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Chairman's Report - May 2023

This year has been the first “normal” year since the Covid lockdown of 2020-21, followed by the strange year of 2021-22, described in my last year's Report, when we saw a gradual dropping of restrictions and a stuttering return of some activities and progress.

Before I go through this year's other features, I make special mention of **CCTV** which has been one of the most significant, and expensive, projects undertaken for the village in recent years and has been an ongoing matter throughout this year. Last year, I reported that Cllr John Metcalfe had taken over the bogged-down battle to get the poles and electricity supply in place; he must be congratulated on coming to grips with this, cutting a few corners and final success - which meant that the system installation could then go ahead in the hands of designer and installer, Chris Tetley. At the same time we formed a sub-Committee (our Clerk, myself and Cllrs. Metcalfe, Perrin and Whittle) to sort out a wearisome variety of legal and operational requirements and documents in support. After trials over the Winter, the system finally went live in the Spring.

This project has entailed a great deal of work by the above-named and at least two other Councillors (M Tetley and D Forrest) at earlier stages and, although the cost became significantly higher than first estimated (offset in part with some grant funding from Pendle Council), it is hoped that it will all prove worthwhile. Indeed, during the trial period it immediately demonstrated some potential to assist the Police in relation to a break-in in the village. I should also particularly thank Cllr Ian Whittle, whose arrival in the later stages with his IT and project management knowledge has been very helpful - and especially as he has now undertaken the ongoing role of CCTV responsible Councillor.

Other major features of the year, in roughly chronological order, have been:

- The welcome return of the **May Fair**, over 3 days and in slightly varied format - organised brilliantly, as always, by Cllr Terry Butterfield and his team (including puppeteers!), with many local residents involved in staffing, food and helping out. So pleasing, and not so easy, to get it back after a 2-year gap;
- Not long after that, the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations**, with Terry and his team (including our Clerk, Patricia) stepping up again to organise bunting, support and prizes for various street and garden parties, best-decorated house etc; well done all;
- A facelift for the **Pinfold** with a bench, planters a lovely Red-Robin central tree and a Jubilee memorial plaque - all organised by Cllr Jackie Meredith and her husband;
- Improvements to the **Threepenny Bit** – in particular new trellis and replacement of damaged flags - awkward jobs done by our Lengthsman;

- A complete “dismantling overhaul” of the children’s **Zip-Wire** on the park and repair/replacement of some of the other wooden items in the Play Area following the usual annual inspection – all overseen by Cllr Richard Gadd;
- Securing of a small **Biodiversity Grant**, for which Cllr Gadd has drawn up a wildflower planting scheme which we hope to develop in the park;
- Participation again in the **Lancashire Best Kept Village Competition** – still in the Champions’ Class and again resulting in a very good Third Place, plus “Highly Commendeds” for the Community Notice and Interpretation Boards and a top ten heritage feature mention for the Spout – once again organised and overseen by our lady Councillors, Diane Perrin, Jackie Meredith and Lucy Willighan;
- A wonderfully successful return of the **Scarecrow Festival**, after 2 years’ absence, with over 60 village entries and followed up by the **Scarecrow Ball** and prize presentation - Cllr Terry Butterfield and his team to the fore once more!
- Our ever-popular **Seniors’ Christmas Party** organised by Cllrs Lucy Willighan and Jackie Meredith, with some 60 senior citizens in attendance - and particular thanks to Jackie for the lovely table decorations;
- The return of the **Christmas Fair** and **Santa at the Fours** organised by Cllr John Metcalfe and the Village Events Committee - with the usual sell-out of tickets for Santa;
- The tarmacking of **Kiln Hill** up to the Village Hall car park, at a very economic price, done in conjunction with the Village Hall Committee and residents; this has provided a proper disabled access route to the Hall, much improved car park access and an enhanced appearance for the whole area - welcomed generally as a significant village improvement;
- Leading action, coupled with Old Laund Booth Parish Council and representing strong local concerns, in thus far successful opposition to an unsuitable housing development proposal on the former **Roaming Roosters** site within the Greenbelt.

These were the more noticeable or significant features with which Parish Councillors were involved during the year. Some of them are not, of course, the direct responsibility of the Parish Council but one or more of our Councillors, as named, play leading roles in their organisation and deserve recognition and thanks for that. However, in addition, behind the scenes and plodding on (as I put it in one Spout issue), are the less noticeable, regular Council activities and responsibilities which help to keep the Parish ticking: the grass-cutting contract, the safety inspections and reports, the parish magazine, village maintenance issues, village hall support, consideration of planning applications and relevant Borough issues, residents’ concerns, monthly meetings, Area Committee Meetings - I could go on! Parish Councillors freely give a good deal of largely unsung time and attention for the benefit of the community - and I certainly give my thanks to my fellow Parish Councillors who have all done their share.

There have been a few changes to the composition of the Council over the course of the year, which we had started with one vacancy following the departure of David Forrest:

- In the late Summer, Cllr Lucy Willighan took a short break and we were glad to welcome her back;

- In September, we were very pleased to be joined by Cllr Ian Whittle, whose talents I have already referred to above and who in addition is part of the Village Hall Committee, so has also become our Council representative on that;
- In December, Cllr (and Vice-Chair) Diane Perrin sadly had to step down due to personal circumstances; in just over 2 years, she had become a very active and valued member and we were extremely sorry to lose her;
- In January, however, we saw the Third Coming of a re-invigorated (or should it be re-incarnated?) Mike Tetley, our former Councillor and Chairman, whose enormous experience and local knowledge is invaluable.

Finally, if I might be permitted on this occasion, a personal word. Having been on the Council for 10+ years, 6 of them as Chairman or Vice-Chairman, I decided not to seek re-election this year as (at approaching 78 and unlike certain American leaders) I felt that age, and some increasing sense of weariness, are against me and I should not hold myself out as available for another 4 years. With hindsight, I wish that I had become involved sooner and had had a bit more time on the Council in my earlier years. I make that comment in the hope that it might prompt other, perhaps younger, residents to think about it and come forward if the opportunity arises. I believe that it is a very worthwhile way to serve the community and help our Parish continue to be the rather special place that it is in which to live.

Were it not for its recent associations, I might have been inclined to say *hasta la vista* ! Instead, just best wishes,

Robin