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Chairman's Report 15th May 2018

We ended last year without a Chairman as Mick Tetley had been forced, through illness, to resign in February 2017 and the helm had been taken temporarily by our Vice Chairman, John Metcalfe. Mick had captained the ship for several years and I would first like to pay tribute to him for doing so - through some rough patches at times and always with practicality and a wry sense of humour!

I was handed the tiller mainly in order to help pilot us through some legal waves which were on the horizon, some of which are referred to further below. I have had great support from our other five Councillors all of whom have contributed substantially with an invaluable and complementary range of knowledge and skills. For most of the year we have been two short on our full complement of eight; it has been disappointing not to be able to recruit anyone else, particularly of younger vintage - but towards the end of the year we were very pleased to welcome back a rejuvenated (?) Mick Tetley (and I refrain from any comparison with the proverbial penny).

As well as being a challenging experience for me, I think it has been a year of useful consolidation and progress, during which some of the main features, roughly in chronological order, have been the following:

- We have dealt with a number of significant planning applications but the only one which I will mention specifically was that for the **School's drop-off area and footpath proposals**, where we became actively involved in helping the School to overcome some problems and secure outline planning approval; these proposals are designed to alleviate the traffic and child risk issues outside school at start and finish times and we hope the School will now be able to progress them.
- We have a **new Website** which went live in July - developed with professional assistance and drawing heavily upon our previous website; this was necessitated, together with several new or revised legal documents, in order to comply with recent "Transparency Code" and other regulations; here I would particularly thank our Clerk, Patricia Rosthorn, who not only put in considerable time on this but also put up with my combination of legalistic requirements and IT ignorance - and she has now mastered the essential day-to-day updating and running of the website; we are rather proud of it.
- Our Parish magazine, **The Spout**, had been designed and published most ably over the last 10 years by our Borough Councillor, James Starkie, and it was a potential set-back when he decided that he would have to give this up - but Margaret Ingham and Cllr Lucy Willighan have taken it on and done a great job with it over the year; thanks to both of them and also to James.

- After a two-year saga, we at last secured a satisfactory **reinstatement of the Clovercroft storage site** on the upper park field by the developers; unfortunately, it then became necessary to pursue court proceedings in order to recover from them a reasonable sum in compensation for rent and loss of use over the period, which was a somewhat sad end to what had otherwise been a good relationship; the park now looks decent again.
- We again entered the **Best Kept Village Competition** where, having won in 2015, we were put in the “Champions” Class and achieved a creditable sixth place; the real purpose was to maintain and improve the look of the village; we held a Clean-Up Day which was quite well supported; all of our 13 benches around the village, the park gate and parts of the bus shelters were re-stained or painted along with several of the centre-village street signs.
- We held our traditional **Seniors’ Christmas Party** which was as successful and popular as ever; thanks in particular to our general factotum (!), Cllr John Hammond, for organising this, assisted by Cllr Lucy Willighan.
- We have started to tackle, via our invaluable Lengthsman, the **drainage problems** on the park and football fields; this is a substantial and ongoing project, probably in three sections, but we have already seen the worst of the problem on the football field considerably alleviated.
- We have had to find, in a hurry, a **new grass-cutting contractor** when we learned that our previous contractor would not be available any longer; we are indebted to Brian Sutcliffe for weighing in with his expertise to prepare plans and seek tenders in the short time which was available.
- We have just completed the installation of a fine new **Community Notice Board** together with a flagged plinth area to accommodate that and Mary’s Bench at Kiln Hill; this was initiated by the Village Events Committee, who came up with the proposal and a substantial contribution, then supplemented by our obtaining a grant from Pendle Council; thanks particularly to Cllrs. John Metcalfe and David Forrest for organising and putting this project into effect - it appears to have been well received by residents.

On looking through the above, I see that only one of our Councillors, Terry Butterfield, has not been mentioned - which is ironical because the village would not be what it is without the enormous work he puts into organising the annual May Fair and Exhibition and the Scarecrow Festival, both of which attract huge numbers of people to our village and raise substantial and much-needed funds for the village institutions; Terry is also our representative on the Village Hall Committee; thank you, Terry.

Finally I must give an honourable mention to our Borough Councillor, James Starkie, who, as always, has attended our meetings regularly and provided valuable support and guidance (particularly to me) in his own inimitable way. An honourable mention it must be, as he (Higham’s very own home-grown boy), steps up to be Mayor of Pendle in the forthcoming year. Thanks and well done, James!

We look forward to another interesting and hopefully progressive year.

Robin Willoughby

Chairman

Higham with West Close Booth Parish Council