

Elton Parish Council – Chairman’s Review 2022-2023

Annual Parish Meeting 11th April 2023

Our Chair, Richard Donoyou summarised our year’s activities as follows.

We have had an incredibly busy year but let’s start with our foundation stones.

1. Core Values

- Our role is to represent all sections of our community
- We welcome all members of our community to our meetings and give opportunity for all to speak and put forward their views.
- Parish Councils are the bottom of the local government pyramid in reality we are part of Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. Elton Parish Council has very few powers, so to be effective we need to work closely with the district and county councils. Their reality is one of decreasing budgets, increasing workloads and great difficulty in finding qualified and experienced staff and most recently, political instability.
- We should be very grateful to Kerry Rew, our clerk, for the way she has tackled the complex and ever-changing world of local government law, finance, and administration to make sure our parish council is as effective as possible.
- It is essential that Elton PC works closely with higher tiers of local government, and we mainly do this by fostering good working relationships with district and county councillors. Our district and county councillors are Marge Beuttell, Simon Bywater, and Tim Alban. We have asked them to do a lot for us over the last 12 months and they have responded brilliantly.

2. Our work

- Our work has included the strictly local issues of litter bins, potholes, and illegal dumping etc but we have also made a big impression at the countywide strategic level. Our responses to the county transport plans have been noted and have resulted in a significant allocation of funds for rights of way work. Don’t under-estimate the amount of time and commitment it takes to read through massive policy documents and bring together a response that is received with credibility by the professionals and politicians in Huntingdon and Cambridge. We have led a group of other parish councils, including Chesterton and Alwalton to respond to the threat of increasing vehicles using the B671, as a result of the proposed developments of the Showground and adjoining sites for housing. We understand that there is now a real possibility of creating a new junction in Chesterton at the Oundle Road / A1 north slip road, so traffic is led onto the primary road, the A1 rather than using the Oundle Road through Chesterton and of course thence, to Overend, rather like the road changes to Castor and Ailsworth many years ago.
- We should give special thanks to Richard Smith. He has worked hard with the parish councils along the A605 from Alwalton right through to Thrapston to respond to the threats of massive distribution centres proposed at either end of the A605. Let me make it clear, these are not just a few warehouses; the planning applications show massive complexes to service hundreds of hgvs’ journeys every day. And with the work of Marge and Simon in particular, we enlisted the help of Shailesh Vara, our MP and we heard a

couple of weeks ago that the application on land from the A605 services all the way down to the Oundle Road in Chesterton has been withdrawn.

3. Finances

We make the most of our limited budget by:

- Competitive tendering for contracts, grass cutting and seeking best quotes for street lighting power. Despite the massive increase in costs for electricity for our lights and other consumables, we have not increased the precept for 2023.
- We have been successful in securing grants for traffic calming for Overend. This is serious money. We have raised grant funds of over £35000 toward the traffic calming project on Overend. So, for every £1 you pay through your rates, we have raised a further £1.50
- We set an annual budget based on a 3-year business plan and review our income, expenditure, and cash flow every month.
- The value of what we achieve exceeds our annual £18,000 precept by a factor of 3.

4. Our Achievements

- We now have an up to date, user friendly and very informative website. Thank you, Kerry. I would encourage everyone to subscribe for automatic updates, so as not to miss important information and details of meetings and events.
- Building on previous work by the WI and Elton Society, the Elton to Warmington Lock has been re-opened and is now a formal statutory footpath and the new Iron Bridge is in place. We continue to work to re-open other footpaths that have been blocked.
- We have worked hard to understand and support the network of defibrillators being installed in the village by Heart Safe Communities UK and others and will consider this further this evening.
- We support the village's Speedwatch initiative and have paid for new monitors which do not need to be manned.... you may have seen these fixed to the lampposts in Wansford Road and Overend. The results of these are truly startling and the data is invaluable in supporting our applications for funds for further traffic calming...we have been shortlisted for a further application for traffic calming on Wansford Road.
- The speed table on Overend is due to be installed in the next months and we continue to work with the school, Elton Estates, church, and Black Horse on a scheme to greatly enlarge the Black Horse car park and incorporate a school drop off, so there will be no need for the damaging parking on Overend.
- We were part of a Huntingdonshire scheme to brighten up the appearance of our streets and help biodiversity by planting wildflowers on Hayes Walk. The results really brought a smile to my face last summer and the number of insects using the flowers was amazing!
- We have contributed to county working parties on crime, flood defence and many other things.
- We have approved the installation of a new and larger noticeboard so we can keep you better informed of all the pc's work.

5. The coming year is huge!

- HDC is updating the local plan and it is a near certainty that the development industry will lobby hard for a new 10, 000 house small town at Sibson, to develop this side of the A1 from the A605 junction all the way through to the Oundle Road to name but two. We will need to

respond. This will not be a one-off paper but an informed part of the process which will continue for the next 2-3 years.

- Planning applications we are currently working on include a massive solar park off the Bullock Road and a major scheme of holiday lodges between Nassington and Kings Cliffe.
- The Elton Neighbourhood Plan has been on our Agenda for 3-4 years. It is essential if we are to have a stronger say in what we want for Elton over the coming years. We need to do it now to plug it into the new local plan.

6. Final Thoughts.

- When I became part of the parish council, I joined a group of crusty old chaps all over 70 and representing only a small geographic part of the village. Over the years, we have recruited women, and better still, people who are not all retired. I would very much hope the parish council will achieve equal numbers of men and women and as well as represent the community geographically, that the range of ages is also represented. This means people below 50 and definitely below 70. And of course, it depends on you putting yourself forward.
- Without a more representative parish council, I fear Elton will continue its gradual transition from a working community to a retirement village...and that would be a disaster! It's up to you!!