

The parish council has three main functions and in this report I will take each in turn and review our activities over the last year.

## Representing the whole electorate within the parish

- As always, we handled a large number of queries from the public (with the clerk as the public face of the council) and planning applications.
- The closure of the Ock Bridge was a significant loss to our local footpath network and we have actively been pushing the county council for a replacement as we recognise its importance to the community.
- We have devoted a considerable amount of time to reviewing proposals for the installation of fibre broadband from both Gigaclear and Airband, with a focus on ensuring that disruption to residents was minimised and that any damage to public spaces was rectified.
- We have successfully lobbied the district council to retain and replace some of the bins around the village.
- Our clerk has been actively monitoring the ongoing A417 roadworks associated with junction improvements in the vicinity of the development west of the A417. We have liaised with both the contractors and the county council to ensure disruption is minimised.
- We have taken up specific issues relating to public transport, specifically on buses. We acted to restore the correct stop location on the High Street when it was inadvertently repositioned by the bus operator and have ensured that the county council and operators were aware of the impact on residents of service disruption due to flooding at East Challow.

## Delivering services to meet local needs

- We have had the trees around the village that are on our land surveyed and have carried out the first stage of a phased tree maintenance plan, initially targeting the highest priority work.
- We have carried out repairs to the corner of Church Green, adding new topsoil and reseeded where the green had started to erode.
- We have continued with our grass cutting and routine maintenance activities, including repairs to play equipment.
- We have been working towards transfer of the Nursery End public open space to the parish council, having successfully resolved some blocking issues around ownership and maintenance of some areas of public space.
- In the meantime, we have also been challenging the developer about maintenance issues with the playground to ensure standards are maintained.
- We have welcomed Wilf Rolls as our new litter picker - an important role that makes a real difference to our local environment.

## Striving to improve quality of life in the parish

- We have continued to champion the provision of new leisure facilities in the village via the QEII recreation field. Obtaining planning permission has been a challenging and lengthy process. However, we have finally resolved the outstanding ecological issues and are in the process of commissioning the archaeological survey that is the final obstacle to planning permission.
- We have been instrumental in using available funding sources to enhance life for residents.
  - We applied for S106 funding on behalf of the village hall for the new audio-visual system, now in use for the village cinema.
  - We supported the Wantage Gymnastics Centre's application for S106 funds towards equipment for their club.
  - We supported the school's application for S106 funds for a public work of art.
  - We obtained S106 funding for a new surface for our multi-use games area, which is now in place and has enhanced the area considerably.
  - We have obtained part-funding for a new play fort from the Public Purposes Charity, with the balance of the funds provided from our Community Infrastructure Levy reserves.
- We have engaged with the county council to develop plans for biodiversity management in the community woodland and surrounding open space.
- We are in the process of applying for S106 to provide a replacement teen shelter in the skate park. Longer term, we need to look at replacement of the entire park, but this is a much larger project, dependent on freeing up sufficient time to investigate suitable funding avenues.
- We organised the installation of a defibrillator at the Wantage Gymnastics Centre, filling in one of the remaining gaps in coverage around the village.
- We surveyed the village on a proposed 20mph limit and, on the basis of the responses, put in an application for a 20mph zone to the county council.
- We have also undertaken a consultation on extending the 30mph throughout the section of the A417 within the village and are lobbying the county council for its introduction.
- We have continued to press the district council on the S106 funds we are due towards a footpath to link Bow Road to Horsecroft.
- We have reconstituted and our public work of art working group and plans for the installation of an art trail around the village are moving forward.
- We are preparing an application to register the local pub with the district council as an asset of community value.
- We have continued to manage green spaces with the village as well as our regular programme of mowing and maintenance to verges and village green. We have taken forwards some longer term projects.
  - We organised planting of daffodils around the village, carried out by a local gardener and funded partly by a donation from a parishioner.
  - We agreed to set aside an area on Chapel Road to be mowed less frequently to encourage nature recovery and biodiversity.

- We planted four rose bushes outside the village hall to mark the late Queen's jubilee.
- We funded the purchase and installation of community speedwatch signs at the entrances to the village.

## General comments

- We have been fortunate to welcome a number of new councillors, many of whom are already making a difference to our ongoing projects.
- Our clerk will be taking over as responsible financial officer this year and is embarked on her CLICA training.
- My thanks go to all our councillors for giving up their time voluntarily to help their community.
- Particular thanks are also due to our clerk, who has continued to serve the parish council with professionalism and efficiency and who has been instrumental in delivering much of what we have achieved this year.