

Chitterne Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 17 May 2021

Chairman's Report 2020-2021

What a year to write a report on. This time a year ago we were in full lockdown and the pandemic has completely dominated our year.

As soon as the gravity of the Corona virus 19 situation sunk in the Chitterne Resilience Group was formed. The village was divided into zones and each zone had a "Street Rep" appointed along with volunteer "deputies" to assist. They were all brilliant, helping out in many ways anyone in the village who required any form of assistance. We have kick started it now 3 times in each lockdown and our thanks go out to all those who made it run so smoothly. We had to cordon off the play equipment in the playing field and when it was eventually reopened two of the swings had to be removed to comply with "social distancing". I am glad to report that the play area is now fully open and the multi play has just been spruced up with a treatment of Danish oil thanks to Joe Wood and Alistair Pett. Throughout the pandemic we have been continuously kept up to date with all the latest information on Covid and related matters and some light hearted items to cheer us along. So big thanks to Pete Sawyers who very efficiently runs "Petenet" for all the village and to Lindsay Lucas for all the information included in our monthly ChitChat.

On the playing field, more tree work has been carried out and the main item was the removal of the large Poplar tree behind the cricket shed. A large bough had fallen off and it was deemed too risky for the tree to remain. It will also allow light onto the Beech trees in the area to help them develop into better specimens. Our thanks to Councillor Horsfall for highlighting the problem of the Poplar tree and his labours in keeping the Cut so pristine through the lower part of the village. Charlie Micklem retired from his duties of mowing the Chancel so the Cricket Club has handed back the responsibility of that to the Parish Council who have engaged Mark Potter to do the work. A big thank you to Charlie for the care and attention he has given the Chancel over the years. We are hopefully about to reach an agreement with the Cricket Club for this year's ground maintenance. Staying with the tree theme the Lime trees between The Coach House and West Farm are, sadly, well past their sell by date. With the help of our local Wiltshire councillor, Christopher Newbury, it was arranged for the dangerous trees to be removed last September. As with many projects last year it was delayed and then the Cut filled up with water. We are now waiting for the bird nesting season to finish and then the work will commence, I am assured.

Paul Johns has taken over Flood Warden duties from Barry Ricketts. A belated Cut clearance took place after the waters rose and thanks to those intrepid men in waders who did an excellent clearing job. This essential piece of maintenance keeps the water flowing down to the flood meadows and greatly helps to keep us out of trouble.

We were successful in lobbying for improvements to the byway we all know as the "Hollow". Many thanks to Paul Millard of Wiltshire Council who organised the works on our behalf; it has opened new horizons for all our walkers. It was certainly of a standard well beyond my expectations.

I received a mail from Henry Parker on the 14th May. He is Senior Manager, Policy and Public Affairs for BT. This was in answer to yet another query regarding to accessibility to a mobile phone signal in the village. Although a new mast had been erected on Stratton's land, overlooking the village, last September someone forgot to apply for a wayleave to install an electricity to run it. Eventually terms were agreed and they expect power by the end of July and the Fibre link to be completed in August with activation following after that. It is basically an EE ESN (Essential Services Network) but I have been assured that any mobile user in the EE MVNO (Mobile Virtual Network Operators) network will receive a signal. These are EE Mobile, BT, Plusnet, Asda and Virgin Mobile. Anyone with a different supplier is advised to lobby them to request that they either buy space on the mast or they erect their own mast.

The allotments continue to thrive but we have made no progress in the availability of water yet. There are some occupied allotments that appear to be somewhat neglected. If any holder finds themselves unable to maintain and use their allotment please let our clerk know as there is a waiting list for vacant plots.

The helicopter overflying incident last summer was resolved at a very high level, thanks mainly to the input of one of our most senior ranking gentlemen. Without his input there is no way we would have resolved the matter in such a satisfactory manner.

The PC has reviewed many planning applications and by the end of this year the village will have an additional 5 dwellings, hopefully a new stable unit, slightly fewer trees and some double glazed windows.

Under the guidance of Councillor Emmerson the village steward continues to serve us, however he has been absent for most of the past year having been seconded onto Covid duties. Please report any suitable task to our clerk who will pass it on.

I find myself now veering into the more negative aspect of PC news. Despite the heroic efforts of Councillor Neal and others the ongoing problem with traffic volumes and speeding are much the same as they were ten years ago and progress is virtually non-existent. The Valley Farm tip has now been running for 30 years and by the look of it will soon be the highest point in Wiltshire! We continue to monitor the march towards the final lorry load and are increasingly frustrated by being bounced between Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency when posing any questions. Once complete at least one aspect of the B 390 problems will be done with. Similarly we are bounced between Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Constabulary when it comes to traffic calming and speeding. The problem has been highlighted recently with the night-time closure of the A 303, as the B 390 is essential for the re-direction of traffic in those circumstances. The latest correspondence from our Wiltshire Council leader, Philip Whitehead, offers scant hope. I quote from his letter dated 7th May this year "there are many locations where residents would wish to see a reduction in traffic, but heavy goods vehicles and passenger vehicles, whilst unwelcome, are often necessary to support a thriving economy". The PC is looking at the problem with a clean sheet and I hope to be able to have some positive news later in the year.

We had hoped to see the scruffy piece of land at the Tilshead / B390 junction improved by Wiltshire Council, sadly no action yet.

The perennial problem of dog fouling continues. Apart from appealing to people's better nature and decency there is little more that can be said that has not been said many times before. Take up yoga, bend your back and pick it up!

The Kings Head PWLB loan is still awaiting approval. Queries relating to the application have been answered and we await their decision. Thanks to Ian Bell who has taken over the chair from Peter Emmerson of the CCPG.

To finish on a positive note I would like to thank Mike Lucas and Rachel Wilkinson, now retired councillors, for their input into our local machinations during their term of involvement and welcome Jackie Bull and Jeff Barella who have been elected in their place. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their support during this last difficult year and their mastery of Zoom and finally Nikki Spreadbury-Clews, our Clerk, who tries to keep us on the straight and narrow with a modicum of success.