

DINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL VILLAGE SURVEY April – June 2017

REPORT

In Spring and early summer 2017 Dingley Parish Council [DPC] sought Parishioners' views on Village life and on any changes that they thought could benefit the Community.

DPC would like to thank the 72 households [97 individual adult questionnaires and 16 from young people aged under 17 years] for taking the time and trouble to provide comment and feedback. A compilation of the survey returns can be found on the DPC website at www.dingley-pc.gov.uk but here are the key points and DPC's action plans in response.

WHAT VILLAGERS SAY THEY LIKE ABOUT DINGLEY

Quality of Life: The good news from the Survey is that people like living in Dingley and feel proud to call it home. They like its countryside location and the potential for outdoor activities whilst the proximity to Market Harborough affords rail connection, shops and services. Villagers expressed an appreciation of their own homes and gardens and in the history of the Village, the Church and Dingley Hall and Dingley Park.

Neighbourhood Support: The vast majority of Dingley residents feel safe in the Community and everyone who completed a questionnaire indicated that they had family, friends or neighbours for support if they required it. Most respondents considered there is a strong sense of community and neighbourliness in the Village.

Community Activities: The level of participation and opinion on community social activities was split with half the households enjoying and appreciating events organised by the Village Hall Committee and half who rarely or never attended for various reasons including lack of child care, timing, dislike of the venue or of what's on offer. A couple of people would welcome organised daytime activities.

The Church and its associated activities were also favourably mentioned but there were regrets about the demise of Music at Dingley.

Safety: Dingley is regarded by the Police as a relatively low risk area for crime. Nonetheless 7 of the 72 households reported being a victim in the 12 months preceding the Survey and there were known to be three more incidents during the summer months after the survey had finished. However for the vast majority of villagers the threat is not one that produces any great anxiety or concern.

With nearly everyone consenting to be on the Dingley Neighbourhood Watch membership list we also now have a means of informing most people about any incident or to request people to be extra vigilant.

Services: Most residents are satisfied with the main services provided to the Village [Refuse Collection; Recycling; Utilities; Bridleways]. Also [but not according to some comments to the same degree] with Highway maintenance; Public Footpaths and Broadband.

WHAT VILLAGERS SAY THEY LIKE LEAST ABOUT DINGLEY

Road related problems: The volume and speed of traffic and size of the heavy trucks, the associated dangers and the impact on environment in terms of noise, pollution and the way the village is split by the A427. The poor road surfaces and the state of the verges and drainage.

Bus services/transport: poor level of service; cost of taxis.

Footways: absence of continuous footways throughout the main Village and the poor state of the surface in places. The problem of obstacles – usually vehicular – that impede walkers especially those with children, prams and people with mobility difficulties and which restrict line of sight.

Cycle paths: the absence of cycle paths to surrounding villages and towns.

Appearance of the Village: spoiled in places by littering, fly tipping and the unkempt state of some gardens and houses. The “non-domestic” use of areas surrounding homes.

Lack of a focal point in the Village: no green or central area for gathering.

Lack of facilities and amenities for children and young people: no park, play area or skate park. No “designated” meeting place[s] for young people.

Lack of facilities for adults: No pub or shop. The prohibitions imposed on access to the woods and the Hall Park. Loss of Kennel Fields for village use.

Parking: the lack of parking areas for many Villagers and for the Village Hall and Church. The consequential detrimental use of verges and pavements for parking.

CHANGES VILLAGERS THINK WOULD IMPROVE DINGLEY AND ADDRESS THEIR DISLIKES

- **Traffic Calming measures.** Proposals included seeking a bypass and routing traffic away from Dingley, lower speed limits particularly on the lanes, speed bumps, speed cameras, average speed cameras; enforcement of existing speeds, a pedestrian crossing controlled by lights, quiet road surfacing; banning all large haulage over a specific size apart from farm vehicles; reduced speed limits; chicane.
- **Better Road maintenance and drainage**

DPC response and plan: DPC met with three members of the Northamptonshire Highways Department & our County Councillor in July and during a tour of the Village highlighted the issues raised by Parishioners and the remedial actions that had been suggested. The issues were acknowledged by the Community Liaison Officers and each of the proposed remedies was given due consideration although predictably budget constraints overshadowed measures that might be possible.

