

**The Annual Parish Meeting was cancelled in Government Guidelines – this is the Chairs Report**

## **Chair's Report 2019/2020**

How things can change in a year!

The Annual meeting planned for Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 has been cancelled in line with Government Guidelines that the country must: 1) stay home, 2) Respect social distancing of 2 metres between individuals and 3) Save lives and our NHS.

The Parish Council, The Church and The Shop have been working closely together, to ensure the health and safety of all our residents is paramount. The response from residents totalling in excess of 80 volunteers, who man a dedicated telephone line and a dedicated email address for vulnerable residents and others who shop and support vulnerable people within our community has been nothing short of incredible and shows what a wonderful community we have.

At this time we have no exit strategy for life to return to normal and I am sure that when we do life will have changed forever and hopefully for the good of all. Words cannot show the appreciation and overwhelming commitment being given by so many as we try to overcome this Coronavirus pandemic.

The work of the Parish Council continues at this time via video and email links and the rest of my report will focus on what we have been doing in the past year and looking forward to the 2020/2021 period.

We currently have a full complement of 9 Councillors. Jo Alexander left us in May 2019 due to work and family commitments. She has since moved to a nearby village and we thank her for her time as a Parish Councillor and wish her every success for her future. We welcome Sue Wakefield as a co-opted member and look forward to working with her.

All of us are volunteers to this role and our focus is to protect and maintain the character of our beautiful parish. To do this we have a Village Design Statement, a Conservation Area Appraisal and a Parish Plan all of which were developed and approved by the residents and subsequently adopted by Winchester City Council.

We spend a great deal of time looking at planning applications and developments in the village to ensure they comply with our Village Design Statement and the Conservation area appraisal. Road and traffic issues and maintaining support to the playground, footpaths and security of the village are other key areas requiring regular attention. We have a range of skills amongst our Councillors who each have a portfolio to manage and the details of which are published in every Parish Newsletter and on our village website.

We have a team of 3 Councillors who look at every planning application in detail and then make recommendations to the full Council. We have the same process to look at the finances of the Parish Council, 3 Councillors meet quarterly with the Parish Clerk to discuss the detail and then report and make recommendations to the full Council.

The one paid member of the Parish Council is the Parish Clerk who is also our Responsible Financial Officer, the past 5 years that has been Jill Judge. Jill has decided that retirement now beckons her and she will be sorely missed. Jill has seen us through some challenging times, for example dealing with

copious administration for the AD application, implementing many new procedures to make us more efficient and communicating with neighbouring Parishes when we needed support.

We all wish Jill a very happy and healthy retirement. Jill has helped Sparsholt and Crawley recruit her replacement. We welcomed Nicky Breen to our team on April 1st and look forward to working with her. Nicky lives in Crawley and may be known to some of you as a former bell ringer at the church. Jill is currently working with Nicky for detailed handover, at least until the end of April.

Local City and County Elections have been put on hold for a year and therefore we will continue to have the support of both Caroline Horrill (WCC) and Jan Warwick (HCC). Over the past year we thank them both for keeping us apprised of decisions made at WCC and HCC that affect us here in Sparsholt. Grants that both Authorities make, do help us to fund projects for residents' needs. WCC and HCC reports in detail are attached.

We receive an annual precept payment for the Parish and this year we have been able to put some of this to good use in replacing a few of our old Parish Noticeboards and contributing to the School and Memorial Hall new noticeboards. We have also painted the Shop and are working closely with The Ham Green group to assess the Ash Tree survey as it is likely a number of trees will need to be felled and replaced. With no money now received from Local Government our finances are currently in good shape to take us forward. The annual accounts audit has been postponed due to the current crisis but are expected to be completed in The Autumn.

Road Safety issues continue at a pace and Stewart Wooles our portfolio holder on Highways entered a competition to name the new 'Dragon Patcher'. He won by naming it 'Elliott' and was awarded with a bench and a tree which will be placed in the Ham Green area of the village. Well done Stewart! The new machine visited us in August and we were able to see a demonstration of just how quickly a pothole can be repaired. Please do report a pothole as and when you see one, this is very easy to do on line.

New HGV warning signs were installed in an effort to restrict the number of oversized vehicles transitioning the village. Dean hamlet in particular has hopefully seen fewer large vehicles since the signs went up from Woodman Lane and Salters Lane. At the Stockbridge road entrance to the village the signs allow large Lorries to the Farms. However, we would ask all residents if you see any large HGVs entering via Crab Wood please do try and take some details such as registration numbers, company logos etc. and forward it to the village clerk. Likewise any vehicle travelling at speed or failing to respect residents' personal space should also be reported.

### **Coming up**

Detailed plans of 3 new affordable homes in Bostock close are being drawn up and should be ready in The Autumn for a village presentation. Those people with a personal interest in renting one of these homes should make themselves known ASAP.

In the next few months we should be seeing new speed warning signs being positioned around the village in an effort to make drivers aware that their speed is being monitored. We are working with our neighbours in Hursley on this new initiative.

Work has started on reviewing and detailing the new Local Plan which will also require our Village Design Statement to be updated in line with any new emerging planning policies, or indeed the removal of some.

**Village Clean up**

Although we have had to postpone the Spring Village Clean Up, we will be announcing a fresh one as soon as we can. In the meantime it is noticeable the amount of tissues, bottles and other rubbish we can see. We have the appropriate materials such as pickers and gloves.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people:

**Councillors** – for giving your time and energy freely and without question

**Parish Clerk** - for all your advice and keeping us compliant within local government guidelines.

**Ham Green Group** - for all your hard work in maintaining and conserving one of our beautiful green spaces.

**The Village Shop** – For all the support to the village in a time of need and we hope that in the future all your efforts will be rewarded with continued support from the community to keep your door forever open.

**The Church** - despite having to close the church at this time has reached out using new communication methods to reach their congregations.

**The school** – To the Teachers supplying lessons to those at home and supporting those children still attending and to the pupil's efforts on providing rainbow and NHS pictures to keep spirits raised.

**The Community as a whole** – your commitment to support the community through unprecedented times has been truly inspirational and comforting.

My apologies if I have missed anyone.

We are so fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful villages in the Country and it is a privilege to serve this village as a member of the Parish Council.

Sue Wood  
Chair  
April 2020