



# Billingham Parish Council

## Chairman's Annual Report May 2017

I often conclude my annual report by remarking how much we achieve as a parish council on our small Council tax budget of some £13,000. I am saying this again this year but at the start, although our income is now well supplemented by rent from our farmland in the parish which has increased in recent years

Bearing this in mind we have in the last 12 months provided £15000 worth of new play equipment in the children's play area, helped by a £9000 grant from SKDC, commenced refurbishing the tennis court with new fencing and new surfacing yet to come and installed a complete CCTV system at the recreation ground. We have also greatly expanded our land holding by gaining the 2.5 hectare Aveland School playing fields for the community, seeing through a £90,000 infrastructure programme and constructing one of the largest new allotment projects in South Kesteven.

Within two months of the new play equipment opening The headmistress of Brown's school Horbling reported that 50% of the schoolchildren were using it and the children submitted glowing reports to us

Nevertheless we have aimed in our budget for the current financial year to spend no more than half our expenditure on the recreation ground, with an eighth spent on both administration and grass and hedge cutting and a quarter on other projects.

I would like to emphasise that our work is by no means just about physical projects. A very important part of our work in the community is in trying to resolve residents problems and to pass them on to the best points of contact in the County and District Councils and other authorities like Anglian Water and Western Power. We also listen to residents views on major planning applications such as Grimers Yard north and respond to all planning applications in the village with a feeling that our comments carry more weight than in the past .

Sometimes the parish council itself gets tied up with red tape at other councils and despite the success of our portable vehicle speed detecting equipment we have had a frustrating time trying to get backing from the County in our aim to acquire a permanent solar powered speed detector. I hope there is now a clearer path to success.

Some of the campaigns we have been involved in over the year have been defeating a proposed extra tier combined authority and mayor for Lincolnshire, supporting Grantham hospital against the erosion of its services and opposing hare coursing in this area.

We were of course hit by another wave of mindless vandalism through much of the year – hence our decision to install the CCTV at the recreation ground and protect our investments there. We still consider it is crucially important for our children and young people to have things to do outside their homes and the holy grail for us is to see something akin to a youth club or whatever its modern replacement is set up in the village.

Helping another section of society we have been well served by the Youth Offenders programme in projects around the village providing an ironic contrast to the damage done by others.

I am intending not to stand as chairman in the AGM that follows this meeting because as a district councillor I now have cabinet responsibility for the economy and development across South Kesteven, which together with my ward duties across Billingborough, Folkingham and Horbling is like a full time job.

I have been chairman of the parish council since 2011 and vice chairman and a parish councillor since 2007. On a personal note I am extremely pleased to see our allotments up and running and well occupied before stepping down. This has been the realisation of a personal goal of mine ever since proposing it some 7 years ago. The allotments will be open to the public as part of the village open gardens weekend on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June. I shall however stay involved in the completion of the Aveland school land transfer which has been beset with complications.

Finally I would like to thank my vice chairman and parish councillors who are all volunteers, together with our parish clerk, who all work hard for the village and who have gained much valuable experience in helping the community. As District councillor I will continue to work closely with the Parish Council.

Michael King