

County Councillor Annual Report

This report summarises the activities of the following member of the County Council during 2023/2024.

Name of Councillor **Dr Kevin FELTHAM**

representing the GARTREE Division.

1) Electoral Division activities

Main Activities and the impact during the past year:

During 2023/24, I attended 31 **parish council meetings** in person. As in previous years, they clashed with other meetings, such as other parish councils, church council, duties as LCC chairman or if an extraordinary meeting was called, so sadly I had to prioritise which ones to attend.

Once again, staff changes at the Kibworth and Great Glen Parish Councils, during the past four years has required some of my time and experience to help the new parish staff find solutions for and to keep on top of staffing and Health & Safety policies. Many parishes in Gartree Division requested some assistance from me occasionally.

I continue to rely heavily on my experience of over 23 years as a county councillor to have ongoing good working relationships with County Council and Harborough District Council (HDC) officers, as well as parishes in the Gartree Division and their clerks.

In most cases, where I am sent an agenda and invitation for parish council meetings, and I am able to attend, I am pleased to give an update on county council business and my activities; if I am unable to attend, I always aim to provide written reports by email. I'm also happy to follow up issues raised by parish councils with the county council where the response has been delayed or requires further explanation.

The venture to create an **Autism Friendly Kibworth** began in 2019/20 and was paused in 2020/21 and 2021/22 when the pandemic lockdown put a stop to events. However, the Autism Friendly Kibworth FaceBook group has now increased to 121 members, since it was publicised again during 2023/24.

A review of the **Kibworths Neighbourhood Plan** began in 2019/20 and includes small allocations for about 21 houses on four small sites within the limits to development. Concluding of this review version was delayed due to the lockdown but after the relevant consultations and external examination it was completed and put to a referendum on 4 May 2023. The results showed overwhelming support for the Neighbourhood Plan at 89.9% voting Yes in support of the Plan and so it was made by HDC on 31 May 2023.

Since 2001, I have continued to contribute monthly Gartree Division news articles on local matters of interest to the **Kibworth & District Chronicle**, a free community newspaper delivered to over 4,500 homes in 25 villages across south Leicestershire, many in the Gartree division; and now [online](#) since the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Community Leadership Role

Since 2019/20, I led the work, with legal support, to regularise the two joint Kibworth Parish Council committees to bring them into line with new accountancy regulations – no joint committees could have separate bank accounts, staffing or assets, from the principal parish authorities and the ongoing work to assist with audit queries was concluded in 2021/22. Three **Memoranda of Understanding** were needed to ensure members from both parish councils fully understood how the new arrangements would work in practice.

The joint **Kibworths Parish Office** in the Kibworth Grammar School Hall, that was setup and refurbished during 2019/20 was closed for almost the whole of 2020/21 because of the pandemic, before it re-opened in May 2021. This original parish office became too small to accommodate two clerks, a deputy clerk and the grounds team so a larger room upstairs at the Kibworth Grammar School Hall to be adapted into a parish office with a small file room and kitchen constructed, was occupied in April 2023. In addition to being the base for the two Kibworth parish clerks and joint deputy clerk and grounds team, it is used for briefings of the parish and Joint Board chairmen and has been used for councillor surgeries.

In 2019, I helped define the specification for a **Feasibility Study** of community facilities in the two Kibworths, and after obtaining a small grant from HDC and tendering, Nortoft Partnerships Ltd carried out a survey and published an initial report in May 2020, which because of the pandemic and lockdowns didn't progress much further. This was followed up by the formation during 2021/22 of a Steering Group, consisting of representatives from the Trustees of the Kibworth Grammar School Hall, Kibworth Community Library and both parish councils. I continue to be the representative for Kibworth Harcourt Parish Council. The group is working to improve community facilities, the future location of the community library and the change of the Kibworth Grammar School Hall into **Kibworth Community Hub**. A planning application for the building changes was granted permission by HDC Planning Committee in 2022. A project management organisation was contracted in 2023 to lead on the development of a clear specification for phase 1 (new library building extension), and phase 2 (new entrance and internal change) and then the tendering process in early 2024. Funding for phase 1 is primarily from community facilities s106 funds and was granted by HDC in 2023. Additional grant funding has also been obtained together with funds from the Trustees and the Hall and Library. It is hoped that a contract can be placed for phase 1 in the summer of 2024.

