

# Annual Report 2018/19

## from the Chair of Scruton Parish Council

This is my final annual report of my current two-year term of office as Chair of Scruton Parish Council and I am pleased to be able to give an account of another productive year.

As before, I give thanks to the people who serve on the Parish Council with me:

- to current parish councillors – Mike Widmer (Vice Chair), Trevor Howe, Richard O’Neil, and Anthony Wood;
- and especially to Clerk to the Parish Council, Chris Barron for his continued support and efficient administration.

We have worked together well as a team and I am proud to say that the achievements of the last year are a product of that spirit of cooperation and collegueship.

### (1) Achievements & Projects (Current and Future)

#### (a) Village Scene

We have worked with the Village Hall Committee as it led the World War I Commemorations and, as a result, we have a lasting legacy of village improvements.

These include

- a special edition Parish Newsletter – The Wipers Times – that gave an account of the full year’s activities; and special thanks to Stephen Elmer for his partnership in this publishing endeavour
- the refurbished signs at the entrance to the village, now supplemented with signs that acknowledge our Thankful Village Status. In both cases the plinths have been either augmented or re-sited to accommodate the larger signs and we will be creating a hard area around the one on the north side of the village to make it more conspicuous
- new notice boards have ordered to be erected, one in the bus stop which will be a communal board that anyone can post notices on, and the second on the village green near the swing which will be for Parish Council notices such as bye-laws etc.
- an information board sited near the bench in front of St Radegund’s church which will sign post visitors to local attractions and explain our Thankful Village status
- a sum of money for the parish council to hold to pay for the costs of a booklet on the World War I community exhibition.

#### Regular Projects

**Village Green** – our contract with regular grass cutters Walkers remains in place and, though we have had some complaints about the quality of grass cutting and perceived damage to the grass itself, we are satisfied that the overall condition of the green is good. We are particularly pleased with the support we get from the Community Project and local villagers to gather up and dispose of the leaves each winter. Thank you to Richard O’Neil for arranging this.

**Trees** – Trees are a perennial liability and we follow the recommendations of qualified tree surgeons to advise us on the regular maintenance and upkeep of the trees in the village,

especially the historic trees on the green, to keep them safe and beautiful.

**Safety** – our monthly assessments of the green and its features happens keep us confident that we are on top of any issues and fortunately sound financial management has left us with the means to initiate remedial action where it's needed. Councillors take it in turn each month to inspect the condition of bus shelters, bins, benches, signs, noticeboards etc and we invite anyone who spots anything amiss to let the Council know as soon as possible. We have tried to improve the lighting in the snicket between Common Lane and Beech Close but this has proved more complex than at first thought and we can only recommend that people carry torches if they feel that current lighting is inadequate.

**Precept** – For many years running now, we have been able to maintain the precept without needing to increase it despite the many initiatives we have undertaken and the improvements we make. This will continue to be a priority for as long as the Council considers it sustainable.

**Local Bus Services** – we have contributed to consultations and surveys about the importance of maintaining local bus services with the result that our regular service survives with a loyal group of users who are keeping it going for everyone's benefit. 'Use it or lose it' must be engraved on their hearts!

## **(b) Communication & Information**

I would like to thank Chris Barron for ensuring that information on Parish Council activities are made available to everyone in a timely manner. I firmly believe that the Parish Council should be inclusive and accessible to all and we encourage villagers to attend our sessions. We comply with all the requirements of giving notice of meetings, setting and publicising agendas and making minutes and other information readily available. My thanks also go to Stephen Elmer and Richard Zealley for disseminating information via Network Scruton and the Village Website.

I'd also like to thank Richard personally for the support he has given me to get the newsletters out each month. In May I shall produce my 180th newsletter before handing the baton over to Stephen Elmer. It's time for a fresh injection of style and ideas and I'm sure Stephen's ingenuity will not fail us. I must thank Joan & Keith Walker, Val Tait, Jane Meeres, Angela Smith, Gordon McQuillen and Margaret Sharp for distributing the newsletters each month too.

## **(c) Specific Projects**

**Scruton Railway Restoration Project** – Once again I can only express my sincerest admiration for the continued efforts of the volunteer group who are involved in the refurbishment of the station buildings and its environs. They turn out every Wednesday in all weathers. Their endeavours have met with well-documented success in several awards and the continued work with village schools and organisations on the Heritage Education Programme.

**Scruton Station Heritage Educational Project** - I am delighted that Wensleydale Railway has attracted a major award for Leeming Station and other projects on the line some of which have been inspired by and will build on the success of Scruton Station Project. Anthony Wood will continue in Reverend Rigby role, and I will continue to be a member of the Management Committee and Friends of Scruton Station Support Group. I will ensure that the Parish Council is kept apprised of developments because the partnership working between the Council and the Railway has been a major contributor to attracting support and success.

**Waste Recycling** – following a most interesting talk by Tracey Flint of Hambleton District Council we will be organising a village outing to the new state-of-the-art Waste Disposal Centre at Allerton Park. More news about this will be announced in future newsletters and via Network Scruton.

.... And last but not least ...

**Financial Accounts** - As the Parish Council receives financial accounts for the other groups and organisations in the village on a yearly basis, it seems only right that the Parish Council should itself table financial accounts. These are tabled for your interest (but, please note, these will be finalised and presented at the Annual General Meeting next month).

## **(2) Chairmanship of the Parish Council**

After 27 years' continuous service, I am stepping down both as Chair of the Council and a member of it. In accordance with the tradition re-established in 2003 when I first took over as Chair of the Parish Council, my current two-year term finishes in May but I would urge incoming councillors to observe this practice as it rotates the chairmanship of the Council without fear-or-favour and permits injection of fresh ideas and new styles to operate for a time-agreed period.

Along with my own resignation comes Anthony Wood's and Richard O'Neil's and I would like to thank them both for their chairmanship of the Parish Council in years past and for all the time and energy they have given to the village as councillors over the many years they've served.

As a Council we have spent much time consolidating the work of the Parish Council and there is a lot of remaining experience to draw on, including my own if sought, but I am delighted to say that the outcome of the call for nominees to become new members has attracted a whole clutch of new interest, people who will bring a young family perspective and the freshness of ideas brought in from elsewhere. My last task as a Councillor will be to complete the updating of our Standing Orders so that each of the new councillors can have a copy in paper version and electronically.

We have achieved a lot in the time I have been on the Council, and I would like to thank everyone for their support which I hope will continue to the new Parish Council in May, and to hope that you have equally good years in the years to come.

**Janet Crampton**  
**Chair of Scruton Parish Council**  
**12th April 2019**