

Keyworth Parish Council

CHAIR'S REPORT 2021/22 Plans/Priorities for 2022/23

Foreword by Cllr Tamsin Armour, Chair of Keyworth Parish Council

In my report from 2019/20 I wondered whether COVID-19 would blow over in a matter of weeks or whether it would be something that changes our lives forever. As we emerged from the various COVID-19 restrictions and started to return to something like business as usual, it became clear that COVID-19 is with us for the long-term and that we must try to live with it. As a Parish Council, we have resumed in-person meetings, albeit using the Village Hall and Centenary Lounge, rather than the smaller Feignies Room. Bookings have started to recover, as activities recommenced and we have even been able to hold a number of events, most recently a fabulous concert in aid of the people of Ukraine.

For many the pandemic, plus other events have changed their circumstances. Support for those in need, via foodbanks, mental health awareness, sport, exercise, and other activities continues to increase along with demand. These initiatives and programmes would not be possible without the dedication of the organisers, often volunteers, and once again I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive 'Thank you' on behalf of myself and the Parish Council, to all those who have given their time and energy to continue to help others. You are amazing and Keyworth is a safer and better place to live thanks to your wonderful teamwork. I am hoping that we will soon see a return of our regular PC Reception, so that we can thank you all in person.

Last year finally saw the long-awaited completion of the Peace Garden on the Rectory Field. The idea originally came from the Parish Council, with early involvement of the Royal British Legion. It was conceived, designed, and built by locals, for all to enjoy. Completion was originally aimed for 2014 and was brought to fruition, via several design iterations, by a small KPC working group in conjunction with Keyworth Environment Group, Keyworth Parochial Church Council, Keyworth Gardening Association, Keyworth Conservation Area Advisory Group, by local company Branch & Bloom. Nottinghamshire County Council and Keyworth Parish Council funded the project. The garden was blessed by the Rector, Father Tom Meyrick, on Remembrance Sunday. It has three benches, commemorating the two World Wars and those who gave their lives. It brings colour, warmth and a place for peaceful reflection to the corner of the Rectory Field, nearest to the Memorial Gates. We hope it will be enjoyed for many years to come.

A second project was also completed, namely the extension of the Skatepark on Platt Lane. This apparently makes our skate park the best around. Much of the credit for this excellent project goes to Jason Jackson, with dedicated help and support from the Skatepark working group, in particular Tony Wells, and from our Financial Officer, Emma Tillyard, who oversaw the various contracts and funding bids, without which it could never have happened.

Finally, I received a number of letters and requests and my favourite from the last year was, without doubt, a charming letter that I received from a member of the Keyworth Brownies, who was completing their 'Influence' badge. The letter contained a plea for an additional 'dog poop bin'. Clearly from someone who appreciates their environment. I am pleased to report that I was successfully influenced, and a new bin is now standing on Lings Lane at the junction with Wolds Lane.

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Council Members

- The current members of council are: Tamsin Armour (Chair), Tony Wells (Vice-Chair). Tom Atack, Geoff Baker, Ian Bell, Mary Butler, David Clarke, Kevin Fitzgerald, Tony Grice, Samantha Kaye, Chris Kemp, Kev Lowe, Kath Oakley, Shelley Millband, Chris Takel, Matthew Tuttey. Following the resignation of Brian Watts, in June 2021, Michael Moncrieff was co-opted to council in September 2021.

Council Staff

- The Council currently employs six part-time staff including the Clerk to the Council Michelle Law who took over the role in October 2021 following the previous Clerk Emma Tillyard, taking on the role of Responsible Finance Officer. The council also employs a Clerical Officer, a Facilities Manager, Cleaner and Handyman. The total basic hours worked by these staff equates to the hours worked by three full time staff.

