

## **Sparsholt Parish Council Chairman's Report 2020/2021**

The Annual meeting planned for Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021 was held remotely via Zoom in light of the continuing Government Guidelines.

The Parish Council, The Church and The Shop continue to work closely together, to ensure the health and safety of all our residents. The dedicated telephone line, email address and volunteer Whats -app group are still available although as the Pandemic is subsiding and vaccinations are increasing we are experiencing a much lower rate of enquiries and requests.

The work of the Parish Council has continued throughout this past year via video and email links and the rest of my report will focus on what we have been doing, and looking forward to the 2021/2022 period.

In December 2020 Pete Chadwick resigned as a Parish Councillor having made a considerable and valuable contribution of his time to the Parish. We are sorry to lose him but understand his need to focus on his family and his career. Thank you Pete and we wish you well for the future.

We cop-opted Lynne Gibson as a Councillor on 18<sup>th</sup> March. Lynne lives in Crabwood off Sarum Road and will be a welcome voice for residents in that area. We have a full complement of 9 Councillors who volunteer their time 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.

Planning applications and developments in the village contribute to the primary workload of the Parish Council to ensure they comply with our Village Design Statement and the Conservation area appraisal. We do request that residents talk to us prior to submitting their plans as we are a statutory consultee for WCC. Working together can often ensure a clear understanding of proposals, avoiding unnecessary delays and often avoiding unseen costs. Applications are always fully discussed by all Councillors at full Council meetings.

Road and traffic issues have for the past year greatly reduced because of lockdown measures and I am sure we have all appreciated the ability to walk and cycle on our narrow country lanes without having to disappear into a hedge as traffic speeds by. During lockdown our roads were resurfaced and recently a part of Westley Lane from the College to the village was completely rebuilt.

I am sure residents will have noticed that a Speed Limit Reminder has been placed in different places around the village. We share the cost of this facility with Hursley Parish Council. We hope that as life gets back to normal that vehicles that use us as a 'rat run' will observe the new sign. We move it frequently to avoid familiarity and complacency. Please do continue to report excessive speed and unauthorised HGV's in the village to the Parish Clerk with as much detail as you can.

During the past year we have managed to maintain the opening of the playground with thanks to our wonderful volunteers Tonya and Keith who both live in Woodman Close. They have regularly sanitised the play equipment for which I feel sure all the children and parents and the Parish Council greatly appreciate.

Our Footpaths have suffered through the winter months and we look forward to the Summer recovery time. The Parish Council uses the services of Peter Yeates to cut a number of footpaths with HCC

responsible for others. The bridleways are covered by the Countryside Rangers and we liaise with them when we are told of any problems.

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.

3 Councillors meet bi monthly with the Parish Clerk to look at the finances of the Parish Council, discuss the detail and then report and make recommendations to the full Council. Likewise a sub-committee of Councillors look at all planning applications in detail before making recommendations to full Council.

The one paid member of the Parish Council is the Parish Clerk who is also our Responsible Financial Officer. Nicky Breen replaced Jill Judge as our Clerk on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. As for anyone starting a new job during a Pandemic and Lockdown it has not been easy. A clerks' job is very varied and requires constant contact with Councillors and local authorities and we thank Nicky for her perseverance during this difficult time.

City Council, County Council and the Police Commissioner elections will be held in May this year although there is no Sparsholt Parish Council election until 2022. Our City Councillor is Councillor Caroline Horrill and our County Councillor is Councillor Jan Warwick.

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.

We receive an annual precept payment for the Parish which this year has been put to good use on a major project and expense in the Ham Green area. A professional survey of the area has been carried out and the Ash Dieback problem has led to a plan for work to be carried out according to priority over the next few years. A detailed report and the costs have been recorded and are available on the Parish website.

Residents will be aware that a number of trees have already been felled under Phase 1 of the project and priority has been given to those trees most at risk to the public. We are currently applying for a quotation for replanting and thanks to a grant from Kirton Farm Nursery and a contribution from the Parish Council, will soon be able to replace the trees lost. Terry Dunn has given a great deal of his time to organising and supervising this project and we offer him our sincere thanks.

### **Coming up**

The proposed new social housing in Bostock Close should soon be available for residents to see before the plans are submitted for planning approval. These will be energy efficient properties and if any residents in current social housing are interested please do register your interest as soon as possible.

### **The playground in Woodman close**

The fencing around the playground and the gate at the southern end are in a state of disrepair and we are currently applying for quotations for replacement. We are also planning to build a fund for the future replacement of the playground equipment.

### **Village Clean up**

Please put Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June in your diary as our village clean up date. Litter pickers and sacks and disposable gloves will be provided in the Memorial Hall Carpark from 10.00am – 12 noon. Thank you to those who always support this event and we look forward to many more joining us.

New Map boards of the area will soon be arriving, one for the back of the main noticeboard by the Shop and a new one at Ham Green car park. This noticeboard will also display signs of the Countryside code. Good use is already being made of the new green bin for dog waste and rubbish.

I would like to conclude with a few thanks:

**Councillors** – for your commitment and time to ensuring we do the best we can for the residents of Sparsholt Parish.

**Parish Clerk** - for taking on the challenge in difficult circumstances

**Ham Green Group** - for all commitment to maintaining and conserving one of our beautiful green spaces. We appreciate the extra work that you will be undertaking as a result of the Ash dieback problem.

**The Village Shop** – For the continuing support to the village in a time of need. If ever the Shop has proved how valuable it is to this community it is now. Jeanette and the team of volunteers have shown such dedication in their support to all in the village, long may the shop thrive and we must all continue to use it and keep the doors forever open.

**The Church** – Reverend Jax and her team have found new ways to keep in contact with the congregation and hopefully life will return to normal in the very near future. We look forward to the doors being open and the congregation returning and oh how we have missed those bells!

**The school** – To the Teachers who supplied lessons to those at home and supported those children of essential workers and happily now have helped all children return to school, we thank you. The community has appreciated the wonderful pictures the children have produced to decorate the telephone box.

**The Community as a whole** – Lockdown has been difficult for all and Sparsholt rose to the challenge. We are so lucky to live in a beautiful village and to know that there is always someone ready to help if asked. Thank you all for staying positive and caring for each other.

My apologies if I have missed anyone.

I consider it a privilege to serve this village as a member of the Parish Council and grateful that I am supported by 8 Parish Councillors who give their time freely to all of you

Sue Wood  
Chair  
April 2021