



ANNUAL MEETING 15th May, 2018
REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
Councillor Mr Kim Richardson

I have been privileged to serve as Chairman of Narborough Parish Council for the year 2017/18. This is my annual report to the Council.

I would like to start with the project to re-build the Parish Centre in Narborough, and its impact on the precept. The new Parish Centre project was originally scheduled to be completed in early 2018, but will not now be up and running until 2019. The delays have been outside the control of the Parish Council, our project managers and the construction company, although all parties have been working together to resolve the issues which have caused the delays and unfortunately added to the project cost. The main problem has been the discovery of live services (gas, electricity, water, cable) underneath the additional piece of land which was acquired from Blaby District Council for the extended building. No one knew that these services were there and they do not appear on any service map. They have to be diverted around the site, and it has been very difficult to get together all of the relevant representatives from the service companies and the planning authorities in order to achieve this. I am pleased to report that, after several months of negotiations, agreements have now been reached and the service diversions are now under way. In the meantime, the re-build has commenced on the part of the site not affected by this issue and so we are now making progress towards providing a modern and multi-use facility to serve the parish. I would like to thank Cllr Derek Ross for his tireless work as project leader for the Parish Council through what has been a very difficult time.

The Parish Council took the decision to meet the additional cost of the re-build from the Council's own reserves and from the precept, rather than apply for additional long term borrowing from the Government. This has regrettably resulted in a larger than expected increase to the precept, but the Council felt that raising the additional finance over the short term rather than the long term represented the best value option to Council tax payers.

During the Parish Centre re-build, the Parish Council has continued to operate from an office inside Blaby District Council's building. In the last year there has also been some major changes inside the office. Earlier in 2017 we updated the job descriptions and contracts of employment for our Clerk and Deputy Clerk, and reorganised the office staff hours in a way that benefits both the Council and our office staff. Then, later in the year, our Clerk Trena Heggs retired, after many years of loyal service. From 1st January 2018, our Deputy Clerk, Julie Whitehouse, was promoted to Clerk to the Council and a new Deputy Clerk was employed, Julia Swan. Trena is staying with us in a limited capacity in 2018 to assist us through these changes, and I would like to place on record the Parish Council's thanks to Trena for this and for guiding the Council through the changes and challenges over the years. I wish Julie and Julia every success in their new roles.

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The Parish Council provides and manages a second village hall in Littlethorpe, 3 parks and open spaces, 3 play areas, a sports and recreation ground, a cemetery, an allotment site, a natural meadow, 2 memorials and numerous flower beds, notice boards, benches and bins. Our grounds staff continue to keep our parks, open spaces and flower beds looking at their best throughout the year, and maintain the play equipment to a high standard, whilst our street orderlies work hard to clear litter from our parks and open spaces and time permitting, cover the main streets of the two villages. At Six Acre Field a new scheme of wild flower plantings will be implemented to add some colour and interest. Last Summer, the Wildlife Trust undertook a survey of Thorpe Meadows on our behalf. We will be using this and the Trust's recommendations to ensure future management of the area maintains and hopefully enhances its conservation interest.

Anti-social behaviour is still a problem and whilst there have been fewer incidents this year, they have been more serious and caused more damage. It is a shame that a minority amongst our residents continue to show so much disrespect for their own environment and regrettably, progress on our review of local byelaws has not progressed as quickly as we would have wished. The Secretary of State refused consent for the Council to make and consult on its proposals for technical reasons. We will be submitting revised byelaws to the Secretary of State once these issues have been addressed and hope to be able to consult residents later this year.

The programme of improvement in the cemetery has stalled for the time being whilst the lead Councillor concerned is working on the Parish Centre project and our Cemetery Groundsman has been poorly, but we will return to this as soon as we can. We also still plan to review the cemetery rules and regulations to see if any changes need to be made to bring them up to date.

