

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 4th May 2021

I expect there will be many Chairpersons around the country starting their annual report along the lines that it has been a challenging and unprecedented year for everyone. Even though covid itself appears to have left the village largely untouched, the effect of the pandemic has disrupted all our lives. The early days of lockdown last year saw us having to cancel the annual Parish and Parish Council meetings and hold our subsequent council meetings remotely. It also demonstrated how well the community could pull together. When the call went out for volunteers to form a Coronavirus Support group to be co-ordinated by the Parish Clerk almost 30 people came forward to help where needed. The fact that that support was only called upon a few times in the early days in no way undermines the willingness and strength of that team of volunteers. I have no doubt that there have been any number of individual acts of kindness and help by people around the village which should also be acknowledged. At the same time, it should be remembered what an invaluable service was provided by the team in the shop at Ansty. Helping to keep spirits up during the lockdown were Jeremy & Marilyn Smith with their Christmas lights trail and Easter Egg hunt and of course Simon & Hannah Roberts and Bryan Bere with another superb Christmas tree display. The flower boxes at the 4 entrances to the village have also provided a welcome splash of colour. A big thank you to everyone involved and apologies from me if I have missed anyone.

Despite being locked down for most of the past year the Parish Council has continued to meet, albeit remotely, and to work on your behalf. Unfortunately, we have said goodbye to Cllrs Marilyn Smith Christine Skinner, Sue Crabb and Richard Ashley but been pleased to say hello to Cllrs Carol Byrom and Graham Waters. This means we are still 2 short on our council of 7 which also means more pressure on the 5 of us that are left. Please ask yourselves if you feel you could spare some time for this essential arm of local government, without which Dorset Council would take over control with only the ward Councillor representing the village.

So, what have we been doing? The playpark has had new swing seats and chains fitted and a soft surface established under the swings and we are just about to sign a 25yr extension to the playpark lease with Magna. A Riparian Owners handbook has been produced and issued to all householders bordering the stream. A Climate Action Group has been formed in the village under the umbrella of the Parish Council and led by Cllr. Byrom. We have held an on-site meeting with Highways to identify where and how measures can be introduced or improved to reduce speeding through our lanes. This will include speed monitoring equipment being installed for a period which may lead to Speed Indicating Devices being employed. As soon as pandemic rules allow the Community Speed Watch led by Cllr Pearce will be back in action, hopefully with a few more volunteers, currently Sue Widdowson. The development at Brook Green continues to throw up concerns and has been the subject of correspondence between the Parish Council, Dorset Council planners and the Environment Agency. We continue to ensure that the parish's green spaces are maintained by Chris Haskett on his mighty mower and help St. Martins PCC with a grant for the churchyard. Another new noticeboard has been manufactured and installed by John Lilley, this time outside the school. Of course, much of what I have described has, and will continue to, entail additional expenditure which resulted in a higher than average precept for this coming year. Let me assure you that the Parish Council does not take such measures lightly, but it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we have sufficient financial resources to meet current and future demands on your behalf. For those who take a keen interest in such matters, the final accounts for financial year 2020-21 will be available for public inspection from the 14th June – 23rd July 2021.

I cannot finish this report without saying a very personal thank you to our Clerk, Dawn, for her unstinting support to the Parish Council for the last 5yrs, something she only took on temporarily until a permanent replacement could be found. And on that note, I am incredibly pleased to welcome and introduce Amanda Crocker, a very experienced Clerk, who took over from Dawn on the 1st May.

That concludes my annual report for 2020-21.