

Annual Report

Fiskerton and Morton Parish Council

May 2024

We have had a full quota of Parish Councillors over the year with 1 co-opted due to a mid-term vacancy. We have a prospective candidate to fill a recent vacancy who we expect to join soon. We continued to meet (open to the public) in the Arthur Radford Centre every Third Monday of the month at 7pm. All Agendas and minutes are available on the website and the most recent documents are displayed on the PC boards outside The Full Moon Morton and The Village Shop in Fiskerton. We continue to be clerked by Brian Powell, who takes care of administration, accounts, communication, legal requirements and specific projects agreed by the parish council. The clerk can be contacted on clerk@fiskertoncummorton.co.uk

In the last year the council has worked on:

Updating the WEBSITE: Aiming to improve communication and allow residents to access local information and links to other organisations, we continue to work on the website as a vehicle to improve compliance and transparency. We would like residents to be able to access the information they want about parish council decisions, policies and spending whenever they want to without going through the clerk. A campaign to encourage residents to sign up for emails (only from the PC) is ongoing. Information on history, activities and action groups is updated regularly. Up to date flood, road closures and social events are sent out to those that have subscribed. We currently have 114 households signed up and have had 6,400 visits to our website in the last year.

PLANNING: The council have studied and commented on 21 housing planning applications in the last year: 3 in Morton and 18 in Fiskerton. The PC considers the site, the proposals, previous applications on that site and the Neighbourhood Plan. The councillors undertake regular training and the overarching principle is that planning is supported unless there are material reasons for not doing so. By far the most common reasons for not agreeing is 'over-intensification' of the site and significant change of the outlook (ie: garage brick walls along the roadside or significant height/size changes of the property). The plans to be discussed are always published on the agenda, all residents are welcome at the meeting and our decisions are sent by the clerk to Newark and Sherwood who can agree or over-rule us.

FOOTPATHS: Nottinghamshire County Council have responsibility for the maintenance of the footpaths and the PC are constantly reminding them of their duties with regards to specific footpaths. We would encourage residents to use the MYNOTTS app whenever possible. We are aware that many footpaths have been inaccessible without wellies this winter, owing to the unprecedented wet weather and the high water table and balance that with the reality of living in the countryside where farmers are also struggling with the same conditions on their fields. The PC also distributes letters to remind residents to maintain plants and hedges if on the boundary of a footpath. We are currently looking into quotes to stabilise a well-used footpath off Gravelly Lane .

VILLAGE MAINTENANCE: We have maintained and sought safety reports on the playground equipment at Arthur Radford. This year we were required to order an extra RESI report which condemned 2 pieces of equipment on safety issues. The Council are currently collecting data to analyse the expense of replacing/maintaining such equipment with benefits to our residents who pay our precept via council tax. This may well be an issue on which local opinion is sought. Our councillor Sue Saddington (Nottinghamshire County Council) regularly attends our meetings to update us on road maintenance issues and other initiatives available to us. We will continue to promote the use of MyNotts App to residents which allows residents to report highway maintenance issues. We currently use Ulyetts to maintain our hedges and grassed areas and have agreed to continue the contract for another year.

FLOOD GROUP : Training undertaken by our team on weather, environment and road closure. We are now equipped with road signs and able to make decisions following a risk assessment to close the roads. We have teamed up with Rolleston and Bleasby to work together in the future. We currently have 7 wardens and are looking to increase our numbers as we progress into the next phase - 'Help Ourselves'. We are planning a village meeting in September to help prepare our residents for the changing environment in which we now operate.

VILLAGE EVENTS: The council held another sold out village mingle event – wine tasting with the aim of encouraging community cohesion. For the first time, tickets were sold on line via our website and we will continue with this in the future. We have budgeted to continue part funding social events or requests from the SGA or Friends of the Village Green throughout the coming year.

DOG BINS: We continue to fund the ongoing collection of all 5 bins across both villages.

DEFIBRILLATORS: We continue to monitor and pay for the maintenance of 2 defibrillators -one by the village shop and the other in Morton phone box. This year we plan to get quotes for new updated defibs to balance against paying maintenance fees on older models.

FRIENDS OF the VILLAGE GREEN: This is a group of interested residents who work on the maintenance, rules and activities that take place on The Village Green. The PC has 2 representatives within the group to liaise with the PC regarding issues affecting the Green. Examples of the group's activity include creation of a Maintenance plan , work on bird and owl boxes, sand and varnish woodwork, the much-improved Christmas lights, a plan to increase power supply and a massive social event – Fiskofest on 6th July 2024 which we envisage will be well supported by all residents across both villages.

SPEEDING: The PC met with Nottinghamshire County Council and Via in Fiskerton to find out what options were actually available to us to encourage drivers through our village to slow down. We pointed out the areas of concern identified by residents and the increase in pedestrians, cyclists and horses. As I said last year, it will take a great deal of perseverance and we are moving forward, albeit slowly. We should have another monitoring strip installed any time now. The viable options appear to be rumble strips, verge gates/planting, moving speed limits further out of village exits. Via are keen for us to set up a residents' speeding group to collect more data. Via will let us know what we are allowed to do, how much we would need to pay or how much we would need to contribute. This is an ongoing activity for the PC.

FINANCIAL: We worked on budgeting and set the precept accordingly. This year we decided unusually to not increase the precept as we have reserves that we could use to balance any budget shortfall this financial year although costs have obviously increased and we are spending more as we increase PC activity. We have moved the council bank accounts to Unity Trust Bank which is more suitable for councils and allows us to authorise payments with at least 2 councillors on-line. We are in the process of moving our investments to CCLA and out of Skipton Building Society. We carried out a detailed forensic review of the funds received and spent from the S106 resources arising from the development of the new properties on Green Drive and Longmead Drive held by the Parish Council for the maintenance of the Fiskerton Village Green and Morton play equipment. With our accounts, we have decided to identify spending to either our S106 account (for village green and play equipment expenditure) or council funds - further increasing transparency of our financial situation for residents. The budgeting for this year is available on the website. As ever, all spending must be agreed at the PC meetings. We are currently working with our new internal auditor and new external auditor too.

POPIES: Members of the PC have put up and taken down lamp post remembrance poppies. We worked with the History Society this year to make them even more relevant to our villages by including the names of lost residents and, where possible, locating that poppy near to where they lived.

NEWSLETTERS: There have been 2 Parish Newsletters this year which have been sent to all residents that subscribe on our website. We put up paper copies on the PC boards too. We have liaised with the SGA, Women's Institute, Croquet Club and Church to provide information on events.

Work for next year will include:

Compliance and information sharing

Play Equipment audit and planning for future use

Flood liaison with neighbouring villages

Website use and resident subscriptions

Flood Preparation Meeting for residents in September

Audit of Defibrillator contracts

Speeding Concerns

Maintenance of the villages' public areas and pressure on the NCC to uphold their responsibilities.