Following receipt of a £70,000 Jubilee grant from HDC in 2022, I worked with the parish councillors and clerks to design and obtain quotations for a Queen's Walk on Smeeton Road Park. This is now very early complete and is due to be officially opened in 2024. In addition to a new bound gravel footpath from the entrance, along the southern edge around to the entrance from Fleckney Road, 25 mature trees have been planted with protective metal shields and a slate plaque – commemorating 25 of the village's groups or organisations.

Several new benches have been purchased and installed together with some large planters at the western end.



On behalf of the Kibworth Joint Recreation Board I continued to help the clerks apply for section 106 funding in 2023/24 for a double zipwire and skatepark in Warwick Park. As of May 2023, funding was approved for a trim trail in Smeeton Road Park and a zipwire and skatepark in Warwick Park.



Skatepark on Warwick Park



Double zipwire

The pond in Rookery Park has continued to be improved with additional levels of hardcore and soil to raise the surrounding ground; this was provided at no cost to the parish by a subsidiary of Network Rail, who had been electrifying the Midland Mainline through the two Kibworth parishes during 2023/24.



New concrete and fibre glass lined pond, now fitted, filled and planted – ready for new wildflowers

Engagement with the Council, other statutory bodies and public utility companies (Water, Gas etc) about services in the area

On 18th May 2023 I was delighted to be re-elected chairman of the county council. I attended all five county council meetings during 2023/24. As in previous years these are all webcast and can be viewed in the county council's YouTube archives.

During 2023/24, I attended some 130 events as chairman of the county council representing some 712,000 residents of the county. This is just a brief list of some of the events and venues I was privileged to attend:

- Attended Musicals at Curve by invitation including Evita
- Leicester City Council Town Hall, Lord Mayor election May 2023
- Numerous services held at St Mary de Castro Church and Leicester Cathedral, Leicester
- Numerous presentations by Princes Trust Teams in Leicester, Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough and Melton Mowbray
- Attended graduation ceremonies for Loughborough University, Leicester University and De Montfort University
- Met and attended several events with High Sheriff of Leicester and Leicestershire
- Met and attended two events with the High Sheriff of Rutland
- Hosted Volunteers event at County Hall
- Met with Rupert Matthews, Police and Crime Commissioner
- Privileged to unveil green plaque for at Loughborough Station.
- Attended Open Day at Rainbows Hospice in Loughborough

Network Rail have been installing cables to enable electrification of the railway between Kettering and Wigston during 2023/24. In addition to railway bridges between Great Glen and Wistow which have had to be replaced and have taken some 6 months to complete, the B1 right of way bridge leading from Warwick Park to School Road in Kibworth Beauchamp has also taken over 6 months to complete and involved a temporary pedestrian bridge being installed after meetings with councillors including myself on numerous occasions, the MP and Network Rail. Some negotiating with the contractors by the parish manager meant several construction jobs in the parishes were provided by their staff – e.g. installing benches on concrete slabs, trimming hedges etc.



The new pedestrian bridge from School Road



New gates from Warwick Park lead to new pedestrian bridge beyond.

Priorities for the immediate future are:

The key priority for the Kibworths continues to be the recognition by the highways authority, police and national government that speeds along the A6 through the Kibworths need to be monitored, ideally with average speed cameras, to maintain traffic speeds below 30 mph. A **Community Speed Watch** (CSW) at two locations on the A6, and one on Albert Street in Kibworth Harcourt, were held in April/May 2023 and 63 vehicles exceeded the relevant speed limit over the two-week trial period with volunteers operating the radar equipment. Letters were sent to the vehicle owners by the police.

A Kibworth bypass would benefit the community but is not likely to be revisited without being funded by thousands of new houses. The current Harborough Local Plan does not include large housing development in the Kibworths or Great Glen, and both have Neighbourhood Plans in place; Great Glen and the Kibworths have reviewed them, and both have been made.

A new Local Plan is being developed by Harborough District Council with the aim of sending it to the examiner by July 2025. Public consultation on locations for housing and employment are ongoing and the final version may include some sites in the Gartree division.

Anti-social behaviour problems (ASB) have continued to cause problems in the Kibworths and also in Great Glen. A number of **Facebook Community Groups** began during the covid pandemic. These social media sources continue to provide evidence of burglary, car theft and damage and ASB. I continue to liaise with the Local Policing Unit, the three Kibworths Ward members and the HDC Community Safety Partnership.

