



Chair's Report Annual meeting 2021/2022

2021/2022 has probably presented many more challenges than any previous years in the history of the Parish Council. Some, to the benefit of the Parish others, to its detriment.

I would like to comment firstly on Planning. Government changes to the Planning Regulations effectively rendered our Neighbourhood Plan of little value with respect to conversions and extensions. During the period, the changes have been applied (September 2021 onwards) significant development has occurred through the Permitted Development regulations. Large numbers of the commercial buildings at Linford Wood have been converted to residential flats, ultimately increasing the population by 600+ new residents. In addition, 3 large blocks of flats including a multi-storey apartment unit. This unplanned expansion of the Parish will, over time, impact all of the services providers within the Parish.

Milton Keynes Council invited the Parish to take on Bradville Hall as an asset transfer. This was a competitive selection process which I am pleased to say the Parish won. As many of you know Bradville Hall (now renamed the Community Hub) has a long-standing presence in the community, and it is the Parish Council's intent that it will be run by the community with Parish support. Ongoing repairs to the drainage system and toilet units have slightly set back legal completing but we hope this will be concluded during May.

Staff changes that occurred saw the departure of the two Parish Rangers and replacements were quickly found in the form of Mr David Outram as Ranger Supervisor and Mr Neil Cousins as Parish Ranger. We also welcomed Ms Jessica Hardy as our Document Controller. Jessica's appointment is a direct result of numerous freedom of information requests that to date have imposed an unreasonable workload on staff and significant costs.

One Councillor resigned – Mr Malcolm Millen, who was replaced by Councillor Judy Kite (Bancroft) and Judy was joined by Councillor Edward Seaborne (Oakridge Park). After a review of the size of the Parish and its population Milton Keynes Council cabinet approved an expansion of the Parish Council by three new Councillors representing, Stantonbury & Linford Wood, Oakridge Park and Bradville. These positions are currently vacant.

Our initiative of introducing surveillance cameras around the Parish through Crimewave has proved to be popular with residents who are now asking for more cameras. The results of the use of cameras are a number of prosecutions as a consequence of our ability to provide real time and historical video intelligence.

Regrettably fly tipping, littering and dog fouling still present problems within the Parish. We believe the number of dog bins provided by the Parish are sufficient to cater for the needs of the population. However, we acknowledge that the number of dog owners has increased significantly during the restrictions of the pandemic and will embark on an education programme for new and existing dog owners to act responsibly whilst walking their pets. More dog waste bins are not an option at this time. Our Enforcement Officer (Mr David Barnes) continues to issue notices to those who drop litter.



I would like to thank all the residents who participate as Parish Guardians and undertake litter picks with our Parish Rangers. More Parish Guardians are always welcome! I would also like to thank those residents who undertake their own local litter picking activities. I would like to make special thanks to the Stantonbury litter picking team who clean up their area every weekend.

A particular success was the trial rubbish amnesty conducted in Bradville earlier in the year. This was a return to the system many of our longer-term residents may recall where skips were provided on estates to collect accumulated rubbish. The Parish Council have agreed to reproduce this in other parts of the Parish throughout the remainder of the year and hopefully ongoing after that.

Many parts of the Parish have seen significant reductions in the planting in our open spaces. This is a "Transformation" initiative of Milton Keynes Council to return the estates to their original planting schemes. After many years of neglect, we see this work as breathing new life into our planted areas.

Coincidentally with this work the Parish Council has continued to monitor developments with respect to the devolution of landscape services by Milton Keynes Council. In the past we were averse to taking on this role because we saw the contractual arrangements and costs involved were not favourable to residents. Milton Keynes Council have revisited these arrangements and come forward with a better set of contractual arrangements and added financial support. The Parish Council have therefore committed to taking on the service from April 2023. Anticipating the eventual transfer of this service to all but a few Parishes we have accumulated reserves to pay for plant and equipment as well as staff to provide the service.

We have been considering the long-term functioning of the Parish. The staff have to be congratulated for their significant contribution in maintaining an operating basis throughout 2021 mostly working from home. The pandemic did highlight some points which indicated areas of concern. For example, the Chamber is not big enough to accommodate social distancing, more so now we have to accommodate new councillors. Our IT infrastructure needs a significant upgrade and our mechanisms of communication with residents needed to improve. We have applied limited changes at this time, but more are necessary.

We have considered the viability of the existing Parish Office which is now more than 50 years old and suffers from rising damp through many of its walls. With gas boilers being phased out and heat source pumps being introduced we will need significant expenditure to keep the offices useable and compliant.

For 2022/2023 we are exploring the possibility of new offices in Bradville funded partly through a government low-cost loan but also through the sale of land which the Parish own. We are in the early stages of this possibility and will consult with residents before any decisions are made.

The renewal of Bradville (North) has come before the Parish and we will participate in discussion with the working group on this matter. However, the renewal of Bradville, and I stress it is not regeneration, relies of the project being resident association lead, with



participation and contribution from residents. There have been two public meetings to date with Milton Keynes Council and I'm sad to state, poorly supported by residents. What happens to this estate will be directed by residents and as a Parish Council we will provide any support residents need to contribute to this project.

The special edition newsletter gave information related to many of the issues facing the Parish particularly where Milton Keynes Council are involved. I am disappointed that the Parking issues raised with Milton Keynes Council and the parking plans resulting from the consultation with residents still remain moribund with the MK Council. We have frequently chased the implementation of the proposals and will continue to do so.

Financially the Parish Council is in very good shape and from our reserves we were able to contribute £100,000 towards the precept thus lowering the overall charge to residents. The increase in precept that was made this year reflects taking on Bradville Hall which was not catered for in the 2021/2022 budget and the additional costs, as a consequence of the freedom of information requests. We also included an uplift to provide rubbish skips quarterly across the Parish. Our other increases in costs were in line with the general uplifts applied nationally. Because we have been unable to provide the events etc. as we would normally these monies have been held in reserve for when they recommence.

I would like to close by thanking all our councillors for the contributions they have made throughout the last year in making the Council's work successful.

Cllr Graham Davison

Chair - Stantonbury Parish Council.