I am pleased to report that, after several years of back-and-forth negotiations, we have finally signed new lease agreements with the local cricket and football clubs who play their sport on the Council-owned site on Leicester Road, and so these clubs can continue to provide sporting opportunities for the young people of this parish. Still on the theme of younger people, the Parish Council continues to provide space on Narborough Park for the Reality Youth Bus visits during term time through the year. Last summer we hosted a youngsters' fun day on the park, which was a great success with an estimated 200 children enjoying a variety of sports and play equipment. We hope to repeat this in 2018. I will continue to support the provision by the Parish Council of sport and recreation facilities in the parish, especially for our younger people, as I believe that it is a very beneficial use of public money.

We also continue to work with and support the leisure gardeners association, who manage the allotments for us at the Leicester Road site. The Village Show, organised by Councillors and staff in September, was held at the temporary venue of the old school rooms. The limited space here meant that it was a little crowded, but otherwise the show was once again another successful event with quality exhibits across a range of gardening and art and craft categories. We have some very talented local people!

We are fortunate to have so many other volunteer groups and organisations in our parish, run by local people and providing something for everyone. Let me mention just two recent examples. The Narborough Community Library is up and running, and now, in addition to providing a volunteer library service, also gives pre-school reading sessions, and teaching sessions in family history and computer technology.

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The newly established Friends of Narborough Station group is supported by the Council in their efforts to improve Narborough Station and increase the number of trains which call there. Whilst on the subject of the station, car parking by train users continues to overflow onto our streets, and my only hope here is that Blaby District Council can find some additional space to expand the station car park before the surrounding streets become completely overrun by station parkers.

I was proud to be at the annual Remembrance Service in Littlethorpe in November which was, as always, well attended by the local community. I would like to thank our Vice Chairman, Cllr Alison Clark for attending the Services at both Narborough and Littlethorpe and laying wreaths on behalf of the Parish Council. Regarding the war memorial at Littlethorpe, we still await the outcome of research by a local resident into the names of Littlethorpe residents who served in WWII so that, with this information, the Council can consider how to correct the names and/or correct the description of them on the memorial.

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice-Chairman Alison Clark, our Working Group leaders, fellow Councillors and all of our staff for their help and support throughout the year.

During the year I attended as Chairman:

- Thurs 18th May: Greystoke school; listened to year 5/6 children's ideas on improving the villages.
- Mon 19th Jun: Armed Forces Week flag raising ceremony, Blaby DC.
- Sat 24th Jun: Armed Forces Day service and parade, Leicester Cathedral.
- Fri 30th Jun: B Blaby DC Chairman's garden party.
- Sun 9th Jul: Blaby DC Chairman's Civic Service, All Saints Church.
- Mon 10th Jul: LCC/LRALC Annual Parishes Event, County Hall; more about devolving services, community strategy.
- Sat 29th Jul: Littlethorpe Gala, lucky with the weather again!
- Fri 11th Aug: Parish Council's Youth Fun Day, Desford Road Park, a free event for local youngsters, (200+ attended)
- Thu 17th Aug: Inaugural meeting of the Friends of Narborough Station.
- Sat 2nd Sep: Village Show, presented prizes. High standard of exhibits once again.
- Wed 6th Sep: Leicestershire Police annual meeting with local Councils; further budget cuts and reduction in Police service.
- Wed 27th Sep: Blaby DC annual Parish Councils seminar; workshop sessions about coping with devolved services and about planning.
- Sun 1st Oct: Leicestershire County Service, Leicester Cathedral.
- Thu 5th Oct: LRALC Local Councils discussion, County Hall; taking on devolved services, getting help, working together.
- Mon 9th Oct: 'Finance for Councillors' course at LRALC.
- Sun 12th Nov: Remembrance parade and service in Littlethorpe.
- Wed 13th Dec: Blaby District Council carol service.
- Fri 16th Feb: Parish Council Annual Community Evening.
- Tue 27th Mar: AGM of Friends of Narborough Station.
- Thu 19th Apr: Blaby District Council Chairman's Civic Dinner.

Kim Richardson, Chairman

Narborough Parish Council - 15th May 2018.