

Chair's Report 2023

I was interested to see that the Bank Holiday Monday to celebrate the Coronation is being designated the Big Help-Out; intended to “encourage people to try volunteering for themselves and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas.” This is, of course, not a new idea. The entire Parish Council is run by volunteers, who give up vast amounts of time, effort and energy to keep things ticking along, and to try to make our Parish a better place to live.

This includes managing all of the ground maintenance around the village, looking after trees, the cemetery, creating a new cemetery, creating and distributing the Parish newsletter, providing disabled parking bays, bus shelters, applying for grants, organising celebrations as well as attending the regular Parish Meetings.

It also generally includes cleaning toilets, planting trees, mending stuff, sticking up signs and all manner of unpaid tasks – where we receive precious little thanks or recognition. Usually, all we get is grief and derision, particularly if we are perceived to have erred in some way. It isn't just the Parish Council that relies on volunteers giving time and effort to make the Parish a better place.

The Millennium Woods Group, Ash in Bloom, the Ash Biodiversity Group, the Village Hall Trust, the Coronation and Platinum Jubilee Organising Groups, the volunteers who planted hundreds of hedging trees in the new cemetery and those who regularly donate and erect the Village Christmas tree all carry out vital work and crucially save the Parish Council, which means everyone in the Parish, from having to pay a market rate to get these things done.

It is this level of volunteering that helped to allow the Parish Council to freeze its precept for the second year running. This is the element of the Council Tax which is set by the Parish Council to pay for the work that is needed in the Parish. There is no cap on any increase, and many Parish Councils, including some not a million miles away, have used this opportunity to raise their precept by as much as 20% or even 30%.

Freezing our precept for the second year running, means that the amount that every Council Tax payer in the parish, pays into the Parish funds has remained the same for three years – in the face of soaring inflation.

Were it not for the volunteering that already goes on in the Parish, we would have to double, or even triple the amount that is charged.

Cllr Steve Davey

Chair, Ash Parish Council