

# Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council

## Parish Council Report 2015-2016

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### Introduction

This is the ninth time that I have been privileged to present the Parish Council's Annual Report to the Annual Parish Meeting and the ninth time I have chaired this meeting.

This is the first year of the New Parish Council that was elected in May 2015.

Only six candidates stood for election and they were returned unopposed. Regrettably Councillor Ray Dawson passed away before he could take his seat. Ray had been a Parish Councillor for sixteen years and had been a member of the Playing Field Committee and its predecessor for the same amount of time. Ray was a good friend to the Parish and a close personal friend, his wise counsel, commitment and 'can-do' attitude has been sorely missed.

Councillor Gwyn Owen was co-opted to the Council in September 2015 and Councillor Suzy Sagoo was co-opted in November 2016. With the two 'casual vacancy' seats now filled the Council is at its full strength of seven members.

Parish Councillors commit their time freely and I would, on behalf of the Parish, like to thank all Parish Councillors for their commitment and efforts during the year. We have in our Parish Clerk, Mike Elliott, and an experienced Clerk who helps guide the Parish Council through the myriad of legislation that governs the work of the Parish Council. Once again I would like to thank Mike on behalf of the Parish and colleagues for all his work during 2015-2016.

### Communications, Community Engagement and the Local Government Transparency Code

This council recognises the importance of communication, public involvement and transparency in the work of your parish council:

- An open session included at every meeting where residents are able voice their concerns or suggestions on issues affecting the Parish.

- A Newsletter (Whatton Village News) to keep residents informed about the work of the Parish Council and issues affecting the Parish

- Residents are encouraged to visit the Parish Council Web Site (<http://www.whatton.org.uk>) for up-to-date information on issues affecting the Parish.

In December 2014, the Local Government Transparency Code was made a legal requirement on all Town and Parish Councils to publish information on the Council's web site (if it has one, which we do). The council believes in transparency and had already published a significant amount of the Code's requirements. All the required information is available on the Parish Council's website.

### Planning

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee and has a 'Right' to be consulted in respect of planning application in the Parish (and in some circumstances in adjacent parishes) local planning authority is required to 'take note' of our comments or objections. The Parish Council take planning applications very seriously and encourage residents to attend our meetings when planning applications are discussed. Where we object to planning applications we have do so purely on material planning issues. We continue to monitor Planning Applications in the parish.

The 'Rushcliffe Local Plan – Part 1 (Core Strategy) was finally approved by the Planning Inspectorate and was adopted by Rushcliffe Borough Council in December 2014. Part 1 is the 'strategic plan' and does not include specific policies in that plan Whatton-in-the-Vale did NOT have any allocation sites. However, smaller, non-strategic land allocations will be made in the Local Plan – Part 2 which will not be adopted before the spring/summer of 2017.

Pending the adoption of Part 2 of the Local Plan the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 will still be used as a guide for planning applications in conjunction with the Local Plan Part 1.

There were no significant planning applications in the Parish during the year under review.

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It was reported in 2013/2014 that the Parish Council discussed an outline planning application for 75 houses in the adjacent parish of Aslockton (South of Abbey Lane). The Council objected to the proposal. The Planning Officer recommended approval, but the Planning Committee REFUSED the application. The applicants have appealed the decision and the issue was heard at a public enquiry on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The Inspector overturned the Boroughs refusal and Granted outline planning permission. The Inspector concluded that the Borough was substantially behind its own targeted development plan, that any 'Delivery' policies included in the Plan were now out-of-date and therefore no weight can be attached to them.

A further planning application has been made for 50 properties on Cliff Hill Lane, Aslockton. The Parish Council objected to this application. The Borough Council refused the application. It has now been resubmitted largely unchanged and is awaiting a decision.

An application for 70 houses on land North of Abbey Lane was made during the year, the application was refused. However, applicant has now lodged an appeal against that decision.

Both of the above can be attributed to the Inspectors decision on the Abbey Lane application.

### Neighbourhood Plan

Whilst we have not had any development proposals we do believe it is only a matter of time. Central Government has made it clear that every community is expected to contribute to the national (and local) housing shortfall. The likelihood is that the pressure on Planning Authorities to achieve and even exceed their target number of developments is going to increase.

The Localism Act of 2011 provided Parish Councils with the opportunity to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is NOT a method of stopping development, but rather shaping its location, style, type etc. Neighbourhood Plans must conform to National and Local Planning Policies and in essence will be approved by the Planning Authority.

The production of a Neighbourhood Plan involves cost (part of which may be met by a Central Government grant) and a substantial amount of time and effort by Parish Councillors and others involved in the process.

The Parish Council believes that the production of a Neighbourhood Plan is essential for the future development of our Parish. But the Parish Council cannot proceed with the plan in a vacuum, Community support is necessary. In order for us to gauge the appetite for the proposal we will be writing to every household, explaining the aims, objective and process as soon as it is appropriate.

### Queens Wood

Parish Councillors were joined by students from the Archbishop Cranmer Church of England Primary Academy to plant 200 shrubs and 30 trees on the former playground on Azimghur Road, Whatton-in-the-Vale.

The project which was funded by Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council was organized by Councillor Gwyn Owen and Councillor Chris Grocock liaised with the school. The project was part of the 'Clean for the Queen' initiative to celebrate the year of her Majesty's 90th Birthday.

Councillors Owen, Grocock, Evans, Morris and Redford joined the children in the days 'planting'.

A 'naming' competition was organized by the school and the name '**Queens Wood**' was chosen as the best name for the area.

### Playing Field

The Parish Council continues to fund the Playing Field and the budget amount for 2015-2016 is £900.

### Affordable Housing

As we reported last year the Council had undertaken a 'Housing Needs Survey' but had not advanced the results any further pending the outcome of the Aslockton Planning application. As the application has now been approved and there is more than sufficient 'Affordable' housing included in the outline application there is no need for additional affordable housing in the Parish.

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### Verge Maintenance

Verge maintenance continued this year on the same basis as previous year.

### Public Rights of Way

Whilst the Parish Council has the power to maintain Public Rights of Way, for all other matters we need to work through the Local Highways Authority (Nottinghamshire County Council), during the past year we have continued to address the issue of Orston Lane – Overgrown with self-seeded hedge, repair of the culvert at the junction of Whatton and Elton footpaths and the surface along the first segment. We have been partly successful in that the self-seeded hedge has now be cut back. We will continue to press the outstanding issues.

### Councillor Martin Suthers CBE

It is with regret we must announce the death of Councillor Martin Suthers after a short illness.

Martin has been the Bingham Division County Councillor since August 2000 and more recently the Cranmer Ward Borough Councillor since 2015.

Martin has a long history of local government service and community involvement. He was previously a Nottingham City Councillor 1967-69 and 1976-95 and was Lord Mayor of Nottingham in 1988-89.

Councillor Suthers was a stalwart advocate for Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish addressing a number of issues with the County Council on behalf of the parish.

He made every effort to attend all the parish council meetings and his advice and guidance will be much missed.

Our sincere condolences to Pippa and the family.

GR Redford  
Chairman – Whatton-in-the-Vale Parish Council.  
May 2016