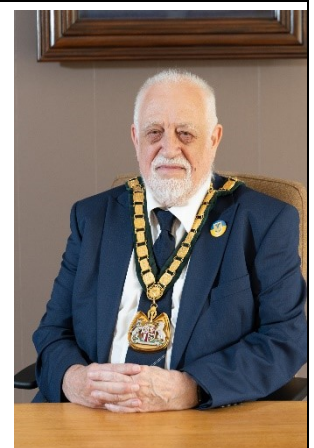
2) Council Activities

Committees you serve on at County Hall 2023/24

While taking on the role of chairman of the county council I have not been appointed to regulatory or scrutiny committees:

My principal role during 2023/24 has been as the elected chairman for a second year. Cllr Joe Orson was elected to be vice-chairman during the year. Since May 2024 I have been appointed a member of the Corporate Governance Committee and received the necessary training.

In addition to the events I attended that are listed above, I was privileged to represent the county at the Armed Forces Parade on High Street in Leicester in May 2023. I was also present on two occasions when HRH Princess Anne visited venues in Leicestershire together with the Lord Lieutenant of Leicester and Leicestershire and the High Sherriff of Leicester and Leicestershire.



Local committees/Outside Bodies

I have been a parish councillor on **Kibworth Harcourt Parish Council** since 2014, and Chairman since 2016; re-elected in May 2023 as councillor, and re-elected chairman for 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. In order to continue improving the working relationships between the two Kibworth parish councils I along with another councillor, have also been elected onto Kibworth Beauchamp Parish Council.

I continue to serve as a parish representative on the **Kibworth Joint Recreation Board** and was re-elected vice chairman for 2023/24. Planned work according the Open Space Strategy have been progressed during the year using either s106 contributions or specific grants.

I took on the role as chairman of the **Kibworth Joint Burial Board** in 2020/21 and was re-elected for 2023/24. The cemetery is a peaceful sanctuary for relatives and friends of those buried in the quiet grounds, as well as local residents walking through the grounds, and it is important this continues. We continued to enhance the cemetery with a new wooden fence along the eastern side of the cemetery in 2023 and a new tarmac path around the natural burial area, both funded by s106 contributions.



The 19th century **Lychgate** was granted Grade II listed status by Historic England in 2022/23. It has exquisite, stained-glass windows and wooden pillars. It has electricity and still has the original hand drawn bier preserved inside the building and which was expertly restored in 2022/23. The Lychgate is included in the Neighbourhood Plan as a local heritage asset.



I continued as a committee member for the **Kibworth & Smeeton Village Hall** during 2023/24 as it managed to continue providing a suitable venue for dance and karate classes as well as village cinema film nights occasionally throughout the year. WiFi has now been installed and the toilets have been upgraded. The external appearance at the Station Street entrance was improved in 2023 and a new wooden floor installed in 2023//24.

I remain a committee member (Treasurer & Secretary) of the **Kibworth Improvement Team** formed after the highly successful BBC TV series 'Story of England' by Michael Wood and Maya Vision International. During the year I continued to help with the ongoing contributions to the online Museum section of the www.kibworthvillage.co.uk website that continues to publicise the heritage of Kibworth Beauchamp, Kibworth Harcourt and Smeeton Westerby.

Other bodies – School governors/community and charity organisations etc

I continue to be an appointed Trustee of the **Nicholson Memorial Charity**. During 2023/24 the Trust continued to approve grants to young individuals and youth organisations. Many of our meetings during the year were held virtually.

I continue to be the **Kibworth Parochial Church Council** Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer for St Wilfrid's Anglican Church in Kibworth Beauchamp.

3) Learning and development:

I attend as many all-member briefings as I could as the majority during 2023/24 were held online using MS Teams. All of these briefings continued to have a better attendance virtually than when they were held in person in previous years. Being able to switch on the laptop five minutes

before the briefings which were usually at 4pm on Tuesdays was preferable than having to drive for 40 minutes to County Hall and then drive back.

4) Other Matters:

With over 50 years of experience working in and around the NHS, including short spells at major London tertiary hospitals (Guys & St Thomas, Imperial College), and officially retiring in December 2018, I occasionally still get asked to provide some advice in strategic planning for new laboratory computer systems by both commercial suppliers and NHS Hospital Trusts.

For several weeks leading up to Christmas 2021, 2022 and 2023 I was delighted to take on the role of the resident Santa Claus at the Kibworth Harcourt Windmill Farm Park on most afternoons.



Social Media

Twitter: @kevin_feltham

Signed by Councillor:

Date 04/07/2024