

## Chairman's report

One year ago Oxenhope Parish Council underwent a considerable change after years of stability of members. Four new councillors were elected to replace those members who had retired or were unable to continue so this meant they have had to find their feet quickly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both old and new councillors for their work this last year. Most importantly my thanks have to go to our clerk Elaine Pearson who has continued to offer an excellent service and I can only hope she will be able to continue to do so.

The beginning of 2015/2016 saw the completion of couple of items left over from the previous year. Firstly there was the completion of the Oxenhope – A Pennine Village tourist leaflet and secondly the launch of the guide to the footpaths linking Hebden Bridge to Oxenhope and Haworth. Thanks to Councillor Eastwood the website and Oxenhope on line have been updated and are now more effective; the latter being increasingly used.

The Parish Council agreed to support the work undertaken by local residents to tidy up the Horseshoe Dam and along with other areas in the village such as the Rose Garden and Recreation Ground, have the land registered as Community Assets. The Christmas tree lights were improved this last year but the size of the tree is presenting a serious problem for the future. A possible solution to this issue is now being considered.

This last year has seen numerous concerns raised about drainage issues in the village which cumulated in the Boxing Day floods. Luckily Oxenhope wasn't badly affected but water did enter some properties notably around Yate Lane. Recent road works contributed to the problem by diverting water to the wrong side of the road and the Parish Council has raised this matter with Bradford Council. For the future we must look to ensure Oxenhope is linked in to emergency planning.

The Parish Council agreed to operate a Participatory Budgeting scheme again this year and raised the amount which could be bid for to £2000. Changes to the way the bidding process worked meant a greater participation by villagers. Section 106 money has proved difficult to resolve. The funding earmarked for social housing has proved difficult to use as it is insufficient to purchase a property and no social housing provider is planning to build in Oxenhope. The Parish council therefore resolved to use the money to make Leemingbeck Close more accessible and negotiations are now underway. Negotiations are also taking place to improve the play area.

This last year saw the Parish Council finally resolve to explore the possibility of Neighbourhood Planning following a successful use of Oxenhope Online to ascertain the views of residents. Councillor McManus has agreed to lead on this issue and I'm sure that this is going to be the major project for the village over the next two years.

The Parish Council has made some alterations to the way in which it operates during the course of this last year. Local groups such as the Straw Race, K&WVR and Manorlands have been invited to update the Parish Council on their activities. The Parish Council has abolished planning meetings unless absolutely necessary and to make members of the public more welcome.

Bradford has been making cuts to its budget in response to central government's austerity programme. Those cuts are beginning to be felt by the reduction in services like gritting and grass cutting. We must continue to challenge Bradford so as to ensure Oxenhope receives its fair share of services. Bradford is looking for Parish Councils to take over the running of some services and this will prove to be a challenge in the future.

The Parish Council has over the years spoken up for the people of Oxenhope and we must continue to pursue this role. The next two years are going to be challenging but I am confident that members have the necessary skills to be able to rise to those challenges and ensure Oxenhope receives the best possible services.

Cllr Tony Maw