

## **Chairman's Report 2018**

Several years ago the Parish Council sat down and devised a Parish Objective, which read as follows:

“To maintain and develop Billing Parish as a safe, thriving and sustainable community which is an attractive place to live and work”.

I feel that now would be a good time to reflect on what has been achieved by members of this council and others towards achieving this objective during the past twelve months.

All of the parish-owned street lighting has been updated, making it more effective, safe, user-friendly and environmentally efficient. The organising and time spent on this project was considerable. It was not an easy task to even find a contractor to fulfil our many and varied requirements.

After nearly two years of negotiations Bellinge Field is now safely under our ownership; this brings the green space owned and maintained by the Parish Council to just over 30 acres. This land is now guaranteed to remain open green space, not only for the present, but for future generations to enjoy. A special thank you for this latest acquisition must go to Cllr. Andy Kilbride who, on our behalf, negotiated his way through the corridors of power at the Town Hall. Whilst on the subject of green space, during this year, following the retirement of Chris Campling to whom we owe a great deal, it was necessary to go through the procedure of recruiting a new Green Space Manager. The calibre of applicants was very high and the vacant post was filled by Paul Marks, a resident of Ecton Brook. Paul has only been with us for six months but has already made his presence felt throughout the whole Parish with his enthusiasm and will to succeed.

Bellinge Ward, believe it or not, is recorded as a deprived area. It is for this reason that the council has supported, not only financially but in any way possible, the team at Bellinge Community House under Michelle Aveyard. The work done by the team, and in particular by Cllr. Dennis Nash and Jon Porter, is primarily to enhance the area for the benefit of people who live there. Activities, to mention a few, include classes in education, knitting, sewing, languages, debt management and keep fit, as well as organising breakfast, youth and walking clubs. I doubt anyone would have believed it to be a deprived area after the marvellous flower display of Bellinge in Bloom. The judges certainly didn't think so when awarding them Best Community Garden and Best Community Group awards.

Ecton Brook, under the guidance of Cllr. Patrick Henesey has seen the setting up of Ecton Brook Community Group who, with the Council's support, will hopefully soon be able to identify their specific problems and requirements and subsequently make recommendations. At the present time, as unfortunately common with a lot of areas, drugs, anti-social behaviour and litter are major problems. The lack of police presence does not offer a feeling of confidence. However, at the time of writing, the Parish Council is in negotiations with Northampton Borough Council in an attempt to have a Neighbourhood Warden who not only specifically covers our parish (which is not the case at present) but who has a permanent base within the parish, so that she can relate first hand with the community concerns.

During the past twelve months the Bernard Weston Pavilion, situated alongside the playing fields, has undergone a refurbishment which included complete modernisation of the toilet areas. The pavilion and the playing fields are in use nearly every day of the year and have become very popular with members of the community who need somewhere to celebrate a special event, especially children's birthday parties.

The need for a local defibrillator was identified recently and steps are in progress to reinstate the old red telephone box in High Street, Great Billing complete with a defibrillator. A special thank you to Steve Marsh and his charity team at the Elwes Arms who are hoping to be able to assist with the cost of the defibrillator.

The Summer Fayre held in June last year was once again a great success (if only the weather could be kinder), and Cllr. Steve Rockall is once again in the process of arranging this year's event which will be held on 30<sup>th</sup> June. This year there will be donkey rides, magicians and bouncy castles for the benefit of the younger members of our community.

2018 marks the 100 year anniversary of the end of World War I. Over sixty members of the Parish paid the ultimate price and many of their descendants still reside here. To mark this occasion arrangements have been made to give the War Memorial in Great Billing a much needed facelift. It is also intended to display large poppies on the lampposts near both our memorials during November.

Overall, during the past twelve months, in addition to the everyday tasks, i.e. planning, litter, advice etc., I am sure you will agree that the Parish Council has been kept busy. I would like to thank everyone involved but in particular I would like to thank Sue Harris our Parish Clerk. Sue's workload is extensive but year on year she still manages to produce everything on time and in her usual professional manner. Sue – thank you. Special thanks must also go to our local Borough and County Councillor, Andy Kilbride. Andy really does put himself about and nothing is too much trouble for him – we are very lucky to have him.

In conclusion, various objectives have already been set for the forthcoming twelve months and on behalf of the Parish Council I send out an open invitation to any member of the community who feels they could assist to make contact and to either become a Councillor, or assist wherever as a volunteer.

John Marlow  
Chairman  
14.03.18