

Chairman's Report – Tidenham Annual Parish Meeting 2021

The Parish Council has been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic as have all organisations across the Country. However, determined to carry on with business as normal, the Council quickly embraced online technology and with in house training and encouragement Councillors have been able to hold meetings over the past year using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

The Annual Parish Meeting by law must be held between 1st March and 1st June each year and the Parish Council had hoped to postpone it until Covid restrictions had been eased and more social community events could take place. Unfortunately, the Government has not allowed such a postponement this year. This meeting is therefore being held virtually but further community events will be held later in the summer.

In August 2020 Mr John Powell stood down as Parish Councillor – thanks to John for his work for the Council over many years.

During the year various members of the Gloucestershire Police have visited the Parish Council virtual meeting. Councillors review crime figures for the Parish each month and have welcomed the opportunities to discuss these and other policing matters at these meetings. In November Councillors welcomed the new Superintendent Jane Probert who gave an overview of the changes to policing in the County and Forest area. Unfortunately there were no Officers available to attend the Annual Parish Meeting but the latest crime statistics for the Parish have been supplied by PC Robert Green, the new PC for the Sedbury area.

The normal business of the Parish Council has continued during the past year.

- The Planning and Highways Committee considered a total of 59 planning applications and liaised with Gloucestershire County Council Highways Dept. and other interested parties on numerous road and footpath issues.

- The Amenities Committee was able to manage the facilities in the Parish in a Covid secure way – including the various periods of closure for some or all of the Parish outdoor play equipment. Thank you to residents who followed the ever-changing guidelines. Essential work has also been carried out on some trees and church yard walls during the year along with the ongoing maintenance of the play equipment and emptying of litter and dog waste bins – the use of both of which has hugely increased over the past year.

- The Finance Committee has carried on its business through virtual meetings and the Committee were pleased to agree to grants for Monmouthshire CAB to help with the increased demand for their services in the Parish due to the difficulties for many people during the pandemic, for Chepstow Covid 19 Helping Group for card machines to help people pay for shopping the Group was buying for them and for Greenways and Cycleroutes for wildflower seeds and bulbs for a mile stretch of the newly opened route to Tintern.

- The Mopla Cottages Committee have kept in touch with the letting agents to ensure tenants have been coping with the difficulties presented by the pandemic. The Committee has also awarded grants during the year to Monmouthshire CAB and the Chepstow Covid 19 Helping Group for help for people in the Parish struggling due to financial and other difficulties caused by the pandemic.

Poor's Allotments Charity was struggling to find a volunteer to take over the roles of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer from Helen Molyneux who has undertaken these roles for many years with much hard work and dedication. The Parish Council has agreed that the Parish Clerk will undertake these roles with a payment to cover time and expenses being paid by the Charity to the Council.

Looking forward to the next year the Parish Council has already committed to several activities and will be introducing some new initiatives:

A Parish Community Speed Awareness Campaign is due to go ahead once restrictions are lifted – we already have several volunteers but more are welcome if you would like to get involved.

The introduction of a Community Litter Picking group is being considered – more details will be available over the next few months.

A permanent Silent Soldier has been purchased for the roundabout in Ormerod Road, Sedbury that is due to be refurbished by Beacon Estates later in the year. Some funds will also be available for planting the surface of the roundabout. Plaques acknowledging the history of the roundabout and the ties with Beachley Barracks will be placed on or near it.

A bench has been sponsored for the new Wyevalley Greenway route and will be in place soon.

Although Councillors agreed not to go ahead immediately with a Neighbourhood Development Plan they agreed to look at this again in the future. Such a plan involves much community engagement and more information will be available at the community events later in the year.

The Parish Council is shortly to finalise details of its Youth Engagement Project (YETI). This exciting new initiative will involve the employment of a Youth Worker in the Parish to work with organisations within the Parish and Forest of Dean to improve the experience of young people living locally. The Council is extremely grateful to Gloucestershire County Council for a grant awarded to help with the project. More details will be announced at the community events later in the year.

From 23rd June 2021 Parish Council meetings will resume face to face and from then on will be held in Sedbury and Beachley Village Hall. The meeting dates and agendas for each meeting are on the Parish Council website www.tidenhamparishcouncil.co.uk and on the noticeboards in Tidenham Chase, Woodcroft, Tutshill and Sedbury.

I would personally like to thank all of the Councillors for their time, work and effort that they have given over the past challenging 12 months.