

HEATH & REACH PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Welcome to the Annual Meeting of Heath and Reach Parish Council

Since the last report, we have welcomed Andrea Piciorus and Julie Bevan as Parish Councillors. Sue Grierson-Hill joins us as new clerk replacing Francesca Sheppard who leave us after nine years. Welcome to the new members and our huge thanks to Francesca for her service.

Key highlights since our last report

Covid Response: While the shadow of Covid is receding, this is a good point to reflect on how magnificently the community pulled together during last year's lockdowns. The village fairies collected shopping, prescriptions, took villagers for jobs and paid house calls to those who couldn't get out. I know that fairies continue to keep an informal eye on villagers they have helped, and these new friendships are a positive legacy of what was a traumatic experience for the nation.

Cemetery: The Community Payback team continues its great work in the Cemetery. However, the presence of Covid means the Payback team has been short on numbers, so it would be great if anyone with spare time could lend a hand to tend graves and keep the cemetery looking good.

Sports and Recreation: New picnic benches have been installed at Thrift Road and repairs are going on to ensure the play equipment is in good shape for the warmer weather. The trim trail at Bryants Lane proved a big asset during lockdown, and we are embarking on the usual programme of grounds maintenance. Alas we can't promise Tom Cruise landing in a helicopter this year, but Bryants Lane continues to prove an attraction to keep fit enthusiasts!

Quarries: The Parish Council continues to work with Central Bedfordshire Council and local quarry companies to ensure operators keep to their planning schedules. This is a watching brief for the Parish Council, and we will keep attending liaison/operator meetings and monitoring any variations in planning conditions.

Speed Watch: There is significant news here after a lengthy and energetic lobbying campaign of both police and Central Bedfordshire Council led by Cllr

Martin Boyden. Hand-held speed monitoring cameras are on their way and Cllr Boyden is organising training and a rota for volunteers to use the equipment at key points into the village. We all recognise that some motorists come through the village far too fast, and that both speed and volume of vehicles are only likely to increase with major new housing developments in the area. Visible monitoring of vehicles is a proven deterrent to speeding cars – if you are tired of “boy racers” coming along Leighton Road, volunteer for roadside duty and together we can keep the speed down.

Village Maintenance. As ever, this continues on a rolling programme. If there are particular jobs that need attention, please could you let the clerk know so that they can be added to Tony Markland’s list.

Finances: Subject to audit, the Parish Council has again kept within budget and has only had to increase the precept by a nominal 0.9%. We are always conscious this is villagers’ money, and we make every pound work as hard as possible.

Finally, thanks to my fellow councillors and the Clerk for their efforts over the last twelve months. Your time and sometimes unsung efforts really do make this a village people want to live in.

Chairman Richard Thyer.