



# Gerrards Cross Parish Council

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## APM Chairman's Report

We were all saddened at the loss last May of our Chairman, David Peters. David had been our chairman for two years and was the inspiration behind many of the initiatives the Council has undertaken over the last four years. Due to the vacancy left by David we have been pleased to welcome Mike Lawson, who we have co-opted to the Parish Council.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> this year, we have the Parish Council elections and nominations are currently being accepted for the twelve Gerrards Cross Parish Council seats. This means you will be able to look forward to a new Council in June.

The Government Big Society initiative presents a unique opportunity for the Parish Council to take more control of local issues. Bucks County Council (BCC) is making £250,000 available to volunteer organisations for this and, as a volunteer organisation ourselves, we welcome residents input on any projects they feel are candidates for this.

We very much appreciate the help and support that we get from many of our residents, both formally and informally. Due to the additional work that we will be undertaking, we will be inviting residents to become Associate Parish Councillors. This will be a group of people who will be able to assist us with various working parties (such as the Library), without the need to undertake the full duties and responsibilities of a Parish Councillor.

This year, we felt the need to make some provision for the reduction in services by the County Council. We have therefore cut back on various projects by some £30,000 and made a small increase in our Parish Precept to ensure we have funds in reserve for this.

Everybody was pleased to see the final completion of the building of the Tesco store last November. Although this has caused much controversy, we need to put this unfortunate episode behind us and do our best to restore our village centre. The administration of the £100,000 donation by Tesco is covered in the attached report.

Both the Parish Council and BCC have been inundated with correspondence on the new traffic lights installed on Packhorse Road as part of the Tesco development. At a meeting with the BCC (the Highways Authority), South Bucks District Council (Safety Officer) and representatives from Tesco and Costain, we concluded that the design is fundamentally flawed and raises a number of significant safety issues. We are currently following up on this with both Tesco and BCC as a matter of urgency.

The Council is adamant that our library will remain open. Our working party is putting together the business case for this and is currently awaiting advice from BCC legal. Whatever happens, at least 100 volunteers who can spare half a day a month will be required and we encourage anybody who feels they can help to let us have their details on the forms available at the meeting.

We have successfully opposed the extension of Wapseys Wood landfill site to the end of 2020. This Green Belt site should have been returned to agricultural land and woodland by the year 2000. There is currently a new proposal to reduce this to 2017, which we will also oppose.

The ongoing maintenance of Highways, including cutting back vegetation, cleaning signage etc has been reduced due to BCC cutbacks. The Council is looking forward to receiving a Devolved budget from BCC in April to allow us to administer this work ourselves. We have an arrangement with Amersham Town Council to undertake this work. This does not include highways repairs such as potholes and resurfacing.

We work closely with our Neighbourhood Police and have regular meetings with them to review local issues, including CCTV, speeding, parking, etc. We also participate in the local Police Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG), which is responsible for the new Parking Watch initiative.

The Parish Council enjoys a close working relationship with the Gerrards Cross Community Association. At the Summer Fair on June 18<sup>th</sup>, we are sponsoring the music marquee and the school bands, as well as the bouncy castle. We also support the Youth Club, which will be making changes due to the reduction in funding from the County. As with the library, we will do all we can to keep this going. The Youth Club also desperately requires volunteers and we encourage you to contact the Community Association if you can help.

Under the chairmanship of Peter Banner, the Gerrards Cross Traders Association is working hard to encourage shoppers to the village centre. We fully support this and will be working closely with them to make improvements in the form of hanging baskets, flowers and flags to brighten up the appearance of the centre, as well as other longer term initiatives.

Over the next year, there will be many new responsibilities for the Parish Council. Working with our partner volunteer organisations, with Bucks County Council and South Bucks District Council, there are many new opportunities that we can take advantage of to improve the quality of life for Gerrards Cross residents. We look forward to your support in this.

Cllr. Chris brown