

## Chair Report 2023/24

Our Parish Council consists of 9 Councillors who are all Volunteers and give their time freely to meet to discuss all matters that affect the Parish. Parish Councils are the first step of Local Government and are consultees to Winchester City Council on all planning applications generated within the Parish. We also keep an eye on those applications that border our parish and could have an effect on our way of life. We are supported by our City Councillors: Caroline Horrill, Stephen Godfrey and Patrick Cunningham; especially Caroline who lives in the village and attends our Parish Council Meetings as does our County Councillor Jan Warwick. We are very grateful for their expert knowledge, their monthly reports keeping us informed on both City and County Council plans and their assistance in resolving problems that occur in the parish.

We hold 10 Parish Council meetings a year on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month in the Mosaic Room of the Memorial Hall and any member of the public may attend.

Planning applications and traffic issues continue to be the main activities we cover along with maintaining the playground, footpaths and liaising with the shop and the Memorial Hall committees. Highways matters are as ever the biggest concern and this past year we have been working with HCC to explore ways to lessen the impact that traffic diversions have on the village lanes whenever there are closures or accidents on the A34 or the M3. Our rented Speed Limit reminder shows that there are some motorists who excessively exceed our 30mph limit when the SLR is set up in stealth mode but far fewer exceed the speed limit when the SLR is set up in display mode.

We are considering whether to purchase or rent an additional SLR as well as how signage could be improved to increase driver awareness that they are entering a village with narrow lanes consisting of single-track sections with few passing places shared with pedestrians, animals (horses, dogs and occasional sheep) as well as cyclists and farm vehicles.

The excessive rain has contributed to more and more potholes. Repairs are on-going but it does require all of us to consistently report new potholes as soon as they are observed using the HCC website.

Our Parish Newsletter received recognition as the Best Parish Newsletter of 2023 in the Southern Parishes. Congratulations go to Cllr John Little who is the Editor. If you are not on the distribution list please do contact John as the monthly issue contains valuable information and announcements.

In May the village street party for the Coronation of King Charles III, organised by the Shop committee, was another great opportunity for a village get together and as predicted yet another wonderful feast was produced under the direction of Debbie Caldwell. The weather was fine and the entertainment outstanding with the dog show and particularly their owners being extremely enthusiastic. The Parish Council organised a commemorative coin for every child and grandchild of residents of the parish that were distributed at the Coronation celebrations. Please do contact the Chair of the Parish Council if you qualify but have not yet received one.

The Village Fete was deferred until September as June was considered too close to the Coronation celebrations. The Fete was again an outstanding success raising much needed funds for the church and other village organisations. These village activities are always well attended and just couldn't happen without the dedicated support of just a few volunteers. We have so many younger families in the village now and it would be great if just a few more people could give a little of any free time they might have, to offering their services in planning future events. We have so many volunteer

opportunities for example: from shop committee and helpers, village fete committee members and on the day help, litter pickers, friends of the church, friends of the school, memorial hall committee members and of course Parish Councillors. Volunteering helps these organisations and is increasingly recognised as having positive mental health benefits for those who volunteer.

This coming year the Parish Council focus will be on ensuring our contribution to the delayed Winchester Local Plan, to ensure it reflects the need of our village and does not harm the safety of residents on our roads. We will seek to pursue HCC recommendations on improved road safety and investigate funding options.

We will continue to maintain and where necessary replace the Woodman Close playground equipment noting that several items are reaching their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Grants to replace play equipment are seemingly non-existent so the Parish Council will have to find the funds to make the necessary investment for the enjoyment of the village's children. Some surplus funds left over from 2023-2024 financial year will be reserved for playground purposes and the road safety measures along with additional funds raised for the year 2024-2025.

Malcolm Hewson and his Team of volunteers continue their conservation work at Ham Green which is a special part of the village. This past year has been a challenge for all those involved, and this is another group of people that could use some additional volunteer support. Here is an opportunity for fresh air and exercise and for some of our more senior teenagers in the village to get involved. The work is varied and supervised and would add value to any youngsters 'personal statement'. The Parish Council will continue to provide financial support where necessary.

I was fortunate to attend the institution and induction of our new Rector Kevin Rogers in March of this year and I understand he has already made a great impression on the children in our village school. Welcome to the Downs Benefice Kevin.

At this point I need to mention the very sad loss of Andrew Osmond, Oz to all of us. He was a Parish Councillor for more than 12 years' and until the past year was a regular attendee who always gave us sound advice on countryside matters and security such as rural crime and neighbourhood watch updates. His sense of humour and positive attitude will be greatly missed by all councillors and the village as a whole. Our thoughts and sincere condolences go to Sarah and all of Oz's family. We will never forget his contribution and will miss his enormous smile when he was out and about on his tractor or quad bike.

David Parker, previously Chair of the Parish Council, died earlier this year after some years of ill health. David was in post and involved in the formation of the Village Shop Association and its use of the Parish Council owned Well House building. He recognised the importance of the post office as a social focus for the village and the establishment of a not-for-profit association when a commercial buyer could not be found by the Post Office management. We will remember David for such a remarkable contribution to the village. Our thoughts and sincere condolences go to Anne and David's family.

### **Now it is time for some Thank You's;**

To all the Parish Councillors who give freely of their time to help make decisions for the benefit of all our residents. Thank you for all you do. Lynne Gibson has recently resigned as a Parish Councillor due to increased commitment to a charity she has helped form in Winchester. We thank her for her contribution and wish her well. The Parish Council therefore have two Councillor vacancies and once due process has been completed by WCC a decision will be made on whether an election is required

or if we can co-opt 2 new councillors. If you are interested in looking after the needs of the parish, please do speak to me or any of the Councillors or come along and observe what we do at one of our meetings.

To Malcolm Hewson and the Volunteers who maintain Ham Green Common. The weather this year has been a real challenge which meant that at times emergency work needed to be done. As there is no longer any contribution from the County Council all you do is greatly appreciated. Particular mention here for the outstanding work done by the HG team to repair the very deep potholes in the HG Car Park. Great job which will be greatly appreciated by all who park there.

To the village shop and post office. We are lucky to have this facility that has a wide range of produce and we can all keep the shop open by regularly using it. This is our Community Shop so please use it whenever you can. Thank you to all of you who look after us.

To our Village School who produce such caring and confident children ready to move on to secondary education in the knowledge that they have had an excellent start to their education. Congratulations to all the Staff and Governors. Congratulations on your Ofsted report.

To Fiona and Mark who continue to inspire us all with their musical recitals that bring joy to those that attend and for their contributions to village organisations from the ticket sales surplus.

Finally, to Nicky Breen our Parish Clerk who looks after all our Parish Council administration and financial matters, which we can report remain in good order passing both internal and external auditor examinations

I am conscious that I have mentioned the word Volunteers a number of times but I can't stress enough how important it is to have volunteers in every aspect of Parish life. The benefits for mental health, spiritual growth and personal development are enormous. For example, what an opportunity for those teenagers involved with Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme

Thank you to all of today's Speaker's and to all of you for attending.

May 2024 be a Happy and Healthy year for us all.

Sue Wood  
Chair  
April 2024.