Council Facilities

- The Council owns, or is responsible for:
 - The Village Hall complex – including the Village Hall, Centenary Lounge and Feignies Room
 - Rectory field and the Peace Garden
 - Keyworth Activity Park
 - Rectory field Pavilion and former Changing Rooms (occupied by Keyworth Table Tennis Club and Keyvolution/Abundance respectively)
 - Memorial Gates
 - Wysall Lane Burial Ground
 - Nottingham Road Play Area (leased from the Equals Trust and Nottinghamshire County Council)
 - Platt Lane Skatepark (leased from UK Research & Innovation)
 - Keyworth Meadow (managed by the Nature Reserve Management Group)
 - Keyworth Bowls Club – clubhouse and green (managed by the club)
 - Keyworth Tennis Club – clubhouse and courts (managed by the club)

Village Hall Complex

- The Village Hall is being hired on regular basis by both new and old customers; the levels of hire are slowly starting to reach those of pre-pandemic levels.
- The bar area of the Feignies room is still hosting the local Food bank.
- The Council's Finance committee agreed to increase in the hire fees for the Village Hall complex in 2022/23 by 3%, this is after they had been frozen for the previous year.

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Nottingham Road Play Area, Rectory Field, Wysall Lane Burial Ground, Activity Park, Skate Park

- There has been some new play equipment installed in the Nottingham Road play area along with some of the existing equipment being refurbished. All of the play areas continue to be proactively checked and maintained by the Parish Council's Facilities Manager with repairs carried out as needed.
- The Table Tennis table on the Rectory Field has had a new net installed which is a metal barrier, it is hoped this will make it a more longer lasting durable structure.
- This year a project has been undertaken to improve and extend the Skatepark on Platt Lane. Funding was obtained from various sources and a new design Skatepark was built. The work for the new Skatepark was started at the end of February 2022 and was completed by the start of April 2022. An official opening of the Skatepark will be organised, to which the local community and the funding organisations will be invited. The new Skatepark is currently being well used and seems to be appealing to many members of the local community as well as those from further afield.
- The Council's Finance committee agreed to increase the burial ground fees by 3%, after freezing them for the previous year. Even with the increase the fees are still some of the lowest in the area.

Memorial Gates

- The paving in front of the memorial gates has been cleaned up and the words 'Lest we forget' have been replaced with a darker brick so the words stand out more. The remaining bricks around the words have also been cleaned and any broken ones replaced.
- The Peace Garden near the memorial gates has now been finished and a plaque installed. The garden will be maintained on a regular basis by a local company Branch & Bloom.

Support for Local Organisations

- **The Council continued in 2021/22 to provide financial assistance to:**
 - Platt Lane Joint Management Committee (the Council has a one-third financial interest in the facilities at Platt Lane)
 - Keyworth & District Community Concern
 - Keyworth Conservation Area Advisory Group
 - Keyworth PCC (re maintenance and repair of church clock)

Donations were also made to:

- Keyworth Community Projects
- RHR Cadet Corps of Drums
- The Keyworth Quiz

The Council makes its premises available at concessionary rates, and in many cases free of charge, for various community events and services such as:

The Food Bank, Keyworth Advice Centre, Thursday coffee morning; Conservation Group; Keyworth Show; Fun on the Field; Christmas Charity Fair; Remembrance Sunday; Christmas Fair & Christmas Dinner, the Bereavement Support Group and the Keyworth and District Community Concern.

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Parish Council Events/Seasonal Activities

- During the past twelve months, the Council has organised and/or sponsored the following events and activities:
 - Both Winter and Summer Hanging Baskets to decorate the village all year round.
 - Christmas trees to decorate shops and businesses, as well as lights on the trees in the church yard.
 - The Parish Council has planted two new trees on the Rectory field as part of the Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy. There will also be other trees distributed around the village which will add to the Green Canopy.
 - A village litter pick
 - Cllr Armour represented the Parish Council at the Remembrance Sunday Event held on the Rectory Field at the Memorial Gates along with representatives from Rushcliffe Borough Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Churches in Keyworth and the Royal British Legion. Memorial wreaths were laid at the gates.

