



## **Chiseldon Parish Council**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021-2022**

The 2021-2022 Municipal year has come and gone relatively quickly; with COVID-19 restrictions coming to an end, bringing things "back to normal" at the council has been high on our agenda. While working at home has not created many problems for the council, we are now offering a staff presence in the Butts Road Chapel during our published opening hours and council meetings have been back "in person" for some time.

Public are welcome to watch council meetings in person, however, one advantage of the pandemic was online meetings which saw more members of the public viewing and engaging with councillors. The temporary legislation that permitted online meetings has now ended and as a result, public engagement has once again waned. The council has provided feedback via the National Association of Local Councils that online meetings were both useful and improved participation in the hopes that legislation will begin to catch up with the ever faster moving technologies.

Talking of technology, while not a parish council led initiative, I'm pleased to see that many premises within the parish have now been connected to fibre-optic "gigabit" broadband which is a significant improvement over the old ADSL broadband offered over the copper telephone network. I'd like to say thank you to Sir Robert Buckland, Borough Councillor Gary Sumner, and Borough Councillor Jenny Jefferies for their assistance in securing a place on the Government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme. Special thanks go to Neil Richardson for his hard work in promoting and communicating progress on this scheme to the general public alongside Cllr Gary Sumner and Cllr Ian Kearsy

In terms of councillors, we now have a full complement which underlines people's desire to participate and make a difference within the community. There are now four committees; Finance, Contracts and Human Resources Committee chaired by me, Environment, General Purpose and Amenities chaired by Andy Rogers, Planning, Highways & Transport chaired by Ian Kearsy and the Recreation Hall Replacement Committee where the chairmanship is decided on a monthly basis. A monthly full parish council meeting brings together all councillors to review work processed by the committees and to deal with any larger issues.

At this stage, I'd like to thank all the staff and councillors for their valued contribution to the council and the community throughout the last twelve months.

I will now note some of the key issues each of the committees have worked on throughout the last year:

#### ***Planning, Highways & Transport***

While the council is not a statutory consultee, the Planning Authority (Swindon Borough Council) pass all applications to us for comment. The highlights of 2021/22 on this committee were:



- Continued objection to the use of Wroughton Airfield by an aggregate company around its location in the AONB and the traffic generated. This will be brought to a public inquiry in May of this year.
- Approval of a replacement data centre at the top of Brimble Hill including liaison with the developers and construction company throughout.
- Further requests made to SBC concerning traffic on B4005, further pressure to investigate a weight limit and requests made to repair the ever-deteriorating road surface on New Road and Hodson Road.
- Reiteration of our response to the housing development off Berricot Lane which is to go to appeal.
- Various anti-speeding measures including the installation of Speed Indicator Displays in Badbury.

Cllr Ian Kearsey will provide his own, more detailed report for the public.

### ***Finance, Contracts and Human Resources Committee***

With the increased cost of living, the council was careful to try to minimise any potential increase in precept and, with the use of a small amount of unallocated reserves, precept remained static at £143,000. The addition of homes within Burderop Park meant that this amount was divided across a larger number of premises and this therefore showed on the SBC Council Tax Demand as a 7.5% decrease. While this is a good news story, the council is beginning to see pressure on costs and therefore an increase in precept in the 2023/24 municipal year looks more and more likely.

Other work within the committee has been business as usual with the various staffing and finance matters being managed throughout the year. One significant change was to our main bankers; we changed from Santander to Unity Bank which now allows us to make payments via faster payments rather than by cheque and avoids the constant passing of the cheque book between councillors to authorise payments.

### ***Environment, General Purpose and Amenities Committee***

Cllr Andy Rogers took over the helm of the EGPA committee this year to continue the good work that Cllr Chris Rawlings has done for many years. Repairs to the recreation hall and chapel, a replacement path in the cemetery and a new flooring in the Castle View Play Area are just some of the important achievements of this committee in the previous year.

Andy will produce his annual report separately which will give more detail.

### ***Recreation Hall Replacement Committee***

The existing recreation ground was allocated in the late 1960s and the existing recreation hall, a temporary "portacabin" type structure was erected in the early 2000s. The building is at the end of life and needs replacement, and at the same time the population of Chiseldon Parish increased by 55.6% between 2001 and 2019.



It's clear that our recreation provision has not kept pace with the demand and changes in lifestyle, so a number of different options are being looked into to not only replace the hall, but to potentially increase recreation facilities as a whole.

At this stage, the committee is looking into the "art of the possible" within the tight constraints of limited land and limited budget with no idea being deemed too ludicrous to discuss. As a result, some "out there" ideas are likely to be thrown around and discussed while deliberations take place, but please do rest assured that a 28-day public consultation will take place prior to any final decision being made and work beginning. Similarly, there is a method statement available to download from our website, and with progress to date, we don't expect to see anything worthy of a consultation being in place until December 2022 at the earliest.

### ***Into 2022/2023!***

The 2022/2023 municipal year looks to be a positive one where the council can continue to make strong contributions to the community through adding commentary to planning applications, improving recreation and play facilities and working closely with Swindon Borough Council to secure funding to renew and upgrade our deteriorating road infrastructure all while maintaining precept at a sensible level.

As always, if there's anything you feel that the council can do to improve the parish, please do get in touch with our clerk. Where a request falls within the remit of the council, we'll ask one of our committees to investigate what we can do. Where it's not within our remit, we'll endeavour to put you in touch with the organisation best placed to help.

Cllr Matt Harris  
Chairman 2021/2022