

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO OUTSEATS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING **FINANCIAL YEAR 2011-2012**

This report was given to the Annual Parish Meeting by the Chairman, Jane Marsden, on 30th April 2012.

Parish Council Activities

I would like to express my appreciation to the Councillors and Clerk who have worked hard for the benefit of the community and I would also like to thank the County and District Councillors and the Police for their reports and support. The Parish Council held meetings every month last year, apart from August and December. There was also a Finance Committee meeting in November.

During the year, Councillors have represented the Parish Council on a number of committees and other meetings including: Recreation (which covers the Swimming Pool as well as the Playing Field), Joint Transport, Village Website, Village Centre Group, Village Toilets, Village Plan, Memorial Hall, Churchyard, Church Charities, Burial Ground, Swimming Pool Fundraising, Stanage Forum, Environment Group, Allotments Group, Gala and Lafarge Liaison. We have also sent a representative to each meeting of Hathersage Parish Council. Councillors have attended several discussion meetings as well, including those held by the Peak Park Parishes Forum, Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA), Derbyshire County Council (DCC), Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC), Bakewell Area Community Watch, Sheffield Moors Partnership and the Association of Hope Valley Parish Councils.

Council has given consideration to several consultation documents received during the year, including the PDNPA's Management Plan and its Statement of Community Involvement; Defra's Consultation on the Governance of National Parks; DCC's Policy on Motorised Vehicle Use in the Countryside, its Policy on Part-Night Street Lighting, its Winter Service Scheme, its Policy on Gritting Roads and its Waste Plan; the NHS's consultation on the future of stand-alone maternity units in Buxton and Darley Dale and Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service's Budget Consultation. The PDNPA has also consulted Council on ten planning applications this year; our policy of informing neighbours of the application and carrying out a site visit where necessary, before making recommendations, has been complied with on each occasion.

We have kept residents informed of our activities by displaying Council Minutes on the noticeboard at the junction of Jagers and Coggers Lanes and producing newsletters during the year, which are delivered to residents' homes or by email where appropriate. The information on the noticeboard is also available to everyone electronically at www.hathersage-outseats.org.uk.

Two Councillors have been trained in "Law and Good Practice for Parish Councils" in the past year and the Clerk attended a Training Day arranged by the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.

Local Council Elections

I am pleased to report that, following the Local Council Elections in May, all Outseats' Councillors were retained and that there has been no change in the Council.

Finance

Council's precept for the year ending 31 March 2012 was £12,048 and the planned total expenditure was £13,102. The biggest payments this year have been contributions to Hathersage Parish Council of £3,150 towards the running costs of the Swimming Pool, £1,450 towards the cost of employing the village caretaker, £1,094 towards replacement playpark on the Playing Field and a further £588 towards the running costs of the Playing Field. Staff costs accounted for £2,091, with other running costs (insurance, room hire, audit charges, travel and expenses, newsletter costs, website, etc) amounting to £1,273. Other significant costs included £438 for grass cutting in the Parish and keeping the Bund Wall tidy, subscriptions totalling £314, a payment to Derbyshire Dales District Council for uncontested election expenses of £219 and £240 for the purchase of grit salt. Donations made by the Council include £260 towards Churchyard maintenance, £150 towards repairs to the church clock, £400 to Bakewell & Eyam Community Transport and £50 to the Luncheon Centre.

For the financial year beginning on 1 April 2012, we have set a precept of £12,672, with the Council's total budget for the year set at £13,047. The Council have endeavoured to keep this increase as small as possible and have reduced costs where it can. For example, the Council has reduced the amount it pays each year for grass cutting, clearance of footpaths and other tidying in the Parish. In future, this will only be done 3 times each year, rather than 5 times. We hope that residents will understand that we have had to be prudent at present and hope that we can fully fund additional areas as the economic climate improves.

Hathersage Parish Council

I am very pleased to report that good progress has been made during the year to enhance our relationship with Hathersage Parish Council. Not unsurprisingly, in a community such as Hathersage, where 2 parish councils cover the same village, most of the facilities and amenities are joint. All these facilities are in the centre of the village, which means that they fall within the Parish of Hathersage. This means that almost half the budget of OPC is paid directly to HPC, for the upkeep of these joint facilities, so we have been working with HPC to ensure that there is sufficient representation on joint committees to enable OPC to demonstrate that we are properly monitoring and influencing the expenditure of our electors' funds. Following these discussions, there will now be an annual meeting between the two councils, OPC will have an increased representation on the Recreation Committee (where much of the spending is concentrated), and we are also in the process of establishing a new "Joint Committee on Mutual Interests", where other areas of joint expenditure (for example, the village caretaker and the village centre) will be discussed. This committee will also have a longer term goal of investigating the possibility of having one parish council to cover the whole community of Hathersage in the future.

