

Chairman's Annual Parish Council Report April 2024

As Chair of Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council (ODAPC) for the last year it is my task to provide the Annual Parish Report for the first year of this new, four-year, Term of Office.

Sadly, because of lack of interest in Parishioners wanting to put up for election, the term began with ODAPC losing its Power of Competency. This is a prestigious position, never held by ODAPC before, gained by the hard work and commitment of our Parish Manager and lost, unfortunately, because there were not enough 'elected' councillors on the new council to retain this status. 'Elected' councillors are those who actually put their names forward for election through the proper process. There were five such people and the minimum required number is six. There is no need for a 'contested' election unless the names put forward exceed eight. Ideally a 'healthy' parish council needs a full, 'contested' election every four years plus a good proportion of Parishioners voting. Sadly, we still cannot regain our Power of Competency until we have a proper, 'elected' council (so not until the next four-year term when, hopefully, a lot more interest will be displayed by Parishioners!)

We cannot stress too often how important it is for **everyone to show interest in what happens in our Parish!**

We were sorry to have a long-standing councillor of ODAPC, Councillor Richard Dyason, pass away in the last year. He will be greatly missed by many, our thoughts are with his family.

After co-opting we now have a full council of eight. We welcome our four, new, co-opted councillors, Cllr. Helen Gravett, Cllr. Amy Hancock-George, Cllr. Stacie Ellison and Cllr. Tina Hawke.

Most councillors have already attended a selection of training courses to keep us up to date on today's requirements, financial regulations, funding available etc. and others have booked in for more throughout the year.

As a council we have tried hard to up our profile and get out and about in the Parish (attending events throughout the Parish and working together with local, Parish groups). We are still finding it a very slow and disheartening process to get Parishioners involved and for us to become 'accepted' but we are **determined** to succeed, no matter how hard it is or how long it takes! We are also attending liaison meetings, North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) and Leicestershire County Council (LCC) events, Police Surgeries etc. to keep us in touch with the 'outside' world.

I will not reiterate the information on the flyer we sent out to every household, in the 3VN a few issues back (and also left in shops, pubs etc. in the Parish). I would like to think you have all read it (If not our Parish Manager could supply you with a copy) and I hope it explained where your Parish precept money goes to, how we have reacted to the feedback that we have received from Parishioners and some of our plans for 2024.

The Parish Manager, or any of your councillors, are always willing to listen to your ideas, questions etc., just get in touch (telephone or email) or come along to a Parish Council meeting.

We have just purchased another defibrillator, to be installed in Acresford in the next couple of weeks and are seeking funding to install a third appliance in Donisthorpe (Hill Street) as soon as possible.

We are in the process of purchasing a second MVAS machine for Donisthorpe. Our thanks go to the Donisthorpe Speedwatch Team whose data collection has helped identify the need for this and the places most suitable for siting one.

Running a Speedwatch group is hard work but can be very beneficial and really good fun (a very good way to get to meet new people too!) Good Luck to the Donisthorpe team who are just embarking on their second year's scheme.

We know that Oakthorpe residents have issues with speeding too and a number have expressed they would like to see a scheme in the village. We councillors are all volunteers and cannot do everything but if anyone is willing to lead such an initiative we can point you in the right direction and will certainly support you.

Work is shortly to begin on updating Oakthorpe Play Area. This has been a long time coming but the end is now in sight. Funding has been obtained from the development on Home Farm and an extra grant has been obtained by ODAPC, we are just awaiting the contractors' start dates.

ODA'POPs' has a monthly walk programmed for 2024 (still waiting for more 'public' interest) We have walked four different routes so far with photos taken, route recorded and 'problems' noted. We must make sure these public footpaths/rights of way are kept open, many of them are historical and too much of our past is already being lost.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Manager, Kelly Grove, for all the hard work she has put in (often in her own time) and her dedication to ODAPC.

Targets that we are working towards, as well as ongoing projects mentioned above, are: -

*The possibility of creating a 'Neighbourhood Plan' (which explained previously would give us more say in the plans NWLDC and developers have for our Parish). **FOR THIS WE WILL NEED PARISHIONERS' INVOLVEMENT!**

*The instigation of an **Annual Parish Meeting (APM)**. This is something which, as a Parish Council, we are obliged to do and have made several attempts to set up but which have been unsuccessful.

There are certain set requirements, but the idea is that The Parish Council 'host and fund' an annual meeting, separate from a Parish Council meeting, **the initiative should come from our Parishioners.**

In a final attempt to get this APM up and running we have booked a room for the event at DMs, Donisthorpe on Monday, September 9th, 2024. You will have received information about it in **this** issue of 3VN. **Please look out for this!** We need to get Parish organisations, groups, businesses etc. involved so intend to present several 'awards' to people living/working in the Parish, nominated by people living/working in the Parish. **FOR THIS WE WILL NEED PARISHIONERS' INVOLVEMENT!**

*Improving our performance and profile by working our way up the **National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Award Scheme.**

* We have now got a programme in place for regular, professional, checks on trees on Parish property so our next step is to set up a 'register' of the trees we are responsible for to make identification of any problems easier. Our aim is to map the trees and give each tree a serial number, so in the future if you see a 'number plaque' appear on a tree you will know why. If you feel there is an issue with a numbered tree then you can report the issue, and number, to us at ODAPC.

Don't forget all Parish Councillors are volunteers. We feel we have been working hard over the last year, so we hope you think that we are making progress, but you are welcome, **anytime**, to share your thoughts or feelings (positive or negative) with us. If you ever need to know **anything**, please ask! Thank you for your time, we hope we see you at some time at one of the events in our Parish or a Parish Council meeting,

WE NEED YOUR INVOLVEMENT!

Mick Warren, Chair, ODAPC 2023-2024