

Message from Kim Moloney, Chairman of Grendon Underwood Parish Council

23 May 2022

So, we come to the end of the first year of the new Council elected last May. We have three elected Councillors and three co-opted Councillors to fill various roles. We are all working well as a team and have been able to deliver many positive outcomes for residents. Vice Chair is Cllr Benfield. Cllr Jackman remains our representative at the Saye & Sele Foundation and Cllr Fealey is our new representative on the Village Hall Charity Foundation. Cllr Harris is leading our campaign to stamp out speeding throughout the parish and Cllr Scanlon is our representative on the Springhill Residents Group. I am personally very grateful to this amazing team who give their time for free without question. They work so hard to ensure our village is a great place to live.

I would also like to put on record the Council's, and my personal, thanks to our Ward Councillor at Buckinghamshire Unitary Council, Cllr Angela Macpherson who remains a stalwart friend of Grendon Underwood and its residents. I would also like to thank Councillor Frank Mahon and Councillor Michael Rand for their support.

Of course, the Parish Council would not run as smoothly as it does without Barry Martindale, our Clerk. Barry really does go above and beyond. He works many hours and has kept us up to speed on all things legal. We as a community owe him a debt of gratitude.

It has been wonderful to be back meeting each other face to face to tackle a year full of challenge and change and I pay tribute to all councillors for their commitment, dedication and unstinting service to the community. I thank them most sincerely.

Community - As promised in my last report, this year, we delivered the Multi-Use Games Arena (MUGA) and we are grateful to our MP, Greg Smith, and to our Buckinghamshire Council Ward representative, Cllr Angela Macpherson for opening it on a warm, sunny day in March. Especially, my thanks go to Cllr Benfield and Cllr Jackman who led on the project from the start.

In addition, we intend to bring forward plans, which are well advanced, to realise a Toddler PlayPark for the under 7s and their parents.

We also aspire to develop plans to provide a running track around the field.

We continue to be plagued by dog fouling on the field from a small minority of irresponsible dog owners and are taking active steps to deter it. We have a Dog Fouling Order in place for the field and intend to enforce it as best we can.

We are also concerned by the amount of litter in the village. We held a Community Litter Picking day in May and were encouraged by the turnout. Thanks to all especially, Cllr Fealey for organising.

We continue to seek funding for a safer crossing at the church and intend to integrate this with a parish-wide anti-speeding strategy in collaboration with Edgcott.

We will be supporting a community event to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HRH Queen Elizabeth II in June and flyers have been circulated.

Throughout the year, our wonderful village shop & post office continues to provide essential services and we have recognised this with a plaque. We are most grateful. They are a vital asset to the sustainability of our community, and we wish them well.

Together with Edgcott Parish Council, we ran a highly focused campaign in opposition to the proposed Mega Prison. We are all indebted to the Working Group, residents and other volunteers having professional expertise for the countless hours of work they put in & for the family disruption over many months it entailed - especially Greg Smith MP, Rod Baker, Roger Behagg and our Clerk for preparing our formal objections and responses to the Planning Officer, the MoJ and County. We were successful in achieving a unanimous refusal at the Buckinghamshire Strategic Sites Committee meeting held in March and I feel this was due to the extraordinary amount of work and research carried out by Rod Baker formerly of Edgcott. Without reward save the current outcome Rod Baker put in over three-thousand-man hours – all on a voluntary basis. We as a community must never forget his dedication. I am not sure the outcome would have been the same without his input. The MoJ remain at liberty to appeal that decision should they so wish. So, no celebrations just yet. Keep an eye on the web site for news of any appeal arising.

Planning - The VALP is now adopted by the Government Inspectorate thereby allowing its basic principles to form the basis of our Planning Response Policy, which, we hope, in certain circumstances could be considered our de-facto Neighbourhood Plan. See the web site.

And, of course, we continue to keep a watching brief monitoring planning applications for major developments arising in association with the Oxford/ Cambridge Arc and elsewhere. We encourage all residents to regularly scan the County Planning Portal (link on the web site) and send in their objections as they see fit.

Finances – I refer to the RFO Annual Report which, I am delighted to report, shows our reserves, together with S106 monies, give us options to carry through our plans. Inevitably, though, Council will have some difficult decisions to make and some will be disappointed. Council will always prioritise on its statutory duties, including safety issues and then discretionary projects as money allows.

Crime – whilst we continue to enjoy relatively low crime rates, we are appalled by the regular occurrence of mass slaughtering of sheep by dogs – a truly horrific sight to witness, causing great distress. Our local police team are fully engaged and encourage immediate reporting of anything suspicious on 999.

I thank the other stakeholders for submitting their annual reports and commend them to you for reference. Thanks to PC Danny Fahy, Thames Valley Police, the Headteacher, Grendon Underwood Combined School, Cllr MacPherson, Buckinghamshire Council, the Governor of HMP Springhill/Grendon and Jez Elkin at Energy from Waste.

On behalf of your new Council, we wish you every good fortune. Take care. Stay safe; Stay well. Good luck.

Kim Moloney, Chairman of Grendon Underwood Parish Council