
Killamarsh Parish Council

Report to the Parishioners of Killamarsh

TO:	Parishioners of Killamarsh
MEETING DATE:	Annual Meeting of the Parish
SUBJECT:	Chairs Annual Report
REPORT AUTHOR:	Mr Stephen Clough – Chair of Killamarsh Parish Council

Item 3

Purpose of Report: To provide an update to residents on the Parish Councils activities in 2022/23

Killamarsh Parish Council Chairs Annual Report 2023

The past Council year has been unusual and challenging, though still a progressive one. 2022 saw the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee during June, though sadly Her Majesty passed away only a few months later in September, after a long 70 years of reign across the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, having been the longest reigning British Monarch in UK history. King Charles' picked up the mantle thereafter and the nation engaged in further celebrations with the King's Coronation following at the start of May 2023.

The challenges of the cost-of-living crisis have tested all of us, and the Council too. Despite those challenges, we were pleased to have supported the delivery of warm spaces directly through Council facilities and supporting others in the community to do the same.

The start of the Council calendar year 2022/23 saw the Parish Council receive a positive internal and external audit, with only minor concerns raised. This allowed me as Chair to start the process of preparing to end the 12-month period as Acting Responsible Officer, where I undertook the role of Clerk/RFO in a purely voluntary capacity for which there was no remuneration.

The past Council year has seen Killamarsh Active come to life as a refurbished leisure facility for the community, following a £1.9m investment from NEDDC including further activity spaces, a new café and integrated library. The Council has aimed to get the Parish Suite refurbishment underway now the Sports Centre work is complete, and following consultation in November 2022 are looking to take this forward with value for money being the priority. Killamarsh Community Hub came back into use in the Autumn, with the Councillors agreeing to move the operational team into the Hub to increase the effectiveness of activities in the building.

The Council has also sought to improve some of the park spaces in the community with replacement benches and looked to invest in some of the Parish owned parks and play areas, with new equipment, benches and supporting conservation work in the community. Additionally, the Council has looked at improving road and village centre safety with support from grant funding. Further investment has taken place, with investment in defibrillators. Working with Killamarsh Wombles has also led to the improvements in the placement of bins and dog bins across the community.

The Council also looked towards activities for the younger generation with Extreme Wheels delivering outdoor activities for the local youth initially, with further plans to extend activities for a variety of age groups, alongside opportunities for employment and skills development for older age groups.

The Council has also looked to develop a more proactive approach to community engagement, with improvements to the Parish Council website to upgrade user accessibility, communications and other activities to engage residents.

During the year the Council has also sought to improve Council operations through developing a stronger team to take the Council forward. This recently appointed team are now well placed to take the Council forward and do more for Killamarsh residents, with the parish office now open for the residents to drop in for a chat, ask for help or raise their concerns etc.

Our Council

Having been without a permanent Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer since September 2019, the Council welcomed our new Clerk in mid-July 2022 being a crucial element in delivering Council objectives. The new Clerk joined the Deputy Clerk who had been appointed in late 2021.

Additional team members have recently been recruited to boost progress in the community, with the recruitment of an additional Maintenance Officer, a Business Administration Apprentice and Events & Marketing Manager. The vision is for the team to capitalise on opportunities for greater community engagement, more events and improved use of Council facilities to provide better value for money for residents. This now allows the Parish Council to start implementing some of its ambitious plans to move the village forward and focus more on the environmental aspects of the village.

Our Precept for 2022-23

Although, when setting the budget for the 2021-22 financial year, we were only able to set a budget with a prudent 2% decrease in our Parish precept (the parish part of the council tax bill), in the 2022/23 budget we were able to extend this to a 10% reduction in precept. While we have not been able to control the wider financial impacts arising out of the cost-of-living crisis, we have worked to alleviate, in part, some of the challenges every resident will be feeling since the withdrawal of the energy support package provided by Government.

The continued inflation has also continued to impact upon the Council's costs, however continued prudent budget management has allowed us to stay on top of these while still looking to deliver more for the community. This has been aided during the past financial year by gaining additional funding from other organisations to support our activities, buffering some of those financial challenges. Budgets remain allocated with room for contingencies to minimise any financial challenges that could arise during the current financial year.

The subsidy against the sport centre continues to reduce, which should reduce the Parish precept further to lessen the impact on resident's pockets over the next couple of years while still delivering more for the village. We have also managed to bring the Council reserves back within legal limits, a goal we have sought to achieve over recent years.

Further savings have also been made around IT provision which has also allowed the Council to invest in much needed new equipment, reduce paper usage and improve secure communications for Councillors going into a new Council year.

With investment in the right team members to form the Council's operational team, we also expect to see improvement in revenue generation through Council facilities which should assist in relieving some the financial burdens placed on the Council. Additionally, costs relating to the Parish Suite refurbishment are expected to be minimised without affecting future intended reductions in Parish precept, with careful financial planning and management.

