

THORNBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairmen's Report 2013-14

You might note from the plural above that Thornborough Parish Council has had two chairmen in the past 12 months. After several years in the post, a bout of ill-health forced Mark Cole to step back, and although he remains a councillor, Stewart Mitchell has taken over the reins since April. So you get two for the price of one this year!

Much of that year has been in waiting for Bucks County Council to finalise the contract for TPC to take over the Community Woodlands at Coombs; much hard work from Cllrs Mary Taylor and Andy Spurr, fund raiser Tanya Pepyn and our parish clerk Maggie Beach has paid off, and almost two years after we started negotiations, it should become reality in the next few weeks, giving us the tenancy of the 183-acre conservation area for the next 100 years.

Road and traffic problems continued to occupy your council during the year, during which Bucks County Council handed over much of its responsibility to private contractors. Although this had a shaky start - grass-cutting, potholes and other repairs were overlooked - we now have a better relationship with those responsible for our parish roads and the A421 trunk road which runs through it.

But our attempts to get The Lone Tree junction on the A421 made safer and less congested with a roundabout have met with point-blank refusals so far, with 'not enough serious injuries or deaths' the County Council's ongoing refrain. We have a new County Councillor in Warren Whyte, whose efforts to improve road matters we gratefully acknowledge, and he is fighting our corner over this.

Village street-lighting has been gradually upgraded, despite a marked lack of urgency on the part of supplier e-on, and is now up to the standard we were aiming for. Next step will be to provide low-level lighting on the village green, already agreed with the money ring-fenced in our reserve account.

High-speed broadband in the parish is hopefully close now, with BT Open Reach planning a fibre-optic cable to the village BT cabinet this autumn; but because properties will still be supplied from the cabinet by copper cable, BT cannot guarantee more than 2 Mgb (the parish currently gets around 0.7), although it could be higher.

Planning matters came to a head with the news that the AVDC Vale of Aylesbury Plan - drawn up to determine future planning requirements in our area - was rejected by the government planning inspector as 'not consistent with national policy and not sound.' AVDC had spent two years and hundreds of thousands of pounds, and now has to redraft, costing

further time and expense. Without this plan, North Bucks could be at the mercy of developers making speculative applications.

There were a number of parish commemorations during the year: benches to mark the Queen's Jubilee and to remember the late Bill Day were installed on the greens; our annual Remembrance Sunday wreath-laying and church service were attended by more than ever; and three weeks after that we honoured the four young crewmen who died in the 1943 Wellington crash at May Wynn Farm with a plaque. As Britain remembers the start of World War I this year, and the hostilities over the next four years, Bernard Garbe will be coordinating commemorative events in Thornborough during the coming centenary.

We lost several Thornborough luminaries over the past 12 months - Evelyn Hanna, Denis Foote, Rob Saunders and most recently Colin Fox - all of them great characters who are sadly missed.

Finally, we end the financial year with strong enough bank balances to have not had to raise the Parish Precept (the portion of Council Tax we require to run things) for a fourth successive year. Parish finances will be reported on by the clerk.

Mark Cole & Stuart Mitchell