

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting of Vigo Parish Council, 24th April, 2017

Good evening everyone and welcome to another Annual Parish Meeting for Vigo. I must apologise for not being with you this evening.

It is a legal requirement that Parish Councils in England hold an Annual Meeting with members of the Parish.

At this meeting the Parish Council has the opportunity to share information with parishioners. We are able to tell you about things that have gone on in the past year and to explain where your money has been spent. It also gives us the opportunity to tell you about Parish Council ideas for future projects.

As well as this we hope to have reports from other people and organisations that have links to Vigo, to give a broader picture of what is happening in and around Vigo.

Parishioners are, of course, always invited to attend our normal Parish Meetings, which are much more formal affairs, with very limited time for questions from the floor.

During this evening's meeting, parishioners are welcome to ask questions and raise issues but we would ask that a questioner waits until the speaker has finished their report before asking a question.

When the formal business of the meeting is complete, there will be an opportunity for parishioners to discuss individual concerns with councillors in a more relaxed atmosphere. You are all invited to join us for a glass of wine and hope that you will take this opportunity to chat with your councillors.

So, to the review of the last year:

I really cannot believe that another year has gone past since our last Annual Parish Meeting. But you will see that it has, as the date of last year's meeting was 23rd April 2016!

Good things:

As always, the main focus of the Parish Council has been to maintain the quality and appearance of the Village and to guard the best interests of all residents, both within Vigo and the wider Gravesham community.

The most obvious way in which the Village appearance is kept to a high standard is by the grass mowing, the tree care and the general maintenance of the village verges, paths and woodland and this is where the largest part of your precept is spent. John will give you more details on the finances in his report.

Another aspect to keeping the Village looking good is by asking residents to keep to the covenants that are enshrined in everyone's' deeds. These refer to such issues as not putting a barrier in front of the building line and not changing the

style of windows etc. Some time is spent at each meeting discussion applications from residents to make changes that require Covenant approval.

In addition to this the Parish Council is continuing with its programme of asking residents to remove 'barriers' that are in front of the building line.

Some changes that we have made during the year are administrative. We have changed our bank account from the Co-op bank to the Unity Trust Bank. This change was made to enable us to move to electronic banking.

Another change we have made is to enrol our clerk in the automatic enrolment pension scheme.

One subject that has occupied a lot of time and energy for the last two or three years, especially for Jim Haslem, has been the Neighbourhood Plan.

Unfortunately, at examination, this was not deemed to be suitable by the authorities. This was largely due, to changing goal posts and the fact that it was not possible to identify areas in Vigo where it would be possible to build more houses. Our thanks must go to Jim for all his hard work and perseverance in trying to establish the Neighbourhood Plan.

One other fairly large item of expenditure that the Council makes is to support the Youth Club in Vigo. This is operated by the Gr@nd, based at Gravesend. It is generally well attended. This year the facility is open to younger children.

We are grateful to County Councillor Bryan Sweetland for an extra contribution towards the youth club.

Last year I reported the plan for a footpath to be put through from the Paddock to the Harvel Road bus stop. This was completed earlier in the year and a new bus shelter was installed on the Harvel Road at the entrance to Timberbank.

Another way for the Council to support local groups and organisation is by a Grant in Aid. Grants of up to £250 are available. Unfortunately, again this year, the Grant in Aid budget has been underspent. Please remember, if you are involved with a local organisation, you can apply to us for a grant.

Not so good things:

As usual this year we have again suffered from incidents of vandalism. The bus shelter is still a common target. Making ruts in muddy ground is also still popular, but this year we have been fortunate in that the ground has not been so wet and so the damage to verges has perhaps been less. The reduction of damage has also been reduced in the areas where Paul Agley, our services contractor, has installed bollards and rustic fences.

As always we would ask residents to be vigilant and to report any incidents of vandalism that they observe to us and to notify the police on 101.

And so to plans for the future:

The Parish Council is planning to obtain more litter bins for the spine path and to install some benches there.

We are investigating purchasing a new CCTV system that will give increased coverage of the Bay and coverage of the Ball Park and possibly the car park.

We are also working on a project to increase the size of the young children's play park and to install some new equipment. This project will need us to obtain a grant as the funds required are much greater than can be managed from our Precept. We will keep you posted.

And finally, as usual I would like to mention some of the many other people who are very important to our Village life, obviously with apologies if I miss anyone out.

Jo Glass, our Clerk, who is always very cheerful and helpful. She does all the day to day running of the Council. Writing the letters, making the phone calls, finding answers to queries, keeping up with legal changes and keeping us all on the straight and narrow! Without her knowledge and very able assistance, this council would definitely not function.

Paul Agley, our services contractor, without whom the Village would not look nearly so good.

Community Wardens, Many Casson and Jacqui Fuller. Who are always proactive in the Village and give help and support in so very many ways.

Carol Cox who continues to produce our excellent Vigo Journal.

Leslie Boycott and Derek Shelbrooke - our Borough Councillors who are always ready with help and support

And Bryan Sweetland, our KCC member

Many, many thanks to you all.

And last but not least, I must, of course mention the other members of our Parish Council. Thank you to you all for the very valuable work you do and for the help and support you have given me. I look forward to working with you all again in the coming year.

Pat Banks