

Quinton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report, April 2019

For any of you not aware of it, or for aspiring councillors, being a Parish Councillor is not a recipe for peace or relaxation so the first matter I wish to address in this annual report is to thank each of my colleagues for their selflessness, hard work, patience, good humour and loyalty. These qualities are not just displayed by my fellows but also, in even greater abundance, by our valued and esteemed Parish Clerk. He is inevitably first in the firing line when residents have a query, a grievance, a novel idea, or when some new central or local government initiative demands hours of exploration or explanation. Without Brian we would certainly not be up to date with the intricacies of GDPR, let alone vaguely understand its demands and implications. Our policies would be quickly outdated and our village would be the poorer financially and legislatively.

Increasingly each year becomes busier than its predecessor. Of course in Quinton we are bedevilled by a number of developments, each of which produces its burdens. Unfortunately, placed as we are, we find ourselves under pressure from a number of projects. The one which will have the greatest impact in the ensuing year will be HS2. We are only just beginning to see the desecration of our hedges, trees and wildlife yet there are years of this ravaging stretching ahead as the line itself becomes embedded in our countryside, despoiling and damaging our roads, footpaths and rural outlook. We can complain and beseech for all we are worth but Parliament has spoken and given HS2 carte blanche, a licence to act as they like. Our protestations bring little respite as the carnage and disruption increase. If we were gaining any benefit from this monster project then it might prove easier to accept but we see few, if any, benefits, just annoyance and unwanted intrusion into our lives.

And, as if HS2 did not bring enough pain, we are soon to experience the additional changes which the reopening to passenger traffic of the main railway line through our station will bring, with a doubling of the track and greater traffic frequency. At least we will have access to these trains by boarding at either Winslow or Aylesbury so, unlike HS2, we will gain some travel benefits.

Then there is the threat emanating from the proposed Oxford to Cambridge expressway, a dual carriageway linking the two university cities. It is likely to be sited within a few miles of our village and will undoubtedly bring some benefits in improving our road systems, BUT, and it is a major BUT, the expressway will definitely bring with it more houses, likely in the form of a new city to be centred on Calvert. You don't need to be a genius that this city will border, if not swamp, Quainton. You younger people have many changes to face. I hope they bring more benefits than losses.

I can, with much certainty, declare that, during the next 20 or so years, you are going to experience more inconveniences and annoyances than we have suffered in recent times. Look how annoying have been the inefficiencies of Thames Water as they have tested our patience over the past nearly three years – and, sorry, a word of caution, they are presently only temporarily absent - they will return shortly. Not only have they inconvenienced us but they have also lost us money, as when a company wanting to film here had to be turned away because, justifiably, the County Council could not countenance more disruption to our road system, even for a few days.

Let's leave the negatives at that shall we and look for the positives. Living in Quainton is, for most of us, a great joy and blessing. Community spirit is high, people find friendship and support and marvel at our beautiful surroundings. It is the continuation of such positives that we should all aim to maintain and enhance. We are indebted to those who contribute to such attributes by organising and/or supporting village events and activities. How many neighbouring communities envy the village businesses which serve us so well? How welcome has been Peter and Julie's acquisition of a post office facility. The renovators of the windmill deserve fulsome praise for surmounting so many obstacles and restoring this major village landmark. The updating of the Saye and Sele Hall has provided another space for community activities, as has the refurbishment of sports facilities in Lee Road. Land at White Hart Field, thanks to Hedgerow havens and its supporters, will, we hope, be a further haven for wildlife and a pleasant place to sit, just like our appreciated wildlife garden and churchyard. Moves to safeguard our Village Green are in hand and, in true democratic style we hope, maybe as an example to national voters, villagers will give a clear indication as to whether the Quainton Beacon we saw,

thanks to our bonfire volunteers, to such dramatic effect on Mill Hill to commemorate fittingly the ending of the First World War, should become permanent or just erected for highly significant occasions.

I trust you will all have noted how your Council manages its finances and budgeting, where annual increases in council tax are kept within stricter bounds than those of other localities.

One characteristic you may be strongly assured your Parish Council does not demonstrate is complacency. We are most aware of those aspects of our village which require support or change. Our latest, well supported, defence of our NDP, this time in the face of a developer determined to deposit, on the exterior of our settlement boundary, the largest housing estate Quinton has ever seen, has shown that our development policy needs to be reviewed. Speeding traffic remains an issue. There are major parking problems with no obvious acceptable answer yet discovered. Further would be developers, focussing only on their own wealth not the health of our community, are searching for any plot where they might drop the odd house or two. Each of these applications adds to our workload and it is particularly galling when we put forward our observations only to see the local planning authority reject our opinions or an inspector who accepts, in face of our opposition, the landowner's exploitation of his assets. Enforcement, where planning breaches occur, is still annoyingly lacking completely or frustratingly lethargic. Presently we await patiently the outcome of the appeal to build on land to the rear of 151 Station Road, an appeal we totally reject, and, in June, we face the resolution of whether the protracted, supposedly unpermitted residence should continue at Trail Flatt Farm. As soon as one case is settled another will rear its head, testing our resolve, resources and energy. On we go.

We are grateful for residents' support in our endeavours to see that Quinton remains a rural settlement where country life may be appreciated and true democracy reigns.

Thank you.