

MORTON & HANTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008

The Council year began with an election. Prior to the election three long standing councillors retired. The remaining standing councillors were returned and Charles Friend, Lucy Taylor and Shaun Reynolds were newly elected.

As last year's report was being prepared the Kings Head was badly damaged by fire. A year later the remains are still supported by scaffolding. The council eventually managed to contact a spokesperson at the owners, brewers Charles Wells, and the initial information was that no proper future plans could be made because the matter is in the hands of insurers. However, more recently, prompted no doubt by the council's approach, the owners have been in touch with the local press and now intend to publicise more possible ideas for the property's future.

During the last year the spate of vandalism, which had affected many parts of Morton, hopefully, appears to have died down. The High Street seat was destroyed last year and a replacement has been purchased by the council and put in place by volunteers.

In the 2007 Lincolnshire Best Kept Village Competition and eventually came third in Class III (Large villages/ small towns), with very few adverse comments. An entry has already been made for 2008.

During the year the clerk attained his Certificate in Local Council Administration. South Kesteven District Council, without prior warning or planning, ceased collection of waste bags from the village cemetery. Mick Hare of East Lane had been very helpfully attending to the dustbins at the cemetery and putting out the 'pink' bags for regular collection. However SKDC decided that no further supplies of these special bags would be available and no further collections would be made. The waste is now classed as commercial reuse. The parish Council had no option other than to ask users of the cemetery to take away any waste. At the present time some waste is still being left at the cemetery but it is hoped that the problem will, in time, be solved.

It was decided that repairs were necessary to the play area safe surface and it was arranged that these would be carried out in spring and the cemetery hedge, along Haconby Lane, has been cut down by contractors to a more manageable size. Hanthorpe pond has been cleaned out by volunteers during the winter.

The council continues to receive complaints about the anti social, and illegal, dog-fouling in the village. In addition to regular visits by District Council rangers the council have also notices on the notice-boards and highlighted the matter in newsletters. However some dog owners continue to be irresponsible.

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

Morton & Hanthorpe Parish Council remains one of the few councils in Lincolnshire to hold Quality Status. That status is maintained because the clerk has succeeded, in his own time, to become CiLCA accredited. We owe him a debt of thanks.

Having said that we continue to monitor; whether the Quality Status actually confers any benefit on the village. In the past we have been recipients of a grant of £4000, the only money ever to come into Lincolnshire under this legislation, but subsequent money has not been forthcoming.

What is more important is the quality of village life and that depends as much on the actions of those who live here as it does the Parish Council. The issues of litter and dog fouling, for example, are of our own making and the most effective solutions are of our own making too. It is about accepting responsibility for the state of the village, and not expecting others to tidy up after us.

As I write, the future of the Kings Head still lies in the balance. The Parish Council have, for months, been trying to find out what the situation is. The brewery is now actively exploring options. For the village we can only wait and see, but the Parish Council remains concerned over the scaffolding and its impairment of visibility at the crossroads.

A new problem has arisen at the cemetery. The South Kesteven District Council no longer collect the rubbish, being unprepared to supply either pink bags or wheelie bins. There has been a marked lack of communication over the situation and we remain unhappy and concerned. What contact we have had with the District Council on this matter has been very often contradictory and unhelpful. We continue to seek clarity over the situation but in the meantime we accept that compostable material should somehow be dealt with on site. In this day and age it is unreasonable to expect that to be transported to landfill.

However we appeal for help in dealing with other materials of an artificial nature – cellophane, wire, plastic etc. The easiest way of keeping the cemetery tidy is for people to take those items home with them. Of course, one option would be to ban the placing of artificial flowers in the first place. We do not wish to be so heavy-handed but would appreciate everyone's understanding in this matter.

We recognise the particular problem with the number of wreaths following an interment and we are currently looking at the introduction of specific measures to deal with that. The cemetery is a credit to those who maintain it and to those who tend graves – we wish it to remain so and we appeal for everyone's continuing co-operation.

Finally I wish to express my thanks to all councillors and everyone else who contributed, in so many ways, to making Morton & Hanthorpe a great parish to live in.

David Creasey
Chairman April 2008