➤ DPC was told that as the A427 is a major trunk road many of the traffic calming measures proposed by Villagers such as chicanes, speed bumps [now out of favour], the banning all large haulage vehicles over a specific size could not be adopted.

- Consideration of a pedestrian crossing would depend on the number of users at any given time of the day and Dingley does not have a sufficiently high population to be able to reach the level of foot traffic where a crossing was deemed necessary.
 - DPC was offered advice on how to initiate a request for a by-pass as a long-term solution and this will be looked into by the Parish Council. [Initial indications are that Dingley does not have the volume of traffic along A427 to warrant a major road scheme]
 - The Officers committed to investigate the possibility of using countdown markers to the speed limits. However, DPC was informed that countdowns were only authorised temporarily as part of a Department for Transport study into their effectiveness and the study determined they had little impact and so had not been authorised for ongoing use elsewhere.
 - Following re-opening of the A6 an assessment of any work required as a consequence of the diverted traffic will be undertaken, concentrating along the minor roads where over-running on the verges has been a particular issue rather than A427 itself.
 - Temporary advisory HGV signs on Braybrooke Road and Sutton Lane were installed within a week of the meeting and it was agreed to install plates below the existing permanent signs to warn that they become single track.
 - The Officers agreed to request the installation of a dropped kerb on the corner of Harborough/Braybrooke Roads but indicated that it would be unlikely that the work would be undertaken in the 17-18 financial year as the budget is already allocated. It will however be carried forward to next financial year for consideration.
 - Moss on the pavement at the entrance of Home Close has been reported to Kettering Borough Council with a request that the path be cleared.
 - A request has been made that vegetation along the back of the footways be cut back by the parish enhancement gang and also for them to clear the path up to Braybrooke Road.
 - The loose Anglian Water (AW) inspection cover on the Harborough Road has been reported to the NCC Control Hub, who pass on these reports to AW for their attention. The Officers indicated they could not influence what outcome AW would deem appropriate, nor the timescale for any action, which might be lengthy if it is not considered a safety issue.
 - The Highways Officers pointed out that in places there was overhanging vegetation from properties and that the property owners were responsible for cutting it back. It was advised that the best approach is to make a report to the 'Street Doctor' service.
 - Fixed position speed cameras are at present not being installed by Northamptonshire Police. Visits by the Police mobile speed camera will continue alongside Speedwatch operations carried out by members of Dingley community.
- **More types of housing in village** - Housing suitable for young first-time occupiers and 'downsizing' older residents and for young families.¹

¹ **Some Villagers wanted the opposite to some of their neighbours' proposals for more housing.** These residents advocated no expansion in housing provision, no development, no change. Some considered the Village to already be a great place for empty nesters, retired and downsizers. Others felt it wasn't the best location for anyone with significant care needs, or for families with children but no transport, for teens or for first time buyers.

DPC response and plan: New housing in the Village would require a developer with an interest in building within the Village, the release of land, and planning consent from Kettering Borough Council which would be informed by the its Planning Officers and the planning regulations.

Villagers would be able to express their views on any proposal directly to the KBC Planning Committee and via DPC should there be any development proposed.

Currently there is no designated potential development area in the Village and DPC does not own any land which might be 'freed' for housing development. There are therefore no plans nor routes by which a number of different types of housing might be developed in Dingley.

- **Better residential property maintenance**

DPC response and plan: Unless the state of a property were to be considered a potential risk to public health and safety, at which time the Borough or County Council Officers may wish to take action, DPC does not have any powers to enforce a standard for property maintenance in the Village.