Snow and Ice Clearance

This is another area where significant progress has been made during the past year, although sadly some frustrations still remain. We started the council year with the hope that we could establish some kind of organised clearance of ice and snow in the Parish – unfortunately, the advice of our insurers has been that we cannot do this without incurring significant additional risks and costs. Therefore, we have done everything we can to support the independent contributions of residents to clear snow and ice; many residents do this (and have done this for years) and we are very grateful for the sterling work that they do.

Over the summer, the Council were involved in a lengthy correspondence with Derbyshire County Councillors, our MP, the Department of Transport and our insurers to try to find some way of providing a more organised clearance of snow and ice. Sadly, we received little more than platitudes from each of them (other than from our insurers, who did their best). Therefore, the Council have taken all the steps that we are allowed to take – arranging for snow ploughing of local roads in extreme bad weather, clarifying exactly when major roads in and out of the village will be ploughed and gritted, the completion of various documents recommended by our insurers, enhancing the advice to residents on how to clear snow and ice safely and effectively, the purchase of a small supply of grit salt in case DCC fail again to supply the grit during sustained bad weather, registering the Clerk as a DCC "Snow Warden" and so forth. While the arrangements are still not as all-encompassing as we would like, they are nevertheless a considerable step forward from where we were a few years ago.

Long Causeway and Callow Bank

The Council continues to have concerns regarding the use of 4x4s, trail bikes and other motorised vehicles on Long Causeway, the deleterious effect that they are having on its irreplaceable archaeology and the danger and unpleasantness that they create for other users of the track. We have highlighted this issue in many ways during the year and I would also like to thank the many residents who have taken action in support of this cause. I am pleased to note that Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) have reviewed their policy on motorised vehicles in the Park; this new policy has been welcomed by many who were previously critical of PDNPA's stance on this issue and it is seen as being more sympathetic to those with concerns regarding conservation. I would also like to thank Tony Favell, the Chairman of the Park, who visited our Parish Council meeting in January and discussed the issues on Long Causeway with us at length. Mr Favell thanked us for raising some important issues and said they would be given

full consideration by PDNPA. Nevertheless, the time for Long Causeway is running out – unless action to stop motorised usage of the track is taken soon, there may be nothing left to save. Furthermore, the recent revision of Derbyshire County Council's Policy on Motorised Vehicle Usage in the Countryside leaves much to be desired.

In recent months, the Council have also been active in trying to prevent Derbyshire County Council (DCC) from undertaking works on the track at Callow Bank. DCC seem to believe that this track, which is only about four feet wide in places, is used regularly by motorised vehicles and should hence be maintained to a standard suitable for such vehicles. The Council has provided evidence that this is not the case and that the track should be designated a bridleway and only be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Currently, DCC are reviewing their position. We hope that they do not unnecessarily and inappropriately spend money on this track, particularly at a time when they are cutting back expenditure in so many areas.

Swimming Pool

This has been a good year for the Swimming Pool. The new fibreglass lining was fitted on time and has been well received by the majority of pool users and the Pool celebrated its 75th Anniversary in great style. A longer term Business Plan for the Pool was completed with the financial assistance of PDNPA and is now starting to be implemented; exciting plans for how to redevelop the Solarium are also under way.

Nevertheless, there will always be additional issues relating to keeping the Pool running in the way we would all like it to be. In the next few years extensive refurbishment/replacement of the plant and filtration system will be required and finding the funding for this is going to require considerable time, effort and resourcefulness. Furthermore, Government cuts may threaten the grants that the Pool currently receives, so alternative ways of finding funding may be required. I am therefore happy to note that a new Pool Fundraising Committee has been set up during the year (with significant support from Outseats Parish Council) and also that the overall committee structure supporting the Pool is currently under review – hopefully we can leverage all of the skills that exist in the village to get the very best we can for the Pool in future.

