

## **ITCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Chairman's Report 2020 – for the year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020**

Our Precept for the year was £64,000 and £9,465 of that went on costs for the Neighbourhood Plan for Planning Consultant's and Legal fees, hall hire for meetings and printing and publicity costs.

Thanks must go to Ian Walker and his committee for getting this to Stage 16.

It cost us £5,460 to contest the Kingfisher Farm Application, which HDC granted even though the Inspector and the High Court had opposed it.

Grants were given to several local causes £1,500 towards the upkeep of the churchyard, £2,450 to Barns Green Youth Club, £500 to the Tennis Club towards resurfacing the courts. £1,900 went to the Village Trust for the Liability Insurance for the Field and for Playground maintenance. We have also allowed £10,000 to kick start a new /replacement Playground following the extension works at the Barns Green Sports and Social Club.

The changing rooms on the eastern side of the Sports and Social Club have now been completed and I can report that they are very smart indeed- and of course we contributed £170k towards these by means of a loan from the Public Works Loan Board taken out in our previous financial year. This brings to an end the Barns Green Development Fund which has been used for several worthy projects within the parish over the last few years. The small amount remaining will most likely be donated towards the Children's Playground project.

Our housekeeping costs include the Clerk's salary and expenses, hall hiring fees and we replaced 2 of our noticeboards and purchased 2 new flags for the village flagpole. We have agreed to put extra signage on our fingerpost at the bottom of Muntham Drive directing motorists to the village car park.

We have dealt with 32 planning applications – the most high profile one being Kingfisher Farm as mentioned earlier. There is an ongoing application involving the village post office and stores of which the outcome is not known yet, but we are of the opinion that the shop is very important to our village and it must be highly praised for its response to the Covid 19 situation. As also must be the Queen's Head Public House and Weston's Farm Shop. I would particularly like to praise and thank the Barns Green Cobra group led by Fiona Christer who are doing fantastic work in supporting those of us who are self isolating.

The Annual Village Meeting in June was held in a packed hall and subjects for discussion were the Neighbourhood Plan, The Traffic Group , The Rugby Pitch project and the Children's playground. Very lively discussion ensued. This meeting has proved very successful in recent years and is an excellent platform for villagers to find out what is going on and what we are doing. Also how their money is being spent!

Unfortunately the recently published HDC Draft Plan clashes with us somewhat, but we have forwarded our comments to them so must now wait and see. Also the possibility of a retirement village at Wellcross has once again come to the fore – despite it being contrary to our Plan and against the wishes of adjoining parishes also. This will be an ongoing struggle.

The Matthews lorries landscaping the Brick Field on Two Mile Ash Road, travelling through the parish at speed and damaging roads caused some considerable consternation initially, but a successful dialogue with the firm calmed down matters and the damage was repaired. All was finished last summer.

We signed off our GDPR policy last October and have also added to our Standing Orders regarding the recording of our meetings by the public.

The school crossings have not yet come to pass, but we do have a new excellent footpath along Chapel Road, linking Finians Field at the Rail Crossing to The Hordens in the village. This is particularly good for pedestrians accessing Sumners. We must thank Paul Allen and the Traffic group for facilitating this with Amanda Jupp and WSCC.

Thanks must go to our litter wardens Pat & Pete Cochran, for keeping parish free of litter – though sadly there have been a few fly tipping instances.

The Parish Emergency Plan was completed and lodged with HDC. Hopefully a hard copy will be able to be lodged at the village hall.

In September, after several alleged “near misses” were reported we hosted a village meeting with Network Rail concerning safety at the Barns Green Railway Crossing – this was attended by local MP Jeremy Quin and over a 100 residents. It was confirmed that the time constraints on the barriers were working correctly. The enduring message was that if the lights are flashing red, **stop and do not cross even if the barriers are up.**

The South Downs Link path was finally completed linking Itchingfield with Christs Hospital station, but unfortunately the official opening ceremony has had to be postponed.

We once again presented our poppy wreaths on behalf of the parish at the Remembrance Day service and we also received permission to keep our Tommy Silhouette on show, with the proviso that it must be kept in good condition.

We have been without our Vice Chairman Sanjeev Joshi for most of the year as a result of an RTA, but hopefully he is now on the way to a full recovery. We are however also 2 councillors short of our full complement and once this Covid 19 crisis has passed, we should consider recruitment.

My thanks go to all of you for your support and also our Clerk, District Councillors and County Councillor. Together we make a great team and my best wishes to you all during these difficult times. May you all stay healthy and happy.

Penny Simpson

Chairman 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020