



Milton Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Parish Report 2020/2021 [includes information from 2019/2020]

This is my first Chairman's Annual report in the 21st Century. Reports from my earlier time on the Parish Council were in the 1990s. The report is unusual in that it is two years since we were last able to hold an Annual Parish Meeting. Although legislation was introduced that allowed online Council meetings, legal guidance in 2020 was that it was not permitted to hold Annual Parish Meetings other than face-face which was not possible because of COVID-19 restrictions. Parish Council and Committee meetings have been held online for the past 12 months. This year the guidance has changed allowing us to meet online for a Parish Meeting.

The past year has been difficult for us all in many ways but has also shown the strengths in our community. Many thanks are due to the volunteers who quickly came together to help people required to isolate in their homes. Recently the Doctors and surgery staff, more volunteers, the Community Centre Manager and Committee members ensured the smooth running of the Vaccination Centre in Coles Road opening often at short notice whenever vaccine is delivered.

At the Council Meeting on 12th April, we expressed our sadness at the death of HRH Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, and our condolences to HM The Queen and to the Royal Family. A minute silence was held in remembrance of HRH Prince Philip.

A review of the Remembrance activities in the Village gives a clear illustration of the differences between the two years. It is about 25 years since the Parish restarted the short Annual Remembrance gathering that takes place on Remembrance Day itself. In 2019 as in previous years Remembrance commemorations were well attended including the Scout and Guide Groups parade on Sunday, and Year 6 children from the Primary School on the 11th. Those gatherings could not take place in 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions. A small group attended quietly and carefully distanced on both days. A Wreath was laid on behalf of the Village on Remembrance Sunday, followed by a one from Parish Council on Remembrance Day. Other groups also arranged for their wreaths to be added to the Memorial. In both years, the crochet poppies put in a welcome re-appearance.

Parish Councillors and Staff

Parish Councillors are all volunteers, and I would like to thank them for their efforts for the Village, and especially their patience and persistence in dealing with the challenges of online meetings.

We welcomed Paul Ellwood, Andrew Latchem, and Alex Markham as Councillors, joining Anna Bradnam, Jane Coston, Rob Farrington, Adam Horne, David Owen, Hazel Smith, and myself Don Wildman forming the full Council today. We would welcome applications for the remaining vacancy. More information is on the website

<https://www.miltonvillage.org.uk/how-to-become-a-parish-councillor>.

Our staff have also had to cope with vastly different working conditions for over a year and have ensured that the administration and services have worked smoothly throughout. Our Clerk, Sarah Corder recently achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification and continues to keep us up to date with the required policies and procedures. Our previous Assistant Clerk resigned as she moved away from the Village. John Barrett has stepped ably into the position despite distancing requirements making use of the office more restrictive. Philip Adams continues his tours of the Village including additional regular inspection and cleaning of play equipment as part of COVID-19 precautions.

Community Care

Our Community Care Warden Tracey Ebbon had to make significant changes to working practices to cope with social distancing and other precautions yet still provides the same valuable support to our elderly and vulnerable residents who wish to remain in the own home. Sarah and Hazel have also provided additional support as backup to Tracey. The scheme continues to receive high praise for the care and support provided.

Milton Trolley Bus

The regular minibus service to Tesco for our elderly and infirm was not much used in recent months but should pick up again as distancing restrictions are eased. Milton Charities have continued to support the service at the reduced level.

Youth

Council continues to provide funding to support the Youth Activities run by the Connections Bus Project although unfortunately the service has had to work in different ways because of the need for social distancing. A recent online session providing Babysitting training was well received.

Recreation facilities

The larger recreation areas and facilities at Coles Road, The Sycamores, and North Lodge Park are managed and operated by the Milton Community Centre and Receptions Grounds Management Committee (MCC). The MCC is a Charity created over 30 years ago specifically for that purpose. Parish Council make an annual contribution to the running costs. The smaller open spaces at Humphries Way, The Rowans, Froment Way, and Hawthorn Hedge are overseen by Parish Council. The Play Area at North Lodge Park is the responsibility of the residents and the Management Company.

