

SPRATTON PARISH
COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
2017/18

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MAY 2018

Another year rolls round so quickly that I feel we are sometimes in danger of repetition. However if it is repetition of local administration such as maintenance of street lights, mowing, security, planning matters, litter picking, churchyard and burials, care of our environment and general village care, then repetition is perhaps not such a bad thing !

We do have and have had over the last year, plenty of new situations to deal with but hopefully have managed each one as it came along. The Precept has been kept low for several years although this year we have put it up by just 4% to keep pace with additional expenditures and inflation and in general the village is in good order.

As ever, we would like attract more participation on the Council so don't feel shy about coming forward. We have had even more families move in to the village since the last Newsletter and a welcome and invitation to join is extended to all newcomers as well as the residents who may have lived here all their lives.

PCSO

The process of agreeing among the five parishes in the Spratton to share the cost of a Police Community Support Officer continues. All of the villages are in agreement except for Boughton who are making their final decision at their next Parish Council meeting.

Elections

The May elections have come and gone without the necessity for the village to have an election. Whilst we still have vacancies on the Council, there is the silver lining that the village did not have to pay the cost of an election which would be quite a large sum if there had been more than 10 candidates.

The buses

The No.60 bus route run by CentreBus will definitely cease on 21st July 2018 and we don't yet know if it is possible for an alternative service to be provided. I have been liaising with John Ellerby and James Loader, Principal Lead: Bus & Rail Development at Northamptonshire Highways who have now received responses to the tenders they sent out to bus companies. These are currently being considered by the 9 parishes on the No.60 bus route and once they have responded the feasibility of any alternative will be decided upon.

Natural Spratton

Our African visitors arrived on time. On 8th May two Swifts took up occupation in one of the two boxes (with cameras) on my house and I am currently waiting for them to lay eggs. Last year they had three successful young and I am hoping for the same this year. Let's hope they might perform as well as they did last year when the first one hatched on the day of the Open Gardens when they had quite an audience.

The other addition is that we now have another Barn Owl box on a tree at the bottom of the Brixworth side of the Spratton hill but it may be a year or two before it gets occupied (Hopefully by a Barn Owl and not Jackdaw, Stock Dove or squirrel).

The annual visit of the wall boring bees on the corner of Church Road and Holdenby Road is well under way with the warm weather. Mostly visible going in and out of the holes are the black female

Hairy Footed Flower Bee (*Anthrophora Plumipes*) although there are one or two other species around there. A sure sign that we are heading into summer!

Just an update for our "Beatle" fans ! The larvae as previously reported stored in my old cowshed over winter not only survived but produce lots of new Lesser Stag Beetles. The various experts, such as the People's Trust for Endangered Species, the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre and the Wildlife Trust, who told me that they had rarely been recorded in Northamptonshire, were very pleased to hear this and hoped that they might reproduce. They are now in a safe log pile in the Pocket Park and it is expected that they will find a suitable environment in rotting tree stumps and soil to breed

The Pocket Park is bursting with life and as usual, Dave Cooke is photographing the seasonal flowers and can provide an email copy to anyone who requests it. They are also displayed in the Pocket Park.

Jubilee Wood is looking very mature while at the same time gathering quite a lot of nettles in one area. Volunteers are in short supply so if you have any time to help please contact the Clerk or myself.

That Bridge !

Sorry but the news is the same as far as removing the lights etc ! Here is a letter which Chris-Heaton Harris has received from Northampton Highways which gives the current situation:

From: Highways
Sent: 19 April 2018 08:40
To: HEATON-HARRIS, Chris
Subject: 935953 FW: bridge on the Welford Road between Spratton and Chapel Brampton

Dear Chris Heaton-Harris MP,

Thank you for your email of 9th April 2018 regarding Structure No. 1020: Spratton Sands, Spratton Northamptonshire.

The bridge's east parapet was struck by an errant vehicle on 22nd March 2018. Whilst on site on 23rd March 2018 to remove and make safe the damage caused by this incident, we inspected the bridge and it was noted that the vehicle safety barrier which protects the west parapet had been struck. It would appear that a vehicle travelling north struck the vehicle safety barrier rebounded and damaged a section of the east parapet, north of the damage sustained on 22nd March 2018.

