

Annual Report 2018 Parish Council

Once again, we have had a very busy year – there always seems to be loads happening and plenty to discuss in this small parish – one thing I would mention is that our small community suffered much sadness a few months ago when there was a horrific incident at the Railway crossing - it is still not known what happened, but it was laudable the way the community rallied round to help out. It also brought home the importance of having an emergency plan.

During the last year Alan Strudley joined us on the council filling the vacancy caused by Nigel Currie's resignation and also Sanjeev Joshi was elected vice- chairman.

We have considered 31 planning applications, mostly straightforward, although there was one which caused a bit of controversy in that I had to temporarily exclude the public due to the amount of interruption we were getting. That said, our thanks must go to Brian O'Connor who is always diligent in doing all our "homework" for us. We also succeeded in having the position of the proposed telephone mast at Summers moved 75 metres to a safer place away from residences.

Financially, we set up a Pension scheme with NEST so are now fully compliant with the Pensions in the workplace legislation. We have made grants as follows: £3,000 to the Youth Club as a special one-off amount to enable them to replace some equipment, £500 to age UK as several people in the Parish have benefited from their services, £1,324.10 to the Village trust towards their insurance for the village green and £969.67 to the Village Hall Committee for their insurance. This last amount was in addition to the £200,000 (net) which we granted them for the building of the new extension. I am very proud of what this Parish Council has achieved with the funds we negotiated from WSCC and Berkeley Homes and I would like to thank the development sub-committee for the terrific way that they have managed the Development fund on our behalf. Very fairly done and spread over several different projects that affect the everyday life of the village. The new jubilee extension to the village hall is mostly completed and is being well used. It was officially opened by Amanda Jupp a couple of weeks ago.

The plans have been passed for the new sports changing rooms at the Village Club and we will make funds available for that project, as agreed sometime ago.

The Neighbourhood Plan steering group are progressing well under the guidance of Ian Walker and with the help of Dowsettmayhew. Some 28 sites were submitted and these were disclosed to the public at an exhibition in January attended by over 250 people. Comments made have been used as part of the matrix used to identify the sites suitable for development. These will be disclosed at the village meeting on 19th June.

Once again, we received a grant from Operation Watershed - and we commissioned Landbuild to take on the job of sorting out some of our flooding problems. Several new drains have been installed coming down the hill from Itchingfield which should lessen the amount of surface flood water in Sandhills and Chapel Roads.

The Parish has continued to report problems and antisocial incidents pertaining to Kingfisher Farm to the police, but we have had no feedback from either them or Enforcement at HDC. A Public Inquiry regarding their appeal will be held on 12th June and we will be represented.

The Parish Emergency Plan is nearly complete and ready to be lodged with HDC. More people have come forward to help and I thank James Sheppard and Tors Barrett for their work on this. We have made a new facebook page set up by Tors, which makes us more accessible to the public. We also have new IPC email addresses.

The Traffic Sub Committee continues to be busy and have regular meetings with WSCC Highways. I am grateful for their work on our behalf – it certainly does help to lessen the work load for us. They have been liaising with the Head of the school to encourage more pupils to walk to school and parents to park further away from the school.

Our litter wardens are doing a splendid job – so good that we have not had a village clear up day this year. However, we are noticing more incidents of fly tipping in the local area which we continue to report to HDC.

As owners of Ancient Woodland, we have joined the Woodland Trust and my thanks go to Matt and Sanjeev for putting our new “No Dumping” sign in place. We have had some discussions with Householders adjoining the orchard and have agreed to trim the grass to an acceptable level twice a year. Letters were also sent to those households who had made gateways from their gardens to the Orchard setting out the legal implications of their actions.

And I can't finish without mentioning the saga of the Fingerpost! For over a year now we have been fobbed off with differing and contradictory excuses from Marcus Slegg of Heritage Signs. We have been desperate to have our signpost back. James agreed to take this on, on our behalf. After a couple of visits and many emails, we have succeeded in getting some of our deposit back with the promise of the remainder in 2 instalments. James is also now doing most of the work himself in conjunction with the Reynolds. This sign will be back in situ very soon.

Lastly, as ever, my thanks to the Clerk and to you all for your continued commitment and support.

Penny Simpson

21st May 2018