

Hunsbury Meadows Parish Council 2017-2018 Review

Council

The last year has once again seen a period of change within the Parish Council with the unfortunate resignation of Cllr Alan Buckley due to a house move but the welcome addition of Cllr Mandy Caunt to our ranks. Hopefully we will soon be welcoming a new Councillor, but we are still looking for another to join us.

Although we have spent the majority part of the year significantly under strength, we have managed to achieve a great deal and I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work.

Boundary Change

The most significant event of the year was the decision of the Parish Council to work towards a Governance Review of the Parish Boundaries with the hope that the Parish Boundaries would be extended to include Pineham Village and the whole of the Pineham industrial estate including the school, Community Centre and the proposed shops.

This involved the Parish Council having discussions with Northampton Borough Council, preparing information for our parishioners on why the Parish Council thought this was the way forward for the Parish to grow and develop and then raising a Community Governance Petition with at least 250 residents in favour of a Boundary review. This we achieved in early November 2017 and formally triggered the review. Currently we are half way through the review process and I am happy to report that the draft recommendations, submitted to the Borough Council in April 2018, were that the Parish Boundary should be changed and that the Borough Council voted to accept the recommendations.

We are now waiting for publication of the draft recommendations for consultation over the summer and then the publication of the final recommendations in the Autumn for the Borough Council to vote on by the 6th November 2018.

Environment

Once again, the Parish Council has been working to improve our environment throughout the year. The main efforts have focused on cutting back hedges and trees. Along Banbury Lane from the entrance to Pineham Lock to the bridge over the canal the trees have cut back, and the overhang reduced. On the other side of Banbury Lane, the hedges in the pocket park have been cut back improving the useable space.

The Parish Council are looking to install more waste bins at various sites within the Parish, however trying to arrange the emptying of the bins is proving problematic as this service is provided by the County Council – which as everyone knows currently has significant financial problems and has put a halt on new expenditure

We are also working with the Canal & Rivers Trust and the Northampton Branch Inland Waterways Association to repair the hard surface towpath by the Pineham Lock playground and get the path extended over the Wootton Brook Culvert. Over the winter this section of the towpath has become extremely waterlogged and muddy to the extent that at times it has become almost impassable. We are hoping that the work will happen later this month.

Further down the towpath where the canal runs parallel to Upton Valley Way East the Parish Council has worked with the Highways Agency to get bollards installed at the bottom of the access ramp to slow down cyclists. Previously there had been offset railings at the bottom of the ramp but these had been removed during works earlier in the year and not replaced.

After an inspection of the bridge over the canal, the Highways Agency have reported that it would be prohibitively expensive to try and extend the footpaths to join up to the footpath over the bridge. The traffic lights would have to be moved and an embankment extended and widened. The Parish Council will look to keeping the vegetation cut back by the bridge to allow easier access to the footpath over the bridge.

Pineham Lock

During this year Chamonix Ltd have taken over the management of Pineham Lock and are now responsible for the upkeep of the landscaped areas, the playground and communal areas. The Parish Council is still representing residents where the response of Chamonix is not acceptable, especially regarding the playground where we still have serious concerns about the safety of the area.

Crime

Over the last twelve months unfortunately there has been an increase in crime in the Parish. This has been almost exclusively burglaries from homes and cars along with theft of cars. The Parish Council is continuing to work with the police to reduce incidents of crime and keep our residents informed of potential issues and good practices.

As part of our drive to reduce speeding along Banbury Lane we ran two SpeedWatch session over the summer and autumn and saw a slight reduction in the number of speeding vehicles, though there was still as large number of drivers travelling at excessive speed. This year's SpeedWatch starts this weekend.

Communication

We have produced a number of Newsletters throughout the year which have been delivered to the all residents and also residents of Pineham Village. These have also been made available online via the Parish website. The website and Facebook remain our primary means of communication with residents in a timely manner, but we still feel it important to deliver a physical newsletter throughout the year.

In conclusion I feel that it has been another successful and productive year for the Parish Council and I would just like to encourage everyone to come along to "Party in the Park 2" in July.