We are looking at options to replace the east parapet, including not using Northamptonshire Sandstone and we are also looking at options to protect the bridge in the future. In the meantime, the temporary lights will remain in place to protect both the public and the bridge.

Thank you again for contacting us. If there is anything else we can help you with please email our Street Doctor Service.

Kind regards,

Sara Grindley
Northamptonshire Highways

Mowing

The previous mower's contract came to an end and in view of the ever increasing demands on the Council's budget, the Council thought it would reduce costs and try to find a few areas where wildlife could be encouraged without causing any obvious "untidiness". For example Daffodils were left to return their energy to the bulbs for a few weeks, where there were obvious displays of wild flowers, some were left until they were over and the Welford Road was mowed for 2 meters from the road rather than right up to the hedge, again to encourage biodiversity. A local contractor, Stuart Smith,

was employed to do the work on a rolling basis meaning that he could be called upon at any time (such as when the Bishop came to our new assistant vicar's licencing when he mowed the churchyard the day before the service). This method inevitably meant that there were some parts of the village in need of mowing while another part was being mowed, which at times was particularly difficult due to the prolonged periods of wet weather. Following representations from some villagers, it has been agreed by all parties that the Council will look for other options with contractors to fit the needs of the village a little more closely. In the meantime the current contractor has kindly agreed to continue the work until a regime is established and our thanks go to Stuart for his work to date.

It is general knowledge that all wildlife from flowers, birds and insects to small mammals are all being increasingly reduced because of loss of habitat and many councils are facing the challenge of trying to improve the various habitats. The Parish Council fully appreciates that the village needs to have an overall neat and tidy appearance but believes that it is worth experimenting with possible environmental improvements. We are looking at a new regime which hopefully will not be too noticeable in the future but if you wish to comment on any aspect of maintenance do please contact the clerk so your view can be considered.

Litter Picking

A big thanks to all who came to the village litter pick in March. It was a great success and enjoyed by all.

DON'T FORGET – WE ARE NOW PICKING UP OUR OWN LITTER WITHOUT THE HELP OF NCC SO PLEASE HELP BY NOT DROPPING BUT PICKING UP WHEREVER YOU SEE IT.

The new DDC waste and recycling system

You will have received the Daventry District Council magazine, Daventry Calling, through your letter box which contains full details of the new "1,2,3" waste and recycling system which comes into effect on 4th June. The changes mean that you will only need to use one recycling bin for recycling instead of the two boxes, which should simplify things a little. However, I find that one of the main omissions of recycling is the vast amount of cellophane packaging and cling film which cannot be recycled and ends up in landfill via the general waste bin, which is to be collected every 3 weeks.

So if you do want to continue using your brown bin, don't forget to obtain a £35 annual sticker for it from DDC (0345 218 5215)

DDC did have a subsidised scheme for Compost Bins (£4. each) but unfortunately that has just run out and it now costs £17.98 +p&p.

ANNUAL RESOURCES, STAFFING AND STRATEGY REPORT

Financial performance 2017/18

During the past eighteen months the present Council has been in office it has administered the day to day running of the parish council's finances and even in these difficult times we have managed to maintain a healthy balance which will carry us through the present Counties financial crises. It was with much regret that we were forced to increase our Precept this year.

The bus situation is still unclear at the time of writing and is being updated on a more or less daily basis, however, please rest assured that your Parish Council will consider all options. All the lights in Gorse Road have been replaced for a more cost effective running bulb and in due course, some lights are ordered and awaiting the fitters whilst the rest of the village lights will also be replaced as and when required. We are in the process of negotiating with Northampton Police Force and joining other local villages in the sharing of a PCSO, this will be discussed at length at the Village Annual Meeting on the 22nd May 2018 and a final decision made.

At the end of April 2018 we were audited by our external auditors in relation to the 2017/18 accounts and Parish Council practices. The Audit confirmed that the Council's accounts were in good order. The Parish Council's detailed accounts are available on request and also published on our web site.

