

Harden Village Council Annual Report – 2023

Gerwyn Bryan, Chair

I would like to begin my report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their contribution to the Village Council over the last 12 months.

The last year has seen significant changes within the council saying goodbye to Cllr Jools Townend – Member for Climate Change, Traffic & Transport following her relocation from Harden, Cllr Amy Wood Member for Climate Emergency and Cllr Joe McShera – Member for Emergency Planning.

In May we will welcome Haydn Cavanagh, Stephen Leather and Richard Smith, to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election.

The Village Council has had another busy and successful year, operating both through on-line meetings and latterly being able to meet again face to face. We have worked hard to engage with residents, seeking representative views wherever possible and responding to queries and issues. Ongoing projects include the following;

Harden Neighbourhood Plan

After a number of years of significant progress and consultation, Hardens Neighbourhood Plan is now lodged with the Council. This is a valuable document which will help to shape the future of the village and influence the wider plans and strategies proposed by Bradford MDC. This will be put to the people of Harden shortly for their agreement.

Telephone Kiosk

The refurbishment of the village telephone box as a village information point has now finished and is successfully operating as an information and book exchange. Following significant use and a harsh winter, a further light refurbishment will be underway shortly.

Park Play

This year, as part of a larger BMDC project, we funded park play sessions in Harden Park during the Summer holidays.

Bingley Rural Green Travel Project

Initiated by Cllr Jools Townsend, the project has successfully brought together the Village and Parish Councils of Harden, Cullingworth, Denholme and Wilsden to work together. Its aims are to get people thinking, talking and airing their views on how we can make our local transport and travel more sustainable. Various roadshows and workshops have taken place and the emphasis on green travel continues.

Traffic & Transport

One of the key points raised as part of our consultation exercises has been the concern of residents to both the volume and speed of traffic through the village. In November 2019 we commissioned a Traffic survey of the village to establish facts, in order to lay the foundation for any changes. The results of that survey have been discussed with Bradford MDC who are now commissioning additional surveys. Whilst the urgency from BMDC is not at the same pace as ours, we will continue to work towards a variety of speed reduction measures through the village.

Allotments

We have reinstated work on the provision of an Allotment Project within the village and formed an Allotments Working Group to help deliver this exciting project for the village, which was held back by the constraints of lock down. Whilst residents were previously represented and we are currently trying to identify a suitable site and would welcome help from additional residents, so please get in touch with either Cllr Alun Kitsell or the Clerk if you are interested in becoming involved.

Climate Emergency

In October 2019, The Village Council became one of the first rural communities to declare a Climate Emergency and produced a Climate Emergency Plan for 2020-21 with a broad commitment to put the Emergency at the forefront of discussions and decision making.

We are embracing this declaration within our actions as a Council on a number of projects currently being led by Cllr Amy Wood, including a number of community litter picks throughout the year with the recently formed Harden & Wilsden Green Action Group.

Planning

Throughout the year, we have continued to comment on planning applications received, supporting development that is in keeping with the village and opposing that which is not. Cllr Kay Kirkham is our lead on planning matters assisted by Cllr Alun Kitsell and has, once more, done a sterling job throughout the year, visiting many sites and leading our discussions.

Emergency Plan

Following a series of meetings with BMDC, Cllr Gerwyn Bryan and Cllr Falak Ahmed are leading a project to develop an Emergency Plan for Harden and this should complete in the coming months. This will help the local team and Emergency Services to be able to react to any major incident within the village should it be forthcoming, particularly in light of recent flooding.

Forthcoming projects include;

War Memorial Renovation

We are proposing to introduce handrails to the steps to the War Memorial.

Village Identity and Signage

Here we are proposing to enhance boundary and village centre signage, full details of which are contained within the Council minutes.

As we emerge from the effects of lockdown and COVID-19 becomes more controllable it looks like the squeeze on local public finances will continue. This means that there is less money available for non-essential services and Bradford Council is increasingly looking to either close or transfer assets and to reduce nonessential services.

As I mentioned in my previous reports of 2021 and 2022, this presents an opportunity for Parish & Village Councils to try and preserve those services that matter to local people. This is another reason for the Village Council to engage with residents, to understand where these impacts will be felt locally and where we may be able to make a difference.

Harden Village Council are continuing to monitor those assets where we feel an asset transfer may be appropriate and in addition will make appropriate applications to preserve Assets of Community Value where we feel there is a danger that they may be lost to the village.

It's not possible to describe all activity over what has been a particularly busy year, but I hope I have given a flavour of our work. I am, of course, grateful to our Clerk, Ken Eastwood and all Councillor's for their input and for freely giving their time to support the Council and to contribute to village life.

Harden Village Council currently comprises;

Cllr Gerwyn Bryan - Chair

Cllr Kay Kirkham - Vice Chair and Member for Planning & The Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Falak Ahmed – Member for Emergency Planning

Cllr Amy Wood– Member for Climate Emergency

Cllr Alun Kitsell - Member for Allotments Project