Publicity/Information

- The Council website (www.keyworthparishcouncil.org) is updated regularly.
- We also keep residents informed through news items and the Keyworth Diary (in the Keyworth News), distribution of which, to all households in Keyworth, is financed by the Council.
- A new Jubilee Edition of the Keyworth Guide is being issued this year, local groups and businesses have been encouraged to get in touch if they would like to be included.

Finance

- At the time of writing, the Council's accounts for 2021/22 have not yet been finalised. The figures to hand suggest that an apparent budget deficit of around £10,000 is likely due to expenditure on the Skatepark extension. The grant monies to cover this expenditure are due in in the 2022/23 financial year and will reverse the apparent deficit. Expenditure was made on a new defibrillator outside the library, covered by funds which had come from the community, and the long-awaited Peace Garden was created, the cost of which is also covered by funds from an earmarked reserve.
- Income from hire of the village hall complex facilities was around 200% higher than budgeted, due to COVID restrictions being lifted sooner than expected.
- The Council reviewed its reserves policy as usual in January. The level of minimum uncommitted reserves (reserves not set aside to fund specific commitments or long-term development plans) has been maintained at a level appropriate to the COVID crisis. The current uncommitted reserves less the short-term deficit on the skatepark reserve is above this level. It should also be borne in mind that the Council owns, and is responsible for maintaining, fixed assets valued at around £1.8 million, and it follows that it needs to set aside substantial funds for emergency/contingency purposes, the pandemic being a current, although non-tangible, example.
- As for 2022/23, the Council has set its precept at a level resulting in the Parish Council portion of the council tax increasing by 2.7% for a Band D property.

Planning

- The council has held 12 planning meetings, reviewing a total of 88 planning applications in the period and has worked with the community and with Rushcliffe Borough Council to ensure the new housing developments on Platt Lane, north of Bunny Lane, South of Bunny Lane and Nicker Hill are appropriate to the area.

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Other Items

- A new community defibrillator has been installed out of the Library on Church Drive. The funds for purchase and installation have been raised and donated by members of the local community and community groups. This brings the number of defibrillators in the local community provided by the Parish Council to four.
- In the last year the Salutation Inn on main street has been registered as an asset of community value. In the short term this doesn't affect or mean that there will be any change to the Salutation, in the long term this registration means that if in the future the current owners would like to sell the Salutation, then the Parish Council and the local community have a right to bid which gives them six months to be able to raise the funds before the pub can go to the open market.

Plans and Priorities for 2022/23

In my view, the Parish Council's most important priorities in **2022/23** will be:

- To begin to look to the future and start to capitalise on the enhanced sense of community that COVID-19 has created. Councillors are keen to support and grow this positive ethos and to develop and long-term plan for Future Keyworth, helping groups, societies, our schools and facilities to form a cohesive set of activities and opportunities, with something for everyone. I am keen to see all Councillors have the opportunity to get involved and really make a difference.
- To continue to support those in need across Keyworth. As we emerge from the majority of the COVID-19 measures we find a world in which many have suffered, and many continue to struggle. This will include continuing to ensure food and other essentials are available, finding ways to support those in financial hardship, and ensuring mental health guidance and support are accessible to all those who may need it.
- To continue to work with sports leaders, schools, clubs and other local groups, to create an inclusive and accessible activity and wellbeing framework, linking Parish Council facilities with developments at Platt Lane, and other venues, providing sports, exercise and recreational opportunities for all.
- To work with residents and local groups to continue to enhance our environment, including planting more trees and hedgerows, finding ways to enhance and protect the wildlife, be it hedgehogs, birds, bees, butterflies, or my favourite, ladybirds, in and around the village.
- To investigate the possibility of extending neighbouring footpaths, enhancing the village centre(s), working with developers and using CIL funds to improve our environment whilst supporting businesses to succeed.

Tamsin Armour

Chair of Keyworth Parish Council

16 April 2022