

Annual Report of Spratton Parish Council 2014-2015



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Chairman's Report

It doesn't seem two minutes since I did my last report and I think this is the 15th that I have done.

Things change, things remain the same, but the Parish Council always tries to look ahead and do what it believes is in the best interests of the Village and its residents.

This is all unpaid, voluntary work and I must thank all my fellow councillors and also the Clerk for all their hard work throughout the last year

There have been two new faces on the council since the elections last year, Fiona Keable and Lynn Hogg and we have said goodbye to Rachel Baillie and Tim Forster although Tim will continue to support our efforts with the newsletter remaining as editor

As you all know the work of the PC is divided into several committees and working parties to help spread the load. Each chaired by a different councillor. The only change from last year is that Fiona has taken over the reins of the planning committee. You will see there is a report from each of them so I am able to keep my report brief.

Our finances are in a stable way and this has enabled the PC to keep their precept to the same level as the previous year and also allowed us to support various local groups as required. The main help we give has been to look after the money for the youth club and the lunch club and I think our thanks must go to the dedicated group of volunteers that keep both activities going. The PC also made a contribution to the WRM activities that have happened over the last few weeks and our thanks must go to the SLHS for making such a fine job of it. We also give financial support to the Rec to help it with its important task of keeping this village facility running for the benefit of everyone

Thanks must also go to Alan Roffey for his technical help with the revamp of the website. It is now in much better shape than before but there is still some ongoing work to do. I would urge you to have a look

The strategic plan has recently been adopted by the PC and maps out some of the things we plan to do in the next few years. This will be consulted upon so if anyone has any ideas or suggestions we would be pleased to hear them and incorporate them in our future works plan

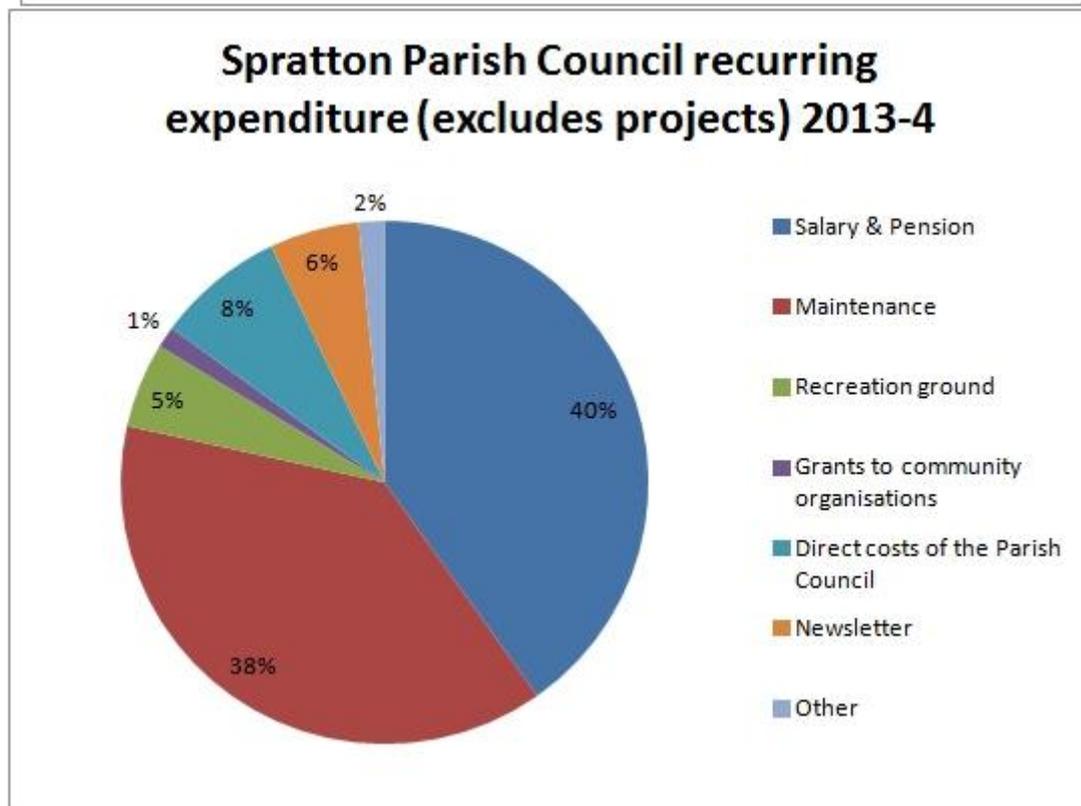
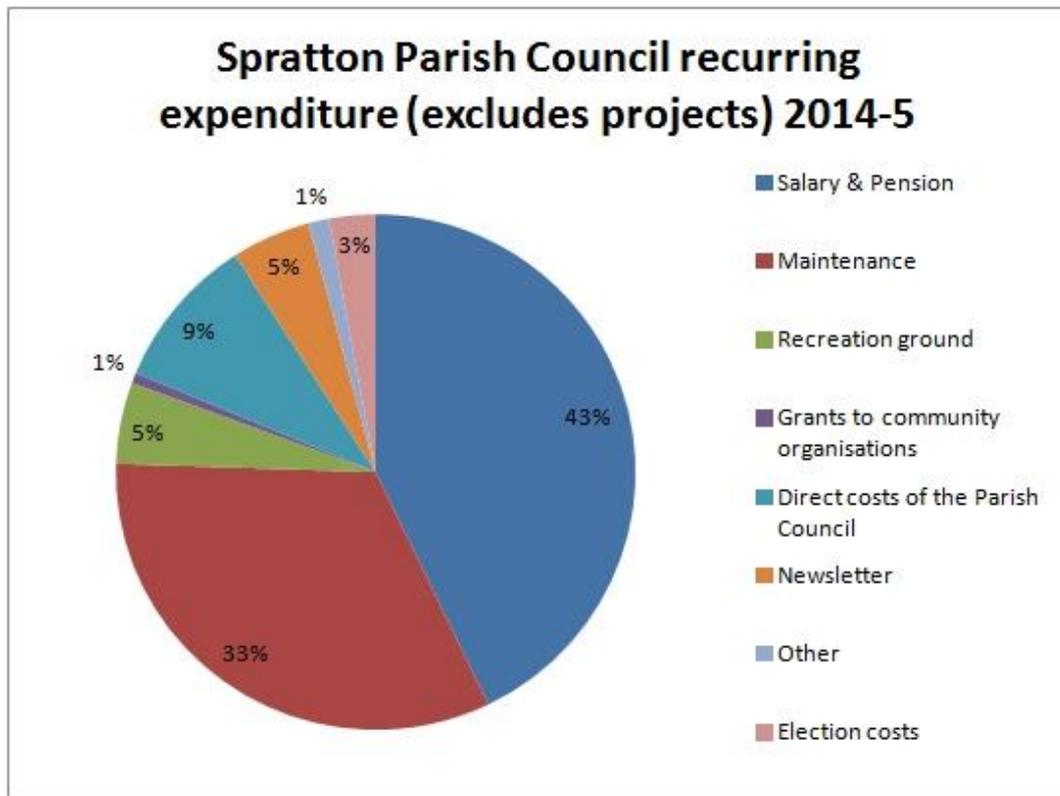
The NDP has recently been submitted to DDC and is now in a six week consultation process.

