

Hopefully you've all read the Chairman's report that Lorna has kindly provided. This lays out the position and records the last year as an accurate reminder.

I just wanted to add a couple of things

Firstly I would like to thank my Vice Chairman and my fellow councillors who all give of their time freely and supportively. Being a parish councillor can be a strange role at times and indeed sometimes stressful and I thank you on behalf of the council for the time and various commitments you have all put in over the last year. I will come back to that in a moment.

I would like to thank Andy Beams our Interim Clerk who steered us at a difficult time and helped us to advertise, interview and indeed appoint Lorna Thwaites as our new Parish Clerk and responsible proper and financial Officer. Lorna has taken to the role in just the way I'm sure we all hoped and has continued to get the council's house in order, something I believe we are now pretty much there. Lorna has also brought professionalism to the role which is helping this council every day, as we strive to continue to do good for this parish. We are very lucky to have someone with her experience, knowledge and understanding working with us and for us. So thank you very much Lorna.

Between Andy and now Lorna, we have all really got a new understanding of our roles and it's been a real journey of education and realisation. Being a Parish Councillor these days, with the amount of downward pressure continuing from central government, is becoming a very different role and I think one that perhaps challenges perceptions of our own and the electorate. On this Council we have always understood it to be an unpaid voluntary role and I hope that long continues. However we are now asked to attend many seminars, working groups and meetings during the working day. This can be very hard to fit around working lives and challenges us all I'm sure. I would like to thank Cllr Hill especially for attending most of these meetings on our behalf to ensure we are represented so thank you Liz. I think the PC role will gradually involve more and more of this going forward and we should be aware of that.

So much has changed this year on our admin and organised side as i've said, but also its been great to see projects come to fruition. Among those, the playing field lease is finally resolved after many years. The new litter and dog bins being installed was great to see and we are so much further engaged in the traffic and parking dilemma for this village than ever before. There is still much to do and we must continue and I know we will. We are doing our utmost to engage with the electorate through our three noticeboards, enlarging our website and now even our own facebook page!

More participation from the public would still be nice at meetings, we would never force anyone in, but the door is always open.

Richard Gravett
Chairman
Firle Parish Council