

Deene & Deenethorpe Parish Annual Report 2024

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Deene & Deenethorpe Parish Council.

This Council meets every two months with agenda's posted in the main notice boards of each village in the parish jurisdiction.

Our six meetings are held in May, July, September, November, January and March. The Parish General meeting is held in May where we appoint a Chair and ensure that we have all the necessary policies and procedures updated and in place for the coming year. This year will be no exception.

It is, I think, worth noting that business conducted by this Council is on a voluntary basis, and the parish is governed by 7 Councillors, and supported by a paid Clerk.

The council is currently comprised of
Cllr Keith Gautrey-Prue (Chair)
Cllr Hannah Chambers (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Simon Hickling (Deene Estate Director),
Cllr Stuart Barrett (Deene)
Cllr Brian Gretton (Deenethorpe)
Cllr Ian Briden (Deenethorpe)
The council has one councillor vacancy (Deene) going into this year.

The Clerk to the council is Mr Tom James.

This is a summary of business we have conducted over the past 12 months:

Appointment of new Chair

After a number of years as Chairman Cllr Gretton, relinquished the chair which passed to Cllr Gautrey-Prue. The council thanked Cllr Gretton for his efforts of the past years and all that he had done for the parish and looked forward to his continued contribution as he remains on the council.

Councillor Changes:

Attendance at Council Meetings is governed by the Local Government Act in that any Councillor that does not attend a meeting without due cause and prior approval in a six month period should be removed from the Council. During the previous year the council had two councillors that had reached this criteria and therefore the Clerk was instructed to write to the members concerned accordingly. This left the council with three vacancies, as Cllr Pepper resigned his post due to his work commitments and his plan to leave the parish.

We have appointed two new Councillors to the parish Cllr Hickling (Estate Director) joined upon registering his name on the Electoral Register and Cllr Briden joined following a short interview process and both were co-opted on to the Council.

Police, Crime and Fire Service Liaison

Cllr Gautrey-Prue continues to sit as the parish representative on the Police Liaison Group that meets with the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner for Northamptonshire. Most local people will be aware of the challenges that have been faced by the PCFC over the past few months and that there are still outstanding issues facing the Chief Constable and controversy on the appointment of the new Chief Fire officer. It is hoped that following the election of a new PCFC earlier this month, that some of these issues will be swiftly resolved. Cllr Gautrey-Prue will continue to liaise now that the new meeting schedules are agreed.

Illusive Festival

The festival was resurrected in 2023 and went ahead on 8-10 September. The organisation was generally good with only a small amount of disruption from traffic which should be expected with the numbers attending. There were a couple of reported incidents by members of the the parishes relating to 'escapees' from the festival disturbing elderly residents in their homes and causing some distress. The police were called to Deenethrope to deal with one individual. There were some complaints regarding noise, but organisers assured us that the stage music was turned off at the designated times however there were some festival goers with their own music apparatus that was being used into the early hours. We continue to work with the organisers and the Estate to ensure that should this annual festival continue it does so with minimal impact on our rural communities.

Highways

With the very wet weather over the winter, there has been considerable damage done to roadways and verges and has also caused a significant amount of flooding in both villages. The Chair has written numerous times to the North Northamptonshire Highways to request repairs and maintenance to the highways used by parishioners on a regular basis to go about their daily lives. Sadly this has been to little effect, despite also reporting all issues on Fix My Street.

Cllr Gautrey-Prue has written to Tom Purslove MP and met with him on 17th May, 2024 and following a short drive demonstrated the challenges parishioners face regarding road use in our small parishes. The route taken was Osier Bed Lane, A43, Deene Road, Kirby Lane, Gretton Road, A43 roundabouts, A427, Benefield Road. These roads adequately demonstrate the poor state of our counties rural roads in a short 8mile drive as well as showing the impact of poor repairs carried out on A43 and Benefield Road.

I have asked Tom Purslove to lobby the North Northamptonshire Council and to examine the use of the extra funding they have been given for road repairs. Mr Purslove is going to pick up with Cllr Jason Smithers, and ask how they consider rural areas more fully. We shall await the results of our lobbying over the coming months.

Tresham Garden Village

This had been very quiet over the past 12-18 months, however Councillor Hickling updated the council at the March Meeting and stated that a detailed planning application was being developed over the coming months and that once there is any further progress to report he would update the council further.

Grass Cutting

The Clerk has drawn up new contracts with Messrs Cook & Cox to ensure that the grass verges in the villages are maintained along with the Churchyard and the Estate Plantations. Our thanks also goes to Harry and Gavin Chambers for their assistance keeping the Yew Tree Island in trim.

It remains our intention to continue with the grass cutting contract for the coming year.

School Bus and Safeguarding Issues

Over the course of the winter there was a safeguarding concern raised to the council concerning the safety of a pupil from a local school. The issue was raised with the school and the transport provider, but with no real progress, this was escalated to the North Northamptonshire Council via our local MP to get resolved. The Council believes that this issue is now satisfactorily resolved.

Noticeboards

There was a request made to the Council that the old noticeboard, that had been replaced by a new metal noticeboard earlier in the year, be reinstated at the request of parishioners in Deene. After a small refurbishment by the Estate, the old noticeboard has been reinstated.

Permissive Footpath through Barratt's Wood

The discussions regarding a footpath through the woods linking Deenethorpe to Bulwick have been shelved for the moment as we look to consider whether the proposals formed part of a Section 106 grant funding. The council will continue to look at this business over the coming months.

Commemorative Trees

A tree has been planted to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on the green at the side of the Willowbrook in the lower end of Deenethorpe.

Commemorative Plaques have been purchased to mark the trees appropriately.

Community Orchard

Discussions regarding the siting of a Community Orchard in one of the villages were started at the March meeting of the council and will continue at the next council meeting (May 2024).

Defibrillators

Our defibrillators are maintained by Cllr Gautrey-Prue and the Estate Office on a monthly basis through the Webnos and Circuit systems ensuring that they are always ready for use should an emergency occur. The council are due to distribute key fobs to parishioners to let them know what to do in the case of an emergency and how to access the defibrillators cabinets should the need arise.

Council Income and expenditure

The council agreed at its meeting in January 2024 to maintain the current precept levels, in light of it having sufficient funding to address its current requirements and the cost of living challenges being faced by many members of society at these times. Our precept for both villages being just over £9000 per year. Our current bank balances will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

Our expenditure consists mainly of village maintenance and upkeep of assets (eg Lawnmowers etc) plus our remuneration for the Clerk and statutory expenses such as insurance and membership fees and subscriptions (Defibrillator).

We have supported two requests for financial support during the year, both from the Village Hall Committee. The Council agreed

- 1) A grant of £870 to top up the gravel in the Deene Village Hall Car Park.
- 2) A grant of £500 to support the commemoration of the D-Day 80th Anniversary event in June 2024.

Following the second grant it was decided that the Council should have a policy relating to the issue of grant funding which the clerk has now implemented for any further requests for funding.

The council is always willing to hear from members of both parishes on how we can serve the villages better and will be looking to set up a regular newsletter/social media page over the coming weeks.

As Chair I would like to thank all council members for their attendance and input to our discussions and decisions on behalf of the parishes and hand over to the Clerk to run the remainder of the business.

Signed

Keith Gautrey-Prue
Chair
Deene & Deenethorpe Parish Council