Hathersage Youth Club

As the council year comes to an end, we are concerned at Derbyshire County Council's proposed closure of Hathersage Youth Club. We regard this as a valuable and cost effective service and have been in discussion with various interested parties, including DCC's Cabinet Member for Young People, to try to reverse this decision. While the situation looks bleak, we are doing all we can to try to find an alternative solution that will benefit all parties.

Village Centre and Village Toilets

During the year we have participated in the plans for redeveloping the village centre that are being drawn up by Hathersage Village Centre Group (HVCG). We think they now represent a good improvement. We have also been included in some of the discussions with Derbyshire Dales District Council regarding the toilets in the village centre. Given the cuts from central government, DDDC simply cannot afford to fund these toilets in full in the next few years. Therefore, in conjunction with Hathersage Parish Council, we are currently investigating whether we can part-fund the toilet block in the short term (perhaps we will also need to reduce the amount of facilities provided). In the longer term, we support HVCG's plan to include a smaller toilet block in the village centre, probably with a maximum of 3 cubicles. This should be sufficient for the village, without imposing so great a financial burden, since it seems unlikely that DDDC will ever wish to resume funding the toilets at their current level.

Improved Train Service

The Council would like to congratulate Hope Valley Rail Users' Group on their success in arranging a new evening rush hour train each way from Manchester and Sheffield. This was the result of many years of effort by many volunteers and is thought to be the first change to the timetable for over 20 years. We

were also very happy to assist HVRUG in their survey on rail usage that was delivered to all households in the Hope Valley; this seems to have had a very substantial response and I am told that the results look very promising. We offer HVRUG our continued support in their efforts to enhance the train service from Hathersage Station.

Vehicle Speeds in the Village

Outseats Parish Council send three representatives to the Joint Transport Committee (JTC). This year, the JTC have focused on the speed limits for cars approaching the village on the Castleton Road; the current 30mph zone starts on a blind bend just as traffic arrives at the first houses in the village and this seems dangerous compared to other villages, where there is a 40mph "buffer zone" to calm traffic. Negotiations with the police are ongoing at the moment.

One way that the whole village could help the police would be if local residents volunteered to help with the speed watch in the village. This only requires volunteers to give an hour of their time once or twice a month and full training is given. Furthermore, the volunteers only have to note down the speed of cars, the police then take forward any actions required. These speed watches had a measurable effect on speeding in the village last year, but the police have had to suspend them as they have insufficient volunteers at present. Anyone interested should contact the police (PCSO Anthony Boswell) on 101 or contact the Clerk or a Councillor.

Village Website

While the village website (www.hathersage-outseats.org.uk) is now fully established as a "one-stop shop" for all matters relating to the Parish Council, it has still not fully developed into the wider resource for the whole village that we had hoped it would become. We are looking at whether the website can become the first place people go to look to find out what's happening in the village and thus increase its popularity and usefulness. With this in mind, we have recently asked John Dalton, a resident of Outseats, to take on a new role as the coordinator of the parts of the website that do not directly relate to the parish councils and I would like to thank him for taking this on. I hope that, over the next year, we will see good progress in the "What's On" section of the website and that everyone will use it more and more.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee

I am pleased to note that preparations are already well under way to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on 3-4 June. While the exact details are still being agreed, it is clear that there will be a church service in the morning of Sunday 3 June, followed by the Big Jubilee Picnic Lunch, where everyone in the village will be invited to bring a picnic to the Playing Field, where bands will be playing and events organised. On Monday 4 June, we will have one of the 2,012 beacons that will be lit across the country to celebrate the Jubilee; we also hope to hold a firework display that night if suitable donations can be obtained. There will also be a Coffee Morning on the morning of 4 June, for those that can remember the Coronation. Anyone who can help with the celebrations in any way is welcome to contact me or our Clerk.

School Governors

During the year, Mrs Jo Wood has agreed to be the Council's representative on the School Governors for another 4 years. I would like to thank her for taking on this role again and also for all the work that she has put in during the past few years to help the school. I would also like to congratulate everyone at the school for its recent very successful Ofsted report.

Parish Council Meetings

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that an open forum is held at the start of each Council Meeting for members of the public to raise any matters of concern. The Council welcome attendance by all our residents. The dates and locations of all Parish Council meetings can be found on the village website.