Killamarsh Active

The Sports Centre was successfully refurbished with a £1.9m investment and reopened to the public in October 2022. Since then, the centre has been going from strength to strength, with membership up and the new facilities such as the children's play area, the café and the integrated library, all

seeing an increase in visitors to the centre. Killamarsh Active continues to build on its plan to increase usage and patronage to the leisure centre as well as draw additional visitors to Killamarsh to meet its business plan over the coming years.

They still have ambitious Youth Activity Plans in place and are delivering on this, with further activities aimed across all age ranges, so with further help from the Parish Council we hope to generate plenty of activities across the spectrum of ages, using our key facilities.

Skate Park

NEDDC have secured £140k of funding towards the Skate Park from both the Government's Safer Streets Fund and NEDDC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This is currently under development by District and is expected to provide a refurbished site better equipped to meet user needs.

Parish Suite

Following consultation on the Parish Suite, the Council has aimed to progress the refurbishment of the facilities with best value in mind, including seeking grant funding from various sources to support costs. Much groundwork has gone into seeking contractor quotes and we hope to progress this in the coming months to bring the facilities back into full operation moving forward.

The Council is aiming to minimise any form of borrowing to support works whilst ensuring it has the flexibility to meet the needs of the majority of future users. Much work has gone into cost management to avoid unnecessary costs to progress this project, though we still expect the project to start moving forward at pace once all external grant funding potential has been exhausted.

Killamarsh Community Hub (formerly known as the CLOC building)

The Killamarsh Community Hub re-opened for business during the period 2022/23. During the winter months the building was used by the Town Team to provide warm space facilities for residents, funded by monies from Derbyshire County Council which was well received and operated in conjunction with other groups and organisations in the village to provide 7 days a week offering to residents.

Community user interest in the building is now starting to grow with the space having been hired out on a number of occasions and other community groups and organisations looking to use the facilities. Some work has already been carried out inside the building to help increase its accessibility and all Parish Council and Committee meetings are now held at the hub.

The Council have approved further work to be undertaken shortly, which will then enable to Parish Council operational team to move into the building, enabling the site to be managed much more effectively and become the village focal point to benefit the community.

Allotments

I would like to thank Judy France our Deputy Clerk for the hard work that has gone in to carry out the successful review of allotment and for ensuring concerns have been and continue to be dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. More allotments have now been let and periodic checks are now being undertaken, logged and appropriate action taken where necessary.

The Environment Committee have been reviewing pieces of land owned by the Council to identify if any existing spaces could be converted into further allotments, to ease the continuing rise in the waiting list. A particular site had been considered, but after consultation it was decided that the site was not the most appropriate site to use and would have the potential to cause many problems for residents in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site.

Christmas Lights & Seasonal Fixtures

During December 2022 there was an increased investment in the Christmas lights with two new permanently planted trees being installed outside the Community Hub and on the precinct facing Bridge Street. In order to ensure we could decorate more lampposts across the village, we made the decision to try something a little different, with real decorated trees being placed on the lamp posts instead of the one-dimensional plastic trees previously used.

The council were unfortunately let down by the supplier and some of the trees were not adequately decorated and the lights had limited visibility. The Council has taken note of the feedback provided around these issues and are already working to resolve any future issues.

The Council have also investigated the additional aspects of lamp post hanging baskets or additional planters in the village for flowers as this adds visual appeal to the main areas of the village.

Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day 2022 took place as per the previous year with the continued beautiful array of red poppies placed at the war memorial and around the village. Sadly, the Council had struggled to secure a marching band since many had disbanded since the pandemic, however the Council have since secured a marching band recently to accompany the parade this November. The afternoon tea was delivered at the Community Hub this year which was attended by a number of residents. This was once again part funded by Derbyshire District Council Leadership Fund and donations.

Summer Festival

For the first time in a number of years, the Council has sought to provide a Summer Festival during July at the Community Campus facilities on the field and around the leisure centre area. This is aimed to provide some summer entertainment for residents and bring the community together.

Environment & Outdoor Fixtures

The Parish Council have agreed to look at installation of a new park at High Moor, to replace the old park which fell into disrepair many years ago. The new park is intended to be named after King Charles III as a long-lasting legacy from his recent coronation and will hopefully help High Moor residents feel more included in the village than they have previously. I'm pleased to say we will also soon see the redevelopment of the play area at Norwood Park which has been in a poor state of repair for several years. The Parish Council will also continue to press the District Council to look at, maintain or replace their existing parks in the Killamarsh West area of the village unfortunately, the Parish Council do not own any of the parks in West and are unable to invest in them, but we can encourage them to look for funding to invest in them.

The village has had several benches replaced as part of an ongoing plan to maintain key public spaces, alongside addressing issues around the placing of existing benches affecting residential properties.

Additionally, focus has been given to the risks posed by trees and their various states in some locations around the village and those that affect residential properties, although there is still much work to do in this area. Some rectification work has taken place at some points around the village, though it remains a focus for the Council to take forward.

