Chiseldon Parish Council

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2017 – 2018

2016 has been a year of marked change for both the Parish Council and the Parish as a whole.

A series of boundary changes have taken place across Swindon to support the creation of the new Parishes. As a result Badbury Park was removed from Chiseldon Parish to form part of the new `Central Swindon South Parish’.

I can however confirm that we were successful in retaining our full remit of 15 Councillors. The Parish Council continues to manage their responsibilities through the original 4 committees – Finance, Environment, Recreation & Planning. This year we added a 5th Committee to focus on Transport Development. Each Committee Chair will shortly provide an update on their work this year.

During the year the composition of our Parish Council has seen a change of membership. We have welcomed 4 new Councillors; they are Cllrs David West, John Martin, Jane Beaumont and Ian Henderson, whilst accepting resignations from 4 long standing Cllrs including Adelaide Dudman, Margarita Cabrera; Wendy Wright and Sarah Bowles. We would like to repeat our thanks and appreciation for all the hard work and the contribution they have made to the Parish over the years.

I would also like to thank all our Parish Councillors for the time and effort they devote to their duties on a completely voluntary basis. Each Cllr shares a passionate concern for the well being of the Parish, always having the best interests of the community at heart.

The Parish Council however, would not function without the pivotal role of the Parish Clerk. We were very happy to welcome Clair Wilkinson as our new Parish Clerk at the beginning for this year. In a year of significant change, with increased responsibilities transferred from the Borough Council to the Parish, Clair has delivered an outstanding performance in her support to the Full council, to the Chair and to the wider Parish Community.

Our final thanks and gratitude is extended to our Ward Councillors – Cllr Gary Sumner, Cllr Fionuala Foley and Cllr Eric Shaw, who work hard to represent and resolve many issues on behalf of the Parish. They also provide ongoing support through their attendance at our Council meetings and holding monthly surgeries in the Parish, reacting quickly to our requests for help. We would like to acknowledge the specific contribution of Cllr Eric Shaw who this year, has performed a duel role as both Mayor of Swindon and Ward Cllr for Chiseldon and Lawn.

Without a doubt the biggest change that the Parish Council and the Parish have experienced to date is the transfer of responsibilities for most Environmental services from the Borough Council to the Parish.

As you may know the Borough Council have been required to divert funds from non-critical functions such as environmental services to services in support of Children and the Elderly.

The Borough’s financial forecast over the next 3 years has projected a marked decline in funding for environmental services and this would have resulted in reduced levels of service at a local level. The Borough therefore engaged Parishes with a view to take over responsibility for environmental services.

Following extensive negotiations with the Borough Council and an evaluation of a range of service solutions, it was agreed to transfer responsibility for environmental services to the Parish from June 2016. The service model adopted was considered to provide the best value for money and enhance the environmental service levels across the Parish. Chiseldon Parish Council is in fact now able to tailor the services by area across the Parish to meet local needs.

The Service Model we agreed to deliver across the Parish includes grass cutting, hedge trimming, light street cleaning, litter clearance and the emptying of bins. These are in addition to those services already provided such as dog bin emptying, the maintenance of the Rec ground, Castle View play area, Butts road cemetery and chapel. We are currently in further negotiations with SBC to extend this service model and we will keep you updated on developments.

Last year we reported to you that a new Parish Plan committee had been formed led by residents who reported into the Parish Council. Their remit as you may recall was to investigate and report on the future development through a series of public consultations.

The Parish Council received the findings of the Parish Plan investigation and now regularly refers to the key findings in our consideration of Community Priorities.

The top four areas reported to be of concern to residents are:-

* Speeding
* Volume of traffic
* J15/M4 junction and the consequence of rat running through the villages
* Village appearance (litter and dog mess)

And the top 4 things that people most loved about living in the Parish are:-

* protecting its rural setting
* community spirit
* public transport links to nearby towns and services
* village shops

I can confirm that the subject of speeding, volume of traffic and general highway matters has increasingly occupied the Parish Council’s attention during the year. In particular we conducted a thorough investigation of the New Road build out installation, following the adverse response and reaction received from significant number of residents .The outcome of our investigation led to the parish council voting for its removal and replacement with a more appropriate traffic calming solution in New Road.

Going forward the Parish Council considered that a more direct focus should be given to matters concerning highway, traffic & transport both public and private. In Feb this year the Full Council agreed to form the new Transport Development sub-Committee. The Chair of this Committee, Cllr Mills ,will shortly explain more about its function.

Turning to the importance of our Village Appearance. I want to recognise the fantastic turn out of residents on Saturday 4th March in support of the Chiseldon Parish litter pick. This was Chiseldon Parish playing its part in ‘The Great British Clean up’ and how well it was marked across our Parish - A great show of civic pride.

I would like to acknowledge the support of our Pubs in the Parish that provided free refreshments to the volunteers – including The Patriot Arms, the Bakers arms , the Plough and the Calley arms.

I would also like to single out our Chair of Environment , Cllr Chris Rawlings , who together with Clair Wilkinson our Clerk organized this event Thanks also to the Scouts who turned out in force to support the day.

Prior to passing over to the our Finance Committee Chair who will explain in detail the background behind the precept increase in 2017/18

 I would like to stress that whilst any increase in the precept is unwelcome, the annual increase based on a Band D property is £27.78 and represents just under £0.54 per week. This means that the total bill for a band D property will be £91.75 compared to £63.97 last year.

This level will put the Parish Council on a stronger footing for future years in order to provide more services, protect and increase the standards of the ones we have and be in a position to respond to additional service transfers from the Borough to the Parish

In closing, I would like to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed this last year as Chair of Chiseldon Parish Council and have considered it both a privilege and a hugely enjoyable experience to work together with my fellow Councillors to support the Community and this beautiful Parish.

Councillor Caroline Brady

Chairman of Chiseldon Parish Council – April 2017