

Chairman's Report – Annual Parish Meeting 12th May 2008

Great Addington Parish Council has continued to meet each month throughout the 2007/8 year. The main business of the Council concerns:-

- Street lighting
- Maintenance of the "Closed Churchyard"
- Support for Local Organisations
 - Addington's Playing Field
 - Memorial Hall
 - East Northants Concessionary Travel
 - East Northants Citizens' Advice Bureau
 - Air Ambulance Service
 - Village Youth Group
- Consultation on Planning Matters at ENC and NCC levels

Local representatives Cllr Dudley Hughes (ENC) and Cllr Andrew Langley (NCC) have regularly attended our meetings and we thank them for their interest and support. The meetings are normally held on the 3rd Monday of the month and are open to the public. On occasions during the past year, members of the public have been vociferous in their objections to a feasibility study into the possible re-siting of the village school to the Addingtons' Playing Field.

Cllr Harry Mayes has been a Parish Council representative on the Addingtons' Playing Field Committee since the field was acquired for the villages. He has now felt it appropriate to resign that role. GAPC would like to record their thanks to Harry for his long and dedicated service. Colin Fry and Kevin Binley will now represent GAPC.

A programme to improve the level of street lighting in Woodford Road has been completed. The total cost of erecting one new light and replacing two old, inefficient units with two more effective units already owned by the Council was £3830.50. The Council were successful in their application to ENC for a grant of £2553.66 towards this cost. Due to a mistake by the contractor, one of the units intended for Woodford Road was attached to the pole at the junction of Lower St/Manor Close. When this was pointed out the contractor chose to leave it in place and fit a new unit in Woodford Road, at no additional cost to GAPC.

The part of All Saints churchyard immediately surrounding the church has been declared "closed". There is no room for more burials in this area. There is a section of churchyard to the rear of the church which remains open for burials. In 1997 responsibility for maintaining the closed churchyard passed from the Parochial Church Council to The Parish Council. This is in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1972. GAPC's responsibilities include maintenance of the churchyard wall. It has been obvious for some time that the wall has bulged and would need attention in due course. During the summer of 2007 the contractor who mows the churchyard grass noticed that a gap had opened up behind the wall along Cranford Road, indicating possible recent movement of the wall due to the pressure of the retained earth. GAPC felt that, in addition to considering a simple repair, we should explore the possibility of rebuilding the wall further back into the churchyard so that the extremely narrow footpath on Cranford Road could be widened. We have held discussions with representatives of the Chancellor of Peterborough Diocese and have been told that the wall cannot be moved because the churchyard is considered to be a medieval burial ground with potential archaeological value. Northants County Council Highways Dept. have advised that the alternative of narrowing the roadway to allow widening of the path is not economically feasible. As a result GAPC have commissioned an architect to write specifications and obtain tenders for repairing the wall on its existing base. The architect has surveyed the entire wall on both Cranford and Woodford Roads. It has been divided into sections according to the degree of repair needed. The scope of work will cover rebuilding or re-pointing, as appropriate. Depending on cost the work will be undertaken in one or more phases. Since taking responsibility for the wall GAPC has built a small reserve fund to cover such work. In addition we will seek financial support from Local Government, charities etc. to minimise the impact on local residents.

GAPC are aware that there is a division of opinion among residents on the possibility of relocating the village school to the Addingtons' Playing Field. The School Governors are currently conducting a feasibility study that may or may not result in them approaching the Playing Field Committee to consider a proposal. GAPC are, together with Little Addington Parish Council, "custodial trustees" of the Addingtons' Playing Field Charity. The sole duty of Custodial Trustees is to hold the deeds of the property on behalf of the residents of the two parishes. They have no responsibility in the running of the charity and should the Management Trustees (The Playing Field Committee) instruct them to dispose of the property in any way they must do so, provided that the disposal is lawful. If GAPC is requested to act in this way we will take legal advice at that time when all relevant facts are known. In the meantime, mindful of our responsibility as a Parish Council we will continue

Chairman's Report – Annual Parish Meeting 12th May 2008

to monitor public opinion and may from time to time advise any interested party of our perception of the “public interest”.

We have recently set up a new website to promote GAPC. The address is www.parish-council.com/greataddington . This site gives us more scope than our previous one, in particular it allows us to make more Council documents such as minutes, agendas and Council procedures available on-line. Aspects of the site that are not being heavily used by visitors are the Discussion Forum and Contact The Council. These pages allow you give us feedback or to ask questions. Why not give it a try? The site is provided to us free of charge on condition that we take advertisements from our provider. If you want your company advertised on our site, please let us know. For a small fee we can upgrade our site and block the provider's adverts. During March 2008 the site had an average of 25 hits per day.

The Parish Precept (the amount GAPC adds to your Council Tax) has been set for 2008/9 at £6650.00. The precepts for 2006/7 and for 2007/8 were £6046.00. The major elements of the increase this year are an anticipation of the cost of repairing the churchyard wall and an increased donation to The Addingtons' Playing Field Committee to help them meet their running expenses. GAPC attempts to limit the precept wherever possible, for example there is a potential to reduce the cost of our Public Liability Insurance during the year 2008/9 and if successful this will help when setting the 2009/10 budget.

GAPC would like to thank the small team of volunteers who compiled, distributed and collated the Parish Plan questionnaire earlier this year. A brief summary has been distributed and the Council await the final report from the team. We are confident that it will help give us some direction for the future. We have already seen that traffic volume/speed and on street parking are issues that need to be addressed. We have begun the process of getting access to Northamptonshire Police Dept's hand held speed gun. If we can show sufficient support from residents we will be able to nominate volunteers for training. They will then report offenders to the Police who will issue warnings to the drivers concerned. If you haven't already signed the “support” list, please see the Clerk. Any ideas you have to tackle the parking issues will be welcomed. Dog faeces on public footpaths is another issue that concerns you. The Council is in the process of clarifying the latest situation with ENC regarding Dog Control Orders that already make it an offence for dogs to foul pavements.

Nick Palmer
Chairman, Great Addington Parish Council
23rd April 2008