

Great Gransden Parish Council
Chairman's Report – to the Annual Parish Meeting 2024

It has been a quiet year compared to 2022/23 when we lost a queen and gained a king and we settle into normality after Covid which seems such a long time ago now...

Perhaps the biggest change to everybody in the village has been the introduction of the 20mph speed limit which many find frustrating has reduced the average speed in the village when measured by several mph, so definitely a success. Of course many still ignore it but to try and solve this would only be wasted energy and cost. There is simply no disputing that slower is safer where vulnerable road users are concerned especially where there are no paths.

There is the continuing success of the Reading Rooms especially the Café and other events and plans progress for even more community facilities there. It has become an invaluable asset to the village and recognition must be given to all those involved.

Following a period of deterioration during a difficult tenancy we now have a refurbished Reading Room cottage which is currently providing a home for a local family and again thanks must be given for their hard work bringing the cottage up to a good standard.

Some things will never change... the flooding on Waresley Road is the worst I have seen since moving to the village and at times the road is impassable for days if not weeks at times this year. Pot holes are also worse than they ever have been. The community is still lacking a pub despite offers to purchase it at the advertised price but thanks to an increase in other facilities we all at least have plenty of other things to do while the Grade 2 listed Crown and Cushion pub in a conservation area continues to suffer from neglect when it so easily become an asset to the village again.

What else hasn't changed: The woods still close at times but it has been REALLY wet this year, footpaths are still ploughed up and of course there is always dog mess to deal with!

As with last year Huntingdonshire District Council Planning department have still been unable to rise to the challenges presented to them by Dutton Gardens and Mandene Gardens which continue to be the cause of dispute and inconsistency. The Parish Council have presented ideas to them regarding joining the developments and providing a joint recreational area but this alas has gone nowhere despite signs of willingness to help. Even the six foot fencing separating Dutton and Mandene Gardens remains despite being in breach of planning...

However we must not be overly critical of HDC as they face significant challenges going forward with trying to maintain their current level of services with ever decreasing resources and cost pressures.

There has been no significant development over the past 12 months but it is pleasing to see that the Neighbourhood Plan is being supported by HDC when considering planning applications.

We still have challenges ahead with perhaps the Sportsfield providing some of the most significant (after Waresley Road). Adequate facilities for the Football Club and Nursery are still an issue, the pavilion requires improvements and the car park needs to be resurfaced urgently. And that is not to mention the flooding and maintenance of the grassed areas. Thanks goes out to the volunteers that do their best to keep the football pitches usable even stepping in when we had to change contractors for grass cutting.

We still have the delights of dealing with the upcoming A428 works and the inevitable increase in local traffic it will bring although the current preferred route for the Ox-Cams rail link means its impact will hopefully be minimised...

Of course we also have a general election this year and no doubt this will put pressure on communities to provide more housing and having to deal with the consequences.

But we have the summer to look forward to and with new facilities like the Croquet Club we should have no excuses for not enjoying everything Great Gransden has to offer.

As ever I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their input, efforts and commitment over the last 12 months. I would like to say a special thank you to a few people here this evening...

To our clerk Sharon who has stepped up brilliantly to the challenge of bringing some organisation to our natural chaos and continues to do a remarkable job. To Councillor Davis for her work in bringing the playing field enhancements to fruition and obtaining a quite staggering amount of funding to allow it to become reality.

To our Vice chair, Councillor Pett, without whom the role as Chair would quite frankly be impossible.

To all those volunteers who help keep grass cut, litter picked, bins emptied, events organised and defibrillators checked!

Quite simply our volunteers are our biggest community asset.

But the biggest thank you and possibly the saddest for me, is the fact that Richard West, our long standing District Councillor, has decided enough is enough after many years serving the public. We will miss him dearly.

That concludes the Chairman's report.

Thank You