Thank you

Barry Frenchman

Resources Committee Report

Expenditure in the year 2014-5 has been very similar to that in the previous years as shown by the pie charts below. Total recurring expenditure was £39,168 compared with £38,110, but the 2014-5 figure included election costs of £1134.



Planning Executive Committee Report

During the past 12 months the parish council considered 16 planning applications. These applications were discussed at either full parish council meetings or if there were time constraints, they were considered at Planning Committee meetings, the Planning Committee has delegated powers to respond to planning applications.

The parish council can decide to respond to an application in 3 different ways, by sending in No Observations and No objections, by Objecting to an application or they can send in Observations. All responses are sent to Daventry District Council as it is the District Council who ultimately decide planning applications.

Of the 16 applications, the parish council responded with No Observations and No Objections to 8 applications. Observations were sent in to 2 applications, in these cases the parish council did not have reasons to object to an application but had observations to make, for example, the proposed ridge height of a building may cause concern. Objections were sent in response to three applications, in these cases the parish council felt that there were sufficient planning reasons to Object to the proposals.

Of the 16 applications, 2 were ultimately withdrawn, 3 were refused, and 10 were approved. One of the applications was for permitted development which is not discussed at parish council level.

Cllr Keable took over as Chairman when Cllr Heaton stepped down from the role.

Fiona Keable

Neighbourhood Development Plan Report

The Plan went out to pre-submission consultation in the autumn of 2014, with many comments being received by parishioners and statutory consultees. Many of these have now been incorporated in the Submission version, which was submitted to Daventry District Council on 22 April 2015. The 6-week consultation on this began on 1 May 2015, with copies of the material on DDC's and the Parish Council's websites, and hard copies in the Kings Head, Cafe Doris, Sports & Social Club and the Brixworth Library.

