

# **AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL - 20 MAY 2014**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

In my report last year my first statement was to refer to the sudden and tragic loss of our Clerk and friend, Andrew Flindell. I am sure that all of the Councillors and staff from that period still remember him with great fondness. As a consequence of this very sad event the Council had to deal with his loss and its impact on the operation of the Council. Fortunately for the Council it's very experienced Deputy Clerk, Janet Collier, stepped into the breach and allowed the Council to continue to function for the next few months until the new Clerk, Neil Harris, was appointed and started work in September. Additionally her continuing support to the new Clerk has allowed a smooth transition to take place. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to express the thanks of the whole Council as well as my own personal thanks to Janet Collier and all the staff for the way they dealt with Council business in this very difficult time. We were fortunate to secure the services of Neil Harris as our new Clerk, formerly with Maidstone Borough Council, and with a great wealth of experience in local government matters. He has settled in well, is already moving the Council forward and we were very pleased to confirm his appointment after completion of a 6 month trial period.

The Council currently has 14 members out of a total of 20 though it is hoped that this number will be increased by one when a new member is added to the complement at the Annual Meeting of the Council. During the year the Council gained one new member namely, Mick Ambrose, representing Aylesford South. However the Council also lost one member, Lloyd Green, Vice Chairman of the Council and representing Aylesford South as he moved out of the area. Lloyd is missed as his enthusiasm and commitment was helping to bring about change and making the Council a more forward thinking and progressive body.

The Parish Council has a stated aim to protect and enhance the social, recreational and environmental well-being of the parish and its residents. I have set out in this report what the Parish Council has done in the last 12 months and intends to do in the next 12 months to further this aim.

The Council has undertaken quite a few projects in the last 12 months much of which has been in the recreational field the principal of which is the provision of a new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in the Ferryfield. This exciting new facility which opened at the end of last year has been a great success with local children, and as there are more daylight hours and the weather has improved it has been used more and more. The provision of this new facility has made a significant difference in the provision of recreational facilities for young people in the Parish.

This has not been the only enhancement of recreational facilities because new pieces of play equipment have been provided in the existing play areas in Eccles and Tunbury. The new equipment provided at these sites are for use by toddlers and are great new and well used additions in these areas.

At the time of finalising this report another recreational facility is being provided in the Ferryfield namely a trim trail of 8 pieces of equipment which is aimed more at older

teenagers and adults wanting to get fit or retain fitness levels. This also shows the Council's strategy of not just providing new recreational facilities but also to provide for all different age groups. This is an objective which the Parish will continue to follow when it provides further recreational facilities.

The Council as a responsible landowner has commissioned and received a tree survey highlighting the trees on our land which requires work to ensure safety and the environmental well-being of the land and its surroundings. The importance of this has been particularly highlighted in recent times by the damage caused in the recent winter storms.

This year the Council has also looked at its community safety responsibilities and felt it was the right time to purchase 2 CCTV cameras to help assist the police in the detection of crime in public areas but also on its own land. It is expected that these cameras will be with the Council in the near future.

The Council feels that whilst it has achieved a great deal this year it still has a lot to do. One of the schemes that is being progressed is the Old Bridge Lighting project where the Council is looking to providing uplighting on the bridge. This scheme will provide better security on an unlit road as well as highlighting what is a very important historical monument. This is a very exciting project where the Parish will be working with its agreed contractor and English Heritage.

In Eccles the Council is currently looking at 2 schemes firstly the very much needed car park to be provided on a site to be leased from Trenport to the rear of St Marks Square. This scheme is being pushed along as quickly as it can but like all schemes involving legal agreements is subject to various legal delays. However once the legal go ahead is given it will be implemented as quickly as is possible.

The Eccles Skateboard park is a very well used recreational area in the village but has started to look a bit tired and worn and the Parish Council is actively looking how it can progress a much improved facility. To this end it will be looking to support from the community particularly the users to help us achieve the best result for this well used and popular skateboard park.

The Council will also be looking to introduce a new website which will allow local residents and businesses an opportunity to make people aware of what's happening in their community. There will also be a chance to influence what is happening in their local community and to stimulate new ideas and input effectively in the design of existing ideas such as the Eccles Skateboard park.

In the past year Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council have started the review of their Local Plan and in particular they will be addressing how to accommodate the increased number of houses that will be required in their area as a result of the increased number of houses required in the south east. The Council has responded positively to this consultation so far having a very helpful and frank meeting with Officers from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. In the forthcoming year this consultation process will continue and the Council will need to continue to respond to this in a very positive way seeking the best outcome for the Parish.

Roger Gledhill, Chairman

May 2014