

Kirkby Malzeard, Laverton and Dallowgill Parish Council

Parish Council report presented to the Annual Parish meeting on April 24, 2017 by the Chair, Howard Mountain.

Firstly I would like to update everyone on the personnel changes within the Parish Council since the 2016 Annual Parish meeting. At the time Mike Hurford was Chair with Gwynneth Jackson Vice-Chair. The Council also comprised Ruth Broadley, Geoff Loble, John Peacock, Gerry Mass and Sue Tyreman. Elections were scheduled for May but as no other candidates stood against the existing Kirkby Malzeard councillors all 5 remained in office, and the only change was within the Laverton and Dallowgill Council where I replaced Sue, who did not wish to stand again. Mike was re-elected as Chair and I took on the position of Vice-Chair. In November Mike indicated that he wished to resign as Chair and so we swapped roles. The term of the Council this time is only for two years rather than the normal four years and so there will be new elections next May.

The other change is that after 17 years as Parish Clerk Catherine Raw resigned at the beginning of January in order to spend more time on her other businesses and activities. I kept things ticking over as Acting Clerk until the beginning of this month when I'm relieved to say that a new Clerk, Mrs Linda Johns, was appointed and she is now starting to get to grips with everything that the job involves.

We feel that the current council is representative in a geographical sense with three councillors living in Kirkby village and two others within the rural areas of Kirkby parish, whilst Geoff lives in Dallowgill and I live in the Laverton area. In terms of gender as well there is a good balance but in respect of our ages we do recognise that we need to be aware of what younger residents expect and need from a Parish Council, and to that end we have updated our website this year and will be expanding our social media output in the months to come, in order to try and communicate more fully with everyone.

The routine work of the Council continues much as usual – providing opinions on planning applications, liaising with Highways to get potholes fixed, organising grass cutting and other maintenance work, but one major change this year is that we have started to take over responsibility for the children's play area at the Highside Playing Fields. We have also altered the way in which grants from the

precept to local organisations are being allocated and to this end we are opening up funding to other groups as well as the Mechanics Institute and the Playing field Association whom we have traditionally supported. Mike is also currently leading an initiative to see whether a community led housing scheme would benefit this area and I have taken the initial steps to revive arrangements in the event of a civil emergency in the parish.

Specific issues during the year have centred around the public houses in Kirkby village and whilst, all being well there are new tenants taking over at the Queens Head, the position regarding the future of the former Henry Jenkins remains unresolved. We are liaising with the owner and with the 'Save the Henry Jenkins' campaign group and we hope that a solution acceptable to everyone, which will benefit the community as a whole, can soon be found.

It is one of the roles of the Parish Council to do all that we can to sustain existing amenities such as the Queens Head, Mechanics Institute, School, Faith buildings, village shop and the other local businesses and one way of doing this is to encourage housing growth in the parish, so that there are more people living here to support them. This of course needs to be done in a sympathetic controlled manner – we do not wish to see large scale development which might affect the character of the villages. We will therefore try to support applications for smaller sites and in particular those with elements of affordable housing and those designed for younger people within the community, who currently face the prospect of having to leave the area to find accommodation. We are also considering creating a Neighbourhood Plan which would provide us with greater control over the nature and location of housing developments within the Parish, and applying for community buildings such as the Queens Head to be listed as Assets of Community Value. Ultimately however it is vital that more residents themselves get involved in community issues both by volunteering to help run local organisations and by spending more in the local businesses.

It is pleasing to see many of the local organisations represented here tonight and it is hoped that such organisations continue to flourish in the years to come.