In conclusion, public spending pressures together with the unknown result that the European Brexit situation brings may mean that opportunities to finance initiatives may become more restricted and we will need to treat with caution. We feel that we have prudently managed our budgets for the year 2017/18 which may leave us in a position to address some future projects, whilst making clear progress on the priorities that are necessary such as the church wall and the necessary upgrading of our street lighting. We aim to run and develop our financial plans to ensure we look at ways of achieving the most economic, cost effective and efficient means of doing things.

Jay M Tindale
Chair, Resources, Staffing and Strategy

SPRATTON PARISH COUNCIL MAY 2018

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Once again the past year has been a busy year for the planning committee.

Numerous applications have been submitted to Daventry District Council from this Parish all of which are considered by the Committee.

Much consideration is given to every application that comes before the Committee paying particular attention to the Spratton Neighbourhood plan and also to the wider policies of Daventry District Council Local Plan and the West Northampton Core Strategy.

Each application is considered on its merits and whether it falls within the above criteria for development and our decisions are based on what we believe to be for the benefit of the village and its residents.

Naturally by the very nature of a planning application people's views on the advantages and disadvantages of an application are diverse and can create strong feelings. As a Council we listen carefully to all points of view in order to reach a decision on how to respond to the application before us.

We know we will not please all of the people all of the time but we do our best to reach fair decisions.

Once we have submitted our opinion to Daventry District Council the final decision is left to their planning department or committee. A representative of the Parish Council has attended such meetings when it has felt appropriate to do so to voice the opinion of the Council to the Planning Committee of Daventry District Council.

Finally, if you are aware of a planning application that may affect you or the village on which you have views that you wish to express, then please look at the Parish Council website and/or notice board which will advise you when the application is being considered by the Council and come along to express your views so that they can be considered when making our decision.

SPRATTON PARISH COUNCIL 22nd MAY 2018

CHURCHYARD, CEMETERIES AND OPEN SPACES (CCOS) ADVISORY GROUP

Following the retirement of the previous chair, the CCOS is a relatively new committee and hope to bring some positive changes to the village landscape. The new committee consists of Cllr Louise Smith (chair), John Hunt, Paul Vellam, and Jay Tindale.

It has been a very difficult Spring this year, with heavy rainfall which affected the newly adopted mowing schedule. However, due to the flexibility of the contractor we were able to react immediately to a request to mow the churchyard for the Bishop's visit to inaugurate the new Vicar..... to whom we extend a warm welcome to Spratton!

In the care of our green and open spaces there will be an emphasis on developing and maintaining wildlife habitats, particularly for flora and insects, which in turn helps the population of wild birds and animals. Other parishes in the locality are following a similar path, and we will be monitoring and maintaining these particular wildlife borders so that they do not become unkempt and still enhance a "village feel" to our area. We are currently looking at the systems for mowing and exploring alternatives with a variety of contractors.

Within the last twelve months we have also pruned and shaped two trees with the village, the holly tree in the churchyard and the ash on Brixworth road near to the shop. With the cessation of some council services, for example litter-picking, we would like to encourage local residents to do what they can to help to discourage the dropping of litter and maybe give a helping hand when it comes to weed control along paths and wall boundaries, mowing in front of their properties in between the parish council's appointed contractor visits, and generally helping keep our village tidy.

Cllr Louise Smith 21st May 2018

SPRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHWAYS/HIGHWAYS WARDEN

The highways committee has to report that Spratton bridge has been damaged again, (or the 3rd time) due to Northamptonshire's uncertain future we are unable at this time give any firm dates for work to be completed and any other work eg potholes etc are in the position so the highways committee is not able to move forward with planned works requested, until the smoke clears.

The highways warden will be measuring the total length of all roads and footpaths as DDC have given SPC the task of litter picking in the village, the council would like to ask that all members of the village community look after the village.

The salt bins are due to be refilled for winter later in the year.

The street lighting in the village will be updated on a rolling programme.

Paul Vellam

Chair

Highways