

Chairman's address 2018

I would like to start by thanking my fellow councillors and clerk for their support. I am particularly indebted to Jane for keeping me straight on procedural issues, and I am grateful to councillors who have volunteered for attending other meetings or working on other issues affecting the parish.

There have been a couple of changes during the past year. John Seddon resigned in May, and Marion Cheesbrough was co-opted to replace him. Richard Park resigned in November, and Rob Caddick was co-opted to replace him. I would like to thank John and Richard for their work, and welcome Marion and Rob. I should also mention Vernon Wrigley, who died recently, and was a chairman and member of this council for many years.

I would also like to thank District Councillor Annie Rawlinson and County Councillor Jim Bland for their attendance at our meetings.

As usual, most of the Council's work was fairly mundane, road safety, flooding, planning applications, parish land, endless correspondence from official bodies, etc, with little in the way of visible results.

Some positive progress has been made on implementing the Community Led Plan, and a working group has been set up to handle this, of which you will hear more later. At the moment the working group consists entirely of Parish Councillors, and it would be good if members of the public would join in to spread the load and give a different perspective.

Earlier in the year, concern was expressed about the potential loss of access to "Ena's Lane" following the sale of the lane and the adjoining barn. I am pleased to report that the Council was able to register a right of way over the lane to enable continuing access to the Parish Land beyond.

The most controversial aspect of the Council's work continued to be the proposal for a development of 8 houses on the site next to the village hall. This was originally presented as a project by and for the people of Helsington, but now increasingly looks like something imposed on the village, against the wishes of local people, by organisations which have little or no involvement in the village or even the parish. As a result, neighbours of the project have had to endure 7 years of uncertainty, which must be very distressing for them. The Parish Council has little influence over the final outcome, but I feel that it is our duty at least to represent their point of view. In recent weeks councillors have held meetings with representatives of HCLT and SLDC, and will continue to do so, in an attempt to resolve the situation.

To end on a couple of positive achievements, although I haven't been involved in it myself, I understand the Community Orchard has been a great success, so thanks to Wendy Prescott and her team for that. You may also recall that in February I circulated details of the "Great British Spring Clean" organised by "Keep Britain Tidy". This was to have taken place in early March, but was postponed due to the snow. However, Cllr Savasi organised a very successful litter-pick last weekend, so thanks to her and to all who took part for what was, in this case at least, a visible result.