Both MCC and Parish Council were eligible for Government COVID-19 grants paid via South Cambs District Council to support additional costs and income loss during the pandemic. This was particularly important to MCC as the bulk of their income stopped during the closures.

The MCC Committee is made up of volunteers including representatives of the main village clubs and associations who are regular affiliated. I know that the Committee would welcome more support so please look out for their AGM later in the year to find out more.

Thanks to the Management Committee and particularly the Centre Manager for the intense work over the year in understanding and implementing COVID-19 guidance which has meant closing and reopening multiple times over the year. Use of the Community Centre and some other facilities continues to be restricted. The outdoor play areas are open but please continue to follow the safety guidance. Additional information is available on the website at <https://www.miltonvillage.org.uk/milton-community-centre>.

Play equipment maintenance.

New equipment has been installed on Froment Way including a wheelchair accessible roundabout.

Other play equipment has been repaired or repainted and new bark added. Protruding roots were removed from The Rowans area.

New equipment and some repairs and renovations have been ordered for The Sycamores play-area. Installation is due to begin in mid-May.

The play areas are frequently inspected by Parish or MCC staff. We also arrange for bi-annual ROSPA safety inspections. Following inspection reports the Motorbike Springer on Froment Way has been replaced as although it was safe to use, the mountings were beginning to wear, and we were not able to source replacements. One swing at Coles Road had already been taken out of use and has now been repaired.

If you see issues needing attention, please notify the Parish Clerk except for Coles Road, Sycamores, and North Lodge Park Pavilion and adjacent pitch area which should be reported to the MCC Manager.

Defibrillators

Two new AED units have been acquired, one funded by a grant and the other by Parish Council. Thanks to Pro-Serv for contributing the installation work.

The AEDs at The Sycamores and North Lodge Pavilions are regularly monitored by the Clubs and MCC. The unit located at the Parish Office in Coles Road is checked by the Clerk.

Other Village Maintenance

There is always work to be done around the Village which is organised and overseen by the Maintenance Committee and the Clerk.

- General grounds maintenance

We employ contractors for general grounds maintenance including grass cutting and tree/shrub management of the open spaces owned by the Parish including the Cemetery on Landbeach Road and cut grass areas within the Village that are owned by the District and County Councils who make an annual contribution to the costs. Some larger tasks that require two or more operators working together have been delayed and it may take some time to catch up the resulting backlog.

Tree and shrub work can take time to organise. Advice from the Tree Warden and Tree Surgeons maybe needed. The work needs to be done at the right time of year. Quotations must be arranged for larger unplanned works. However, first we must check that the land is Council owned. Some strips of land between footpaths and garden fences are the responsibility of the house owners.

Just before Christmas we had a report of a fallen tree blocking the footpath running along the Bund. Several of us spent an interesting hour untangling and moving the branches to the side to maintain access for walkers. Our Contractors handled additional work on the larger trunks to complete the job. Note that the bushes and trees are for screening and are maintained by the Parish. Please do not carry out any maintenance work along the Bund

and pathways instead report any issues to the Clerk for attention. No waste materials are to be left along the pathways and bunds.

The fallen and overgrown bushes around the Village Pump have been cleared but the area will take time to fully recover.

Fortunately, the Village was not severely affected by wind during the unusually heavy storms. A large tree fell from private land blocking Church Lane. Volunteers quickly had the lane open again to the relief of the congregation who were in the Church. A tree that came down along Fen Road was on land managed by County and dealt with by them.

Other tree work was carried out by our contractors around Coles Road car park, Tomkins Mead, Allotments and The Sycamores recreation ground.

However the unusually heavy rain accompanying the storms created a significant problem with surface water on the fields, opens spaces and Cemetery as the rain was falling onto already saturated ground. The ditches and drains did not cope with the volume partly because of restricted flow further along the system towards the Cam. South Cambs and County support improved the flow in the public drains (ditches), but some are under riparian ownership and so the responsibility of the landowner on either side. Councillors will continue to press for regular maintenance of these essential services.

