

Annual assembly 19th March 2019

Report from Chairman of the Council

Introduction

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen to this year's Annual Assembly.

[MOMENT'S SILENCE – AND COMMONWEALTH SPEECH]

Although this is not a formal Parish Council meeting, I expect attendees to continue to act as though our Standing Orders still apply.

This is one of the meetings each year that we are legally required to hold between 1st March and 1st June. For the newcomers, it is best described as the annual shareholders meeting where the Directors (us the Councillors) tell the shareholders (you the residents) what we've done, what we want to do and to give a brief financial overview. As this is an election year for all the HW councillors, this meeting needs to be held before 2nd May this year, just in case the people sat up here aren't re-elected, especially as this meeting has to be called by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

If any votes are taken at this meeting, they are not binding on the Parish Council although we should consider them at the next relevant meeting of the Council. Only registered electors can vote on an issue.

Due to the informality of the meeting, registered electors, including councillors, may ask questions of the Council, which we will try to answer here. If we can't, please make sure the Clerk has your name and contact details so that we can get back to you directly. Electors may also make suggestions and comment on anything pertinent to the people of Haydon Wick Parish, this is the whole purpose of the meeting. I will take questions pertinent to the subject that we are discussing at the

time. There will also be an opportunity for more questions at the end of the meeting.

Normally just the Chairman of the Parish holds the meeting but, as in the past, I'm sharing the responsibility with the Vice-chair, Cllr McDermott and the Chair of Policy and Finance, Cllr Callen. Sarah will be covering Community Engagement and future aspirations, Sue will be dealing with the precept.

Final Months in Office

As we approach election day, I am keenly aware of this may be, for some, their last few months in office. I know that some of us will not be standing again for election. For many years this Council has been justifiably proud of being apolitical. Yes, some of our councillors are card-carrying members of various political parties. But on the whole, those party affiliations remain outside the door. Most councillors are here for the benefit of their communities not their political parties.

The elections put some tacit constraints on the workings of the Parish Council and especially the councillors. It is frowned upon to use our position to promote ourselves during this period over possible candidates who do not share this platform and thereby disadvantaging them.

Staff changes in 2018

Last year, our Clerk, Terry Powell took early retirement due to ill health. His extensive knowledge is sorely missed. But we have been fortunate to get a very capable replacement in Georgina. Georgina initially came to us as a locum clerk, as it was planned that Terry's health would improve such that he would have been able to return to his role. But when it became evident that Terry would not be able to continue, the Parish Council took the decision to formalise Georgina's position and she accepted the role full time in December.

Georgina is a fully qualified clerk with a diploma in Community Governance (the advanced level of qualification that underpins our sector). She has worked as Parish Clerk for a variety of small, medium and large-sized parish councils in Ogbourne St George, Swindon and in Oxfordshire. We are also fortunate in that she brings with her an extensive set of business skills, gained most recently from the Financial Services sector. George also lived in Oakhurst a few years ago, so knows the area pretty well and now lives just a few miles away... close to the County Ground...so she should be cycling in daily...eh George!

And I know that we all wish Terry a full recovery and a long and healthy retirement. It's truly well deserved.

Just after last year's Annual Meeting our newest member of office staff took up her position. Sandra Kelly has shown herself to be a competent member of staff. Having worked in local government for over 30 years including working for another Parish Council prior to joining Haydon Wick, she brings a wealth of experience (especially financial) to the role. Sandra is also a resident in the Parish so has a knowledge of the area, an understanding of the issues facing the Council and a commitment to ensuring that matters are passed on to be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Our outdoor gang, better known in-house as POST – the Parks and Open Spaces Team, has had two new members, Mark Weaving and Martin Smith, since this time last year. Martin's position was just for a year initially, but we soon decided that we have enough ongoing work to offer him a permanent position. They've both settled into the team really well and the whole team has worked incredibly hard this year to keep the parish looking tidy despite some huge challenges (more from that later from Richard)...

One final staff change is the retirement, again, of the parish handy man, Dave Hyde. He has been keeping the doors from squeaking, fences from falling down, lights burning and bus stops spick and span for 15 years. Not to mention maintaining our

huge suite of play areas! But this evening's meeting isn't long enough to list the things that carry his thumb print. Another big pair of boots to fill.

So, our thanks to Dave for /your his service to the Parish Council. Have a good retirement and, if you get bored, you know where we are! [we think he is coming]

War Memorial

2018 saw the Centenary of the end of World War I. The fates aligned so that Remembrance Sunday fell on Armistice Day, 11 Nov. We felt that we should acknowledge the sacrifice of our parishioners by erecting a memorial. The Tommy statue and bench that has been installed by the obelisk near Havisham Drive have been well received. The comments about art installation outside the parish office were equally positive. We still have one more bench to install once the Doctors' extension is complete and we can see the effect that it has on our front garden.

Our thanks to the children of HW primary school for their poems and poppies; Homeground Doctors' Surgery and their contractors Donovan Construction (SW) Ltd for allowing us to have the hoardings painted by Marilyn & Chris Trew who kindly provided their service and materials for free; and AWBS for subsidising the materials around the tree. And thanks to our team for tidying up the area and installing the statue and bench.

NOTE:

I'll need to see the sign-in sheet before the meeting starts. I'll need to know if we have any non-residents attending the meeting so that I can chose not to take their questions.