

Chairman's report 2019 - 2020

Who would have believed that I would be writing the annual report for Warnham Parish Council in 'lock-down'?

Due to Government guidelines, all scheduled Parish Council face-to-face meetings have been cancelled and instead we hold "virtual, on-line" meetings, which have allowed us to continue supporting Parish activities during this difficult time. On-line meetings have allowed us to deal with planning applications and any other business considered urgent. However, just as with private life, everything else is unfortunately on hold and this has affected the implementation of some planned work.

Twelve months ago, when I became Chairman, this was also during a period of upheaval. Our well-established Parish Council changed dramatically in May 2019. For various reasons our 'team' was reduced to 4 of the previous members. Thankfully, an additional 4 members were co-opted, and this allowed us to have a workable group. Three new members also joined the council in June bringing us up to a full complement of Councillors. Personally, I think it is a pity that younger members of the parish, and those living away from the centre, have not come forward to take a more active role in the administration and organisation of their parish. This is something we must encourage in the future.

In the last 12 months a couple of topics have dominated our meetings – namely traffic in the village and the plans for Gatwick expansion, although this has not prevented us from making progress with two new exciting projects – the new playground and the Wild About Warnham campaign.

Traffic in the village of Warnham

This topic draws most members of the public to the opening session of public meetings and reflects the level of feeling about the amount of traffic flowing through the village, as well as the speed of the traffic.

The proposed traffic calming measures on the A24 were implemented in February. The impact of these changes was difficult to assess due to road closures in Broadbridge Heath, which occurred at the same time. The clerk to the council received a large number of complaints regarding the Broadbridge Heath road closures. These were all forwarded to the appropriate administrators who advised us to 'wait for completion of the works.'

Large HGVs accessing Field Place along Robin Hood Lane caused considerable damage to the road surface, to the extent that the road became dangerous and had to be closed. This problem was dealt with after consultation with HDC/WSCC. The road surface has been replaced, in some places twice, and restricted access to Robin Hood Lane by HGVs has been enforced.

The two traffic calming schemes approved by the previous Council have still to be implemented; namely Friday Street and Bell Road schemes and these will be initiated once finance is available.

Our proposed cycle route from Warnham and Horsham, which is now financially supported by Warnham Parish Council, may benefit from the present 'lock-down'. The Transport Secretary has told local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. With finance in place and active government encouragement for this type of scheme then we plan to initiate this project ~~in~~ as soon as possible.

A number of parishioners have signed up for the Warnham Community Speed Watch Scheme and received the appropriate training. The location of speed checks has to be identified and agreed by the local police and after the Parish Council purchased a 'speed gun' the group began monitoring the speed of traffic in Church Street on a regular basis from October. Due to the current restrictions, the group cannot operate at the moment, although the said restrictions have obviously reduced the amount of traffic flow. It is hoped that once this project is re-instated that more volunteers will come forward to continue this very effective work.

Funds for local highways problems through Operation Watershed continue to be limited. Further funding is to be applied for. However, we are fortunate that our Environmental Officer, Tony Maughan, is able to undertake minor repair work that has been brought to our attention by parishioners. Tony has also been responsible for renovating several fingerboards around the parish. Other, larger, problems have been assessed and dealt with by WSCC.

Planning

In June 2019 a referendum was held for the Warnham Neighbourhood Development Plan. The plan was agreed by an overwhelming majority of the parish and went forward to be adopted by Horsham District Council. The plan was so well received that it was nominated to be included in the competition held by the Royal Town Planning Institute South East. Warnham's plan was awarded a Commendation for Excellence in Plan Making practice. It was very fitting that the two councillors who spearheaded this project, Roger Purcell and John Hamer, should receive this award at a ceremony held in Portsmouth. Our NDP is key to Warnham being able to support the demands for future development from HDCs Local Plan Review whilst maintaining the rural character of our environment.

The Parish Council considered 30 local planning applications in the year – very much in line with previous years. We have registered a number of domestic applications and we have visited the sites to ensure that the permitted development will sit comfortably in the parish and countryside.

Warnham Parish Council has taken a very active role in strongly opposing the proposal for an incinerator on the edge of the parish. Representation from the council was made to the planning permission appeal held in Horsham and although the appeal was successful for the developers, we are optimistic that sufficient conditions have been applied to control the implementation of the plans.

The proposals for Gatwick expansion continue to be a standing item on the agenda – although not recently! As always, the parish needs to be aware of any changes and

developments at Gatwick and we are fortunate to have Sally Pavey, Chair of Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions (CAGNE) on the Parish Council.

New projects

This year we have launched a new **website** (www.warnham.org.uk). After putting out a proposal for tenders we were very pleased to award the contract to Business Espresso. This is a small, local firm who have also developed Warnham School's website. Our new, very attractive website has been a great help in launching two new projects; the **new playground appeal** in Hollands Way and **Wild About Warnham**.

Our clerk, Ashley Brooks, continued the work begun by the chair of the Committee, John Hamer, to improve and refurbish the playground next to the cricket field. Monies have now been raised to order the new playground from the designer, Eibe. Ashley secured lottery funding which enabled us to reach the target of £66,000 with additional support coming from those who care passionately about its growth and the needs of younger residents. Construction will start as soon as it is safe to do so and hopefully be completed by the summer holidays – fingers crossed.

Wild about Warnham makes full use of the new website and other types of social media. This project, initiated by David Bridges, hopes to develop an awareness of environmental issues and to suggest ways in which we can all take action to improve biodiversity and help support our local environment. David's infectious enthusiasm has triggered a great following. Ian Curling from the Parish Council is chairing regular committee meetings with David to see where the PC can help with this project. Obviously, as I write, many of the planned activities for this project are on hold but the time is being well spent in further research and planning. Watch this space.

To conclude, I would like to thank, on behalf of the Parish Council, our County Councillor, Christian Mitchell, together with our District Councillors, Stuart Ritchie and Tricia Youtan, for attending our meetings and for keeping us informed of what is happening at County and District levels. This is obviously a two-way process and they also represent Warnham at the District and County level.

Ashley Brooks has been invaluable in guiding me through this year. The path has not always been smooth, but she has calmly guided me and the rest of the council in the right direction. Thanks also to the other councillors for all their hard work; particularly our Vice Chairman Geoff Read and group leaders.

Planning Committee: Paul Bickford
Traffic and Highways Group: Paul Bickford
Recreation Advisory Group: Geoff Read

Ann Lloyd, Chairman
May 2020