- **Tomkins Mead**

Minor repairs were carried out to the boardwalk and boot scrapers were installed at both ends to help visitors keep mud clear of the walkway.

- **War Memorial area**

Roots were removed from around the two memorial benches and the area seeded. The Golden Jubilee tree is showing good growth where the intruding bushes and ivy were removed.

- **The Rowans**

Bluebells and snowdrops have been planted between the trees in the area at corner of The Rowans and Cambridge Road near to Edmund House although the other growth has overtaken that area early this year and will need some attention.

- **The Cemetery**

The front section of the Landbeach Road Cemetery remains the responsibility of the Church, but the Parish Council support the general maintenance. In addition to grass cutting, repairs are being made to the Cemetery gate. Regular topple testing is organised to check for stability of the older headstones and some remedial work is being organised in conjunction with the relevant families where possible.

- **New Trees**

Council took advantage of an offer from SCDC for a voucher valued at £60 covering the purchase of up to 3 mature trees for planting on Parish land. Planting the trees social distancing challenge. A Mountain Ash was planted on the Hawthorn Hedge area, and two Flowering Cherry trees at The Rowans play area.

Several packs of trees were provided by the Woodland Trust. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped plant the trees, and especial thanks to Adam Horne who spent several days

organising and supporting the planting over a damp weekend. The Orchard with the mixture of wildlife friendly and fruit trees will be a significant asset once established. Additional tree planting is planned for late autumn when more tree packs are expected. Hopefully by then we will then be able to involve more people in the planting process.

- **The Bund**

A survey of the Bund is planned to identify areas needing attention and possibly replanting as some grants may be available to support this work.

A10 Trees responsibility next to the Parish Council Allotments

The ownership of the trees along the A10 next to the Allotments has been in dispute for over two years since a falling tree damaged the boundary fence resulting in significant cost to the Parish in repairs and legal fees. I am pleased to report that the matter has been resolved with County Council confirming their ownership and responsibility. All Parish costs have been recovered and remedial work is being planned and organised by the County Council.

The Little Library

Following on from the success of the Little Library project on Coles Road organised by volunteers and provided by The Phoenix Trust Council agreed to support the project by funding the purchase of a second unit from The Phoenix Trust. Thanks to the volunteers for organising the scheme and to those providing the space for the units.

Milton Country Park

Parish Council agreed to provide one-off grant of £10,000 from reserves to Cambridge Sports Lake Trust as an emergency payment during the Covid-19 pandemic to help keep the park open as it is a well-used by residents and the Trust was not eligible for the Government emergency grants available to other similar organisations. South Cambridgeshire District Council also made a grant available.

Public Phone

Council received a proposal that the payphone on Coles Road be decommissioned and adopted by the Council. Council objected as it is the only public phone in the Village and as such BT has a responsibility to maintain it. It was agreed that the service will continue and the kiosk has been cleaned by BT/Openreach.

Highways

Several issues with road and path surfaces have been reported to Highways maintenance including broken manholes and the road surface around Willow Crescent. Some of the remedial work has been completed. You can help by reporting new Highways issues online at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

Council has successfully applied for a grant from the A14 Parish Legacy fund to improve the road surface and markings on the High Street crossing by Pond Green. The work will be delivered by CCC and their contractors, but final design and implementation has been delayed because of distancing requirements. We await a timescale for the work to be completed.

Traffic Calming and Parking

We met with Highways in response to a request for a pedestrian crossing on Cambridge Road near to Barnabas Court. The number of access points and laybys in the area meant that the request cannot be taken further.

Parking is an ongoing challenge around the Village. Many people have raised concerns about the junctions of The Rowans with Cambridge Road, and Fen Road directly opposite the junction with Coles Road. Double yellow lines were suggested to visually reinforce the existing Highway Code restrictions. A questionnaire published on the Parish Council website and in the Village View showed a significant majority of respondents in favour of the proposed schemes, so the project was passed to the CCC Highway Services Team for costing for TRO proposal. The costs have now been confirmed and accepted at the April meeting of the Parish Council. We await confirmation of implementation.