Investment in defibrillators has seen the network extended across the village to improve provision at key focal points that are familiar with residents. Over the last year the Parish Council has paid for and installed four new Defibrillators across the village, which were installed as agreed to back up the ones already installed by the Town Team.

The four new locations are Travellers Rest at High Moor, Sandwich Junction near Norwood, Rai's convenience store on Delves Road and the Killamarsh Community Hub building on Stanley Street. Over time it is expected that other key locations will be identified, and the Council will seek to support the development of the network where possible.

Working with feedback from the Killamarsh Wombles has also assisted the strategic placement of bins and dog bins across the community, while they continue to do their amazing work keeping our village clean and tidy. Their continued efforts are appreciated, and I thank them for keeping the community truly at their heart.

Linear Park is currently work in progress, with some tree and hedge work having been undertaken but there is much more to do, this has initially been down to difficulties in locating available suppliers to undertake the work before the bird nesting season. The Parish Office will continue to work on this and look to have a scheduled maintenance plan in place, moving forward with an appropriate supplier. Also, in this area the old, damaged benches have now been removed with new benches and locations being identified, work is progressing here too.

CCTV

We have worked closely with Derbyshire Police and the Safer Neighbourhoods Team to identify key locations for the installation of CCTV, to help assist in identifying and reducing areas of crime and anti-social behaviour. This will assist the police in undertaken their duties and help keep the residents safer.

Key locations have been identified and the Council are in the process of obtaining quotations for a system to be installed that will also be directly accessible by the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Speed Indicator Devices

Speeding vehicles have been identified as a significant concern in our village, so the Parish Council has been working with Derbyshire County Council to agree locations to install a range of Speed Indicator Devices (SID's). These are intended to encourage drivers to slow down, and to collect speed and traffic data to enable the Council to have useful data around the use of roads for future planning issues.

In addition, the Parish Council has engaged with IAM Road Smart to deliver a bi-monthly program of advanced driving skills advice for free to residents. It is hoped this will assist with road safety and help drivers with economy and driving confidence.

Parish Calendar for Charity

The Council has worked to deliver a Parish Calendar to raise money for a local charity for the first-time using images supplied directly by residents of the village. It is hoped that this becomes a regular activity in the community and raises money for valuable local causes.

Extreme Wheels and Activities for Young People

Again, to support our local 9 — 16-year-olds, the council has engaged the services of Extreme Wheels, to provide some further engaging activities over a period of 29 weeks during spring and summer. This was extended from the previous 11 week provision thanks to grant support from the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioners funding scheme to support the programme.

After being absent for almost a decade, last year's re-introduction was well received and this has encouraged some of our older children in the village to partake in scooter and BMX activities, with laser tag and body zorbing also part of the mix of activities on offer. As promised in my last report, the council has aimed to cultivate its relationship with younger citizens and is to look at further options to meet their needs.

It was incredibly important and useful to obtain feedback from our younger residents during these activities and it identified that given a dedicated space, they would prefer to use it for drop-in sessions such as pizza and pool evenings etc. The younger end of the user group stated that they would feel confined and restricted having a dedicated space and would rather engage in outdoor activities. It was recommended that wider consultation be undertaken, maybe with schools, to engage more and

identify much greater feedback of the younger end of our community. Then tailored activities could be looked at.

Consultation has also been undertaken with Gulliver's Resort looking to develop Community Days in Killamarsh, supporting community groups and developing a programme to skill up young people with work opportunities at their Rotherham leisure site.

The Council has also agreed to support the inclusion of young people in some of their decision-making processes, by engaging them in feedback about their community and facilities aimed at their age groups so they could also have a say in the future plans of the village.

Planning

Given the local plan has always been a bone of contention for Killamarsh Parish Council due to its allowance of development of green belt land around the village, as I previously reported this was sadly passed at District Council in November 2021 despite strong criticism and votes against the plan by Killamarsh Parish and District Councillors.

Since then, the Westthorpe Development application came to the Planning Committee at the District Council on the 17th May 2022, and was refused by the Committee, with 10 votes against and 2 abstentions. The application rejection came to appeal at the end of March 2023 and is still currently under review with the planning inspectorate. We hope for a positive outcome for Killamarsh, and I would like to acknowledge the valiant efforts of Paul Johnson, the Killamarsh Rage Group and accompanying Councillors and residents who attended and opposed the appeal.

Website

The Parish Council website has been updated during the current period and now meets with the new Website Accessibility Standards. The website is much easier to navigate, has improved accessibility for mobile technology and screen reader usability. The website content continues to be a work in progress and user feedback is welcomed.

With additional resources and staff, we would like to encourage our Parishioners to visit the office, raising your thoughts and concerns and welcome you to take a part in our villages' future. The world is once again a little bit more different now, but we still want to make Killamarsh a better place to work, play and live in.