Central government changed policy on affordable housing, increasing the threshold from 5 to 10 units at which any development must have an affordable element. This necessitated a change in the housing policy of the Plan, which had previously limited the size of any development to 10 units, which would have meant that no affordable housing would arise. The size limit has been increased to 15 units as a consequence.

Our Plan is financially supported by Awards for All, from whom we received a grant of £10,000, and also by 'Community Development Foundation' (part of the Dept. Of Communities and Local Government) from whom we received a grant of £2250.

Michael Heaton

Churchyards, Cemeteries and Open Spaces Report

The mowing contractors, Countryside Gardens, continue to give a generally good service, helping to give the village a well-kept appearance. We welcome feedback from anyone who has any comments to make.

The Bishop of Peterborough has consecrated a new area at the west end of the East View Cemetery, so we now have a Garden of Remembrance for the interment or spreading of ashes. The Burial Regulations have been amended to reflect this new facility.

To make way for the new facility, the skip has been removed and replaced by a wheelie bin which is situated by the gate at the top of Roly Banks.



To commemorate the centenary of the VC-winning feat of William Rhodes-Moorhouse, Sunday, April 12th saw the Bishop of Brixworth and the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire attend St. Andrew's for a service and the subsequent unveiling of a plaque in the Millennium Garden.

The event was also attended by a Standard Party from No.2 Squadron in Lossiemouth – Rhodes-Moorhouse's squadron. The whole event proved a great success and was well attended.

Repeating the oft-repeated plea - dog mess is still a problem on footpaths and the Recreation Field – please clear up after your dogs!

Bill Blowfield CCOS Chairman

Highways report

In the last 12 months the village has acquired its own VAS sign.

I am sure most of you have seen it. Since its placing, speeds into the village have definitely been reduced. With this we record data where we can see traffic speeds and times of the worst speeding vehicles, these are then sent to the relevant authorities to make our village a safer place.

Parking throughout the village seems to still be a problem, so please be considerate about parking on pavements please leave room for our fellow parishioners to walk along pavement safely.

We still are having ongoing battle about the condition of some roads in the village but have been recently been informed that some work will be done early in the summer. Please forward any highways issues to myself or the clerk we are here to help you.

Mark Pacey

Natural Spratton

Natural Spratton is the voluntary conservation group for the village operating under the auspices of the Parish Council. Currently it has two main projects being the creation and maintenance of Jubilee Wood at Teeton Lane and the Pocket Park in the old Brixworth Road cemetery.

The main activity in Jubilee Wood this last year, apart from ongoing maintenance such as removal of weeds near the trees and replacement of the relatively few which did not survive, was the planting of a hedge around three sides of the wood. We obtained the hedgerow saplings from the Woodland Trust as part of one of their discount schemes and paid the balance with money Natural Spratton had raised over the year. A dedicated group of volunteers spent the day planting and as most of the saplings are now growing well, they obviously did a good job!

Rabbits have always been a problem in the area where Jubilee Wood was planted but the owner of the field recently removed the old straggly hedge running alongside the north/south footpath and dealt with the rabbit burros at the same time. There are still rabbits but not so many as in the past.

We have planted a row of oaks on the side of the wood parallel to where the old hedge was and I am pleased to say that all 21 have sprouted their leaves and look well on their way. The 10 elms on the other side of the wood are also doing well and you may be aware that these were provided by the Elm Conservation Trust as experimental disease resistant trees.

The Pocket Park is nearly as colourful as it was when BBC 2 filmed it for a programme in 2012. Dave Cooke continues to manage it and grow new wild flowers to plant and it is looking good especially after Lottery money was spent last year in making repairs and restoration work. The rabbits have been a bit of a nuisance digging up plants to get at their roots, especially in the winter, but currently they have Myxomatosis which is rather a sad way of solving the problem.

Talking of wild life – Natural Spratton would like to start a push, or campaign to get the local authorities to manage verges better. By that it means better for wild flora and fauna as well as better and more sensible safety lines of sight etc for traffic. Wherever there is an opportunity for wild plants or areas which would benefit wildlife without impinging on the quality of life of people, Natural Spratton would like to see less cutting and more encouragement of biodiversity. Research has shown that half of the wild flowers in Britain only survive because of road verges so this is not a small matter if we are to bring back such valuable things as our bees, grasshoppers and birds.

We would love to hear from anyone who supports this view and if you need any further information have a look at the Plantlife web site <http://www.plantlife.org.uk/roadvergecampaign>.

John Hunt