Illegal encampment

Travellers set-up camp with caravans and other vehicles on the Coles Road Recreation Ground. Arrangements were made for them to be moved on.

Planning and Consultations

Alongside the activities that have immediate visible effect in the Village, we also receive copies of all planning applications for properties within Milton and those in the neighbourhood that may affect the Village. These can vary from a few small supporting documents to ones with over 100 documents some of significant size. These are reviewed and commented usually by the Planning Committee, or at a full Council meeting if the deadline for comment is short, or the project is a major infrastructure item. Whilst the Planning Officers and South Cambs Councillors consider our comments we have no direct involvement in the final decision making,

Councillors also review and comment on a range of consultations on surrounding development proposals and topics like the draft Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan covering the next 5 years, North East Cambridge Area Action Plan, and the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. We also commented on the nearby rail crossings affected by the Network Rail Cambridge Re-signalling project particularly Fen Road.

Council submitted a detailed response to the Cambridge Shared Planning Service on the draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan. A joint letter of common objections was also agreed with neighbouring Parish Councils. Comments were also made on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

A significant amount of Council time was spent on responding to several consultations for the new Police Operations Centre, development of the A10, and the Anglian Water scheme to relocate the Wastewater Treatment plant. Proposals for trialling new Cycling and Walking measures also led to lively discussions.

Council agreed to support a joint letter with other affected Parishes objecting to the proposed use of green-belt sites for the Wastewater Treatment Plant relocation and responded with broader comments more specific to the sites off Butt Lane/Mere Way. Following on from the AWA choice of preferred site for the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Council representatives are included in ongoing design consultations.

Council raised several issues on the planning application for the Police hub including concerns about use of greenbelt, drainage, traffic, and safety of cycle and pedestrian access. We received support from our District Councillors and others on the South Cambs Planning Committee. The plans were approved with conditions including improvements to drainage design, and provision for monitored CCTV on the A10 footbridge. Planning Officers also recorded that this use of greenbelt was an exceptional case and should not be seen as a precedent for future development in that area.

Residents' concerns over the introduction of a moto-cross course on agricultural land on Fen Road were investigated and Council sought advice to clarify the planning situation for such usage. It was found to be outside permitted development and so is being progressed by SCDC Planning Officers.

Finance

After a detailed review of the income and expenditure Council set a precept of £133,000 for the financial year 2021/2022 unchanged from the current year.

Draft Accounts for Year from 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021

These figures have been prepared on an INCOME and EXPENDITURE basis following information in "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils: a Practitioner's Guide".

Description	2019/20	2020/2021
Balances brought fwd	£407,248.24	£473,808.59
Annual precept	£132,000.00	£133,000.00
Total other receipts	£76,105.08	£35,275.41
Staff Costs	£39,370.72	£42,875.90
Loan interest/capital repayments	£0.00	£0.00
Total other payments	£105,962.55	£111,240.58
Balances carried forward	£473,808.59	£487,967.52
Total Cash and Short Term Investments	£462,250.77	£496,591.38
Total Fixed Assets	£190,693.00	£190,694.00
Total Borrowings	£0.00	£0.00

Note: Accounts for 2019/20 have been adjusted to meet revised reporting requirements for staff costs so differ from draft values reported in the previous report. Balances carried forward and Total Cash are not affected.

Reserves:	Balance
General Reserve	£215,389.69
Capital Reserve	£220,000.00
Earmarked Reserve	£52,577.83

Capital reserves are primarily to support acquisition of recreation ground and open space if land becomes available at appropriate cost.

Parish Office and contact

The Office remains closed to the public except for the most urgent appointments that cannot be handled by phone or mail/email. If you have an urgent issue that requires direct contact, then please first telephone the Clerk on 01223 861447 or 07853 170646 so that we can arrange a way to help you whilst minimising direct contact. Further information is on the website - <https://www.miltonvillage.org.uk/>

Don Wildman
Chairman - Milton Parish Council