

Chairman's statement Parish Meeting April 2017

It has now been a year since I was voted in as Chairman of Norton PC, it has also been a year since Richard Oliver has taken on the role of Parish Clerk, all I can say is if I manage to do half a good a job as he has been doing then the Council is doing well.

One big thing on the horizon is the development of 4000 houses, associated shops and schools by Barratts Developments and their associates Pegasus planning. All houses in the Parish were leafleted and an exhibition was held in the village hall. Councillors have had several meetings with the developers and we are pushing for the best possible outcome for Norton. Outline planning should be submitted to DDC in June this year. I can assure you everyone is now aware of the state of the footpath from Norton to Daventry and our appalling broadband speeds.

Talking about broadband I feel very badly let down by BT when I was personally promised by their Eastern Region manager that we had been upgraded to phase 2 of the broadband roll-out. Now, to find that we have been removed completely, and will have to rely on a private company for any improvement. In one way this will give us faster speeds as it will be fibre to the premises, it will be at a high price.

One of the things I have been particularly interested in this year is the state of our roads and footways. We have had several meetings with the Highways engineers and all are pleading poverty. In October last year we paid for highways to undertake a traffic survey, we thought that this would be useful ammunition in our talks with highways and with Pegasus Planning/Barratts Developments when it comes to traffic calming measures. Recently the clerk, Councillor Goodman and myself walked the village with a representative of highways, fortunately they had just found some extra money and as we were in the right place at the right time we managed to get some of it spent on our roads, which we hope you agree are a huge improvement. At our last meeting with Barratts they have produced a map with proposed traffic pinch points at all entrances to the village. (traffic survey comparison report handed out)

Norton also has a group who are putting together the Norton Neighbourhood Plan who are working hard to ensure Norton remains a place where we all enjoy living, I would encourage you to all give them the support they will need as the plan nears completion.

We have had a few problems with the play area at Jack's Patch, which at times have resulted in some closures but we have been working with the NVCA to put things right and hope that all outstanding works have now been completed in time for the warmer days.

About 18 months ago we had one of the metal brackets which held a street light, come away from the wall in a high wind and this was left dangling on the end of its wiring. As well as a safety issue, the lamp heads are obsolete and replacements cannot be sourced. The Councillors took the decision that all the lights needed replacing with LEDs and the brackets should be removed and replaced with lamp posts. This is not an easy or cheap task and one which took up time in many meetings. The costs were £10,500 for new heads and columns and £11,200 for the electrical connection work. The council do not hold that amount of money in reserve and after much debate it was decided to increase the precept to cover the cost of the upgrade. Phase one has now been completed with all of the lamp heads replaced. More extensive work ie the removal of brackets and new lighting columns will have to wait for more money, but now we are aware that these brackets could be dangerous we have to act as a matter of urgency.

The precept was raised from £11000 to £16000, between all householders in the Parish this comes to £2.25 per month, even with this increased amount it will still take several phases to enable us to complete the project.

It just remains for me to thank our District Councillors, Adam Brown and Johnnie Amos who have supported us on many occasions throughout the year and I hope will do so in the one coming. And our very special thanks to Alan Hills our County Councillor, whose motto is "I won't promise anything, but I'll see what I can do" and he usually does. He will be a very hard act to follow after he stands down in the next elections.