There was a suggestion that a volunteer "Village Task Force" could be formed that would take responsibility for addressing environmental concerns in similar way as the annual 'litter pick' is organised but on a regular basis.

DPC is currently looking into the implications and issues of forming such a Task Force and any alternatives but it is not envisaged that private property maintenance would be within the remit of any individual or group undertaking tasks for the benefit of the Community.

- **Parking** More off road [and off pavement and verge] areas including places near the Village Hall and Church. Dingley should look like a residential not commercial area.

DPC response and plan:

There is currently no land available on which to site additional car parking.

Parking on verges is not illegal unless it causes an obstruction in which case the Police can be called on to intervene. KBC can seek compensation for damage to curbs and verges.

DPC has no powers or assets to be able to address the parking concerns and is therefore limited to appeals to Parishioners to be considerate when parking.

A change of use from residential to commercial property requires the consent of Kettering Borough Council Planning Department.

- **More and better maintained footways linking Village** – Also dog owners clearing up their animal's mess and the creation of cycle paths to nearby towns and villages

DPC response and plan

The matter of extending the footways to link the main Village has been previously raised with the local Kettering and County Councillors and was again with the Northamptonshire County Council Highways Community Liaison Officers during their July visit to Dingley. At this stage it would appear to be a matter of insufficient money in the budget as opposed to any absolute discounting of the argument for extending the footways.

DPC will continue to lobby for the footway extension.

Clearing dog mess is the responsibility of dog owners. DPC can request owners to adopt responsible behaviour, as can other residents. In the past naturally decaying spray paint has

been used by the Council to highlight where owners have failed to clear up after their dog to alert walkers, to demonstrate the extent of the problem and to shame offenders into more responsible dog ownership. The method may be employed again.

Cycle paths would require the investment and consent from the County Council – and in the case of a path to Market Harborough, Leicestershire County Council as well. Depending on route it would also require the consent of any landowner over which the path would pass. In the current economic climate it would seem very unlikely that finance will be made available for cycle paths at present but DPC still intends to investigate the possibilities.

- **More Amenities** – for young and old. For example a park and social area for young people; social venue for the older Village members and those at home; a pub and a shop, allotment. A mains gas supply available to homes.

DPC response and plan: Based on the size of the village the Council consider it extremely unlikely that any entrepreneur would view opening a shop or pub in Dingley as a good business proposition even if premises could be secured/converted. For similar reasons no gas company would feel it a commercial proposition to lay pipe lines.

If land were available DPC would support the installation of outside facilities for young people and seek funding for equipment. Regrettably no land is currently known to be available.

One resident has come forward to say they would be willing to run a youth club in the Village Hall. It would require more than one person to undertake such an enterprise and the necessary police and health and safety checks. It would also require young people in the Village and their carers to support the initiative. Would there be sufficient interest?

- **Environmental improvements** A pond or Village green to offer a Village centre.

DPC response and plan: This sounds like a wonderful suggestion but difficult to achieve in reality. Nonetheless DPC would welcome any ideas on how the concept of a Village Centre might be achieved.

- **Better Public transport** – a regular and frequent bus service

DPC was active in lobbying to prevent the complete withdrawal of any service to the Village in 2016. Even with subsidies Bus Companies do not consider rural service viable and the number of potential passengers from Dingley is unlikely to result in a change in this position. Indeed at the time of circulating this summary, the County Council budget proposals for 2018-19 include the ending of subsidies for any public transport in the County which if actioned will threaten all our services including County Connect.

Villagers may care to view and respond to the County Council budget proposals for 2018-19.

which, if implemented, will have a direct impact on the Parish. You can email the County Council: consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk or you can write to:

Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation, Northamptonshire County Council,
One Angel Square, Northampton NN1 1ED.

Alternatively, click on the link below for more information and to complete a survey:

<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/council-and-democracy/budgets-and-spending/Pages/draft-budget-2018-19.aspx>

Dingley Parish Council November 2017.

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