

Chairman's Annual Report 2019

"It was with great pleasure that I was re-elected as Chairman of Whetstone Parish Council at the council meeting held in May 2018. I have been able to attend a few events during this year representing the Parish Council. The Forces Flag raising ceremony at Blaby District Council, the Remembrance Day service held at the war memorial within the village (with our MP Mr Alberto Costa in attendance) and the Civic Service arranged by the Chair of Blaby District Council which was held at St Peters Anglican Church in Whetstone to name but a few. It was at the Remembrance Day celebrations I was honoured to be able to commission the new bench installed near to the War Memorial as the Parish contribution to the 100-year anniversary of the end of the first world war.

The annual Carols on the Car Park at the High Street was held this year, free hot dogs, burgers and drinks were given out. A great evening was had by all and everyone was in good voice.

The Parish Council started the year with all 15 Councillor places filled and a full agenda of work to be carried out during the year. A committee and various working parties were setup for the coming year to enable the smooth running of the council, they bring reports and recommendations to the full Council meeting held each month for consideration and voting on if required.

This year the village has seen it's fair share of planning applications. The Council was asked to comment on The Whittle Estate masterplan with associated flats and commercial development, the building of new and alteration of flats in Central Close just off Victoria Road. On average 3/4 applications per month are made by residents and commercial premises for extensions or change of use etc. The Parish Council is asked by the Planning Department to make any observations they feel necessary as a consultee. The Parish Council has always tried to work with residents where planning applications directly affect them, and I would like to remind parishioners that they can attend any monthly meeting of the Council if they wish to raise issues concerning the village.

The Council has discussed the implications and impacts to the village of future developments within the area, these being the proposed new junction 20A on the M1 motorway, the proposed Whetstone Pastures Garden Village and the proposed A46 expressway. Nothing yet has been planned or any funding made available from Central Government, but the Parish Council will always try to look to the future where big

developments in the area affect the village and its residents. During the coming year the Council will be discussing whether it is time for the village to have a neighbourhood plan to help decide how land in the Parish should or could be used.

Over the past year the village has seen the completion of new housing developments particularly Strata homes and Springwell Lane this has led to a much greater volume of traffic through the village which has given rise to parking and speeding issues. The Council set up a Highways Working Party to look at all traffic issues and they have brought forward recommendations to full council. The group are now in active

consultations with Leicestershire County Highways regarding funding for these schemes suggested. The Parish Council could fund these schemes from the Precept, but most councillors felt that LCC highways should be responsible for the funding rather than the Parish.

The extra housing does have some benefit with the Council being able to claim funding (S106) from developers to improve the open spaces within the village.

Over the past year we have been able to: -

Complete the footpath from Otter Way to Linden Homes.

Complete the Oliver Park footpath.

Provide safer access from College Road to Trinity Park and widening of paths within the park.

Improvements have been carried out on the Parish Council Premises. The Edward Wright Room has been refurbished and the toilets have been updated and repainted. The top yard car park had been resurfaced and there has also been replacement of equipment that is used by the ground staff.

Our Clerk, Deputy Clerk, ground staff, litter picker and cleaner have been kept very busy throughout the year keeping our open spaces, cemetery and other areas of the village clean, tidy and a pleasure to walk through. The hanging baskets are always a pleasure to see and the grass is always kept short in the open spaces. Our ground staff are also trained tree surgeons and can keep the trees in the village healthy and safe. I would like to give my thanks on behalf of the Councillors and Parishioners to all our staff for what they do for the village.

Each year the Parish Council is asked by Blaby District Council to set how much money it needs to fulfil all its obligations within the Parish. This is a proportion of the Council Tax charged to each householder within the Parish. After detailed discussions by the Finance Working Group then Resolution by Council, a precept was applied for of £257,075 which represents an increase of 2.27% from the previous year.

Also, this year the Parish Council has been asked to consider taking over the financial administration of the Whetstone Allotment Association. Discussions have begun with a view to implement by January 2020.

This year local elections were held, and we have seen some changes to the Parish Council. Nine of our Councillors decided to stand for re-election and because there were fifteen seats on the Council, they were elected unopposed. We also have a new Councillor joining us Mr J. Culshaw. Unfortunately, we have seen six of our Councillors stand down Mr M Bradford, Mr S. Duffin, Mrs N. Howden, Mrs D. North, Mr A. Raithatha and Mr A. Tanner. I would like to thank them for what they contributed to the Parish Council and wish them all the best for the future. We have five vacancies which need to be filled by willing volunteers. Anyone interested in maintaining and looking after Whetstone Parish could look to join the Council by co-option, more details can be obtained from the Clerk or talking to any of our Parish Councillors.

It just remains for me to say I have enjoyed being Chairman of Whetstone Parish Council for the past 3 years and to thank the staff and Councillors for all they do for village and the residents."