

## Message from Kim Moloney, Chairman of Grendon Underwood Parish Council

### Annual Parish Meeting - 23 May 2023

So, the end of the second year of the new Council elected in May 22 has come and gone. Its been a very challenging year with extended fallout from the pandemic, especially in the first half, with personal tragedy and illness of Members & staff threatening to pull us off track both in complying with our statutory obligations as well as keeping to our improvement plans for the community. It is only with the unstinting support of all Councillors and staff pulling together that we have managed to keep making progress and I can't thank them enough, some acting above & beyond, for no pay, purely for our community.

Our three elected Councillors and three co-opted Councillors have bedded down well and we make a clearly focused team, delivering many positive outcomes for residents. You will have noticed the results of their hard work in the major investment we have made in the village, without breaking the bank or risking our reserves. This year we will co-opting another Councillor and are advertising for a Clerk in anticipation of pending retirements.

I must recognise the various contributions my Team Members make as without them nothing would happen. My Vice Chair is Cllr Benfield on who's support I deeply rely. Cllr Jackman remains our representative at the Saye & Sele Foundation and Cllr Fealey, together with Cllr Jackman are Trustees representing the Council on the Village Hall Charity Foundation. Cllr Fealey is also our lead on an anti-litter campaign with regular 'picking days' being organised. Cllr Harris is leading our anti-speeding campaign and is developing a comprehensive strategy for data collection to provide evidence-based conclusions to the appropriate authorities. You will have noticed the speed signs at the church crossing with more throughout the village. 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 three Ward Councillors at Buckinghamshire Unitary Council, Cllr Angela Macpherson, who remains a stalwart friend of Grendon Underwood and its residents, Bucks Councillor Frank Mahon and Bucks Councillor Michael Rand for their support.

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

Community – following on from delivering the Multi-Use Games Arena (MUGA), last year and as promised in my last report, this year we delivered the under 7s toddlers Play Park which is already proving to be a popular resource.

We helped support the celebrations for the King's coronation and will support the school sensory garden.

My personal 'bee in bonnet' is support for our more elderly residents who may be having difficulty getting out and about and who may not be confident using the internet. Having met and chatted with some of them, it is clear their main problem is loneliness. Hopefully we can raise awareness and support.

We continue to be plagued by dog fouling on the field from a small minority of irresponsible dog owners. We regularly find bags of poo, ready bagged, not a meter away from a dog bin? We are taking active steps to deter it and 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.

Following on from community events to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, this year we celebrated the coronation of HRH King Charles III which was well attended in spite of not the best of weathers.

I must mention in dispatches our wonderful village shop & post office which continues to provide essential services throughout the year. 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, our 'no more prisons' campaign came its conclusion, as far as we are concerned, when the Appeal, called by the MoJ against the unanimous decision to refuse at the Buckinghamshire Strategic Committee meeting held on ....., was heard on .....

The Inspector's conclusion will inform the Minister of State as the Minister has called it in for his personal & final decision. Timing not yet available. We will post to social media and our web site as we get news.

Planning – as well as the VALP being adopted by the Government Inspectorate, the NPPF is also now updated and both are incorporated into our own Planning Response Policy, which, we hope, in certain circumstances could be considered our de-facto Neighbourhood Plan. See the web site.

And now yet another Buckinghamshire development plan and boundary changes are under development. If you want to contribute you can go to their 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 continued progress in our strategic plan to prudently transfer as much resource as possible into tangible results in the community. Our S106 monies are now fully deployed to the PlayPark, grants from our Bucks Community Board are deployed with the speeding devices, we have bought a village planter, we have put signage recognising the much-missed reign of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, on our new notice board and recreational assets. We also have plans to improve the footpaths to MUGA & PlayPark & carry out upgrade improvements to Playground equipment. After due consideration of legal restrictions and cost, plans to provide a running track around the field are on hold until the next financial year.

Infrastructure – we are all appalled by the state of our roads. Bucks Highways say the pothole plague is caused by winter being cold and it rains in England! They have bought new equipment, have new money from government and have a new contractor with a resolution plan in place. But their task is huge. They have hundreds of miles to look after in Buckinghamshire. Be prepared for delays. We look forward to noticeable improvement over the summer.

We are dismayed so much is being spent on cycle ways when our footpaths remain in a dreadful state of repair. Report any egregious instances on Fix my Street on Bucks website.

In addition, we continue to be plagued by utility roadworks and associated disruption – on top of HS2 & EWR ongoing works. Whilst appreciating water and electricity infrastructure needs to be maintained, we have requested they be co-ordinated around Grendon Underwood & Edgcott. UKPN have provided their plans for cable improvements from Waddesdon to Grendon Prison which, overall, will last up to September 23 but have agreed to reschedule their dig across the school entrance whilst school is not in session. Be prepared for delays. If you do want to report any particularly disruptive or dangerous example, County encourage you to report using Fix my Street, on their web site.

Crime – whilst we continue to enjoy relatively low crime rates, we are ever vigilant for instances of drug taking and graffiti. Our local police team is fully engaged and encourage immediate reporting of anything suspicious on 101, or in extreme urgency, 999.

I thank those other stakeholders who have submitted 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 Council, we wish you every good fortune. Take care; Stay safe; Stay well. Good luck.

Kim Moloney, Chairman of Grendon Underwood Parish Council