

Well, it's my first full year as Chairman and it's been a year that no-one is likely to forget for a long, long time. Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their commitment and hard work during this difficult time, their individual skills and experience have made my position so much easier and allows us to function well as a group. Also, a great big thank you to Vysian for keeping us on the straight and narrow, most of us are new to council work and we have relied heavily on her experience and knowledge of the things we need to address as a council. I would also like to add my thanks to Neil and Will for their time on the council. There are currently two vacancies on the council as a result of their resignations and it would be good to fill these as soon as possible. Coronavirus has had a dramatic impact on all our lives over the last year or so but I feel that as a community there are, in place, support structures to help the more vulnerable and needy, which I hope has lessened the impact on villagers's lives. I would like to thank particularly the Parochial Church Council for the food/provision bank that they started during the early stages of the outbreak, Jo our Parish Nurse and Gill Payne for the Helpline she set up.

So, what have we achieved?

Since the new council was appointed in 2019 we have maintained the precept, our basic financing, at the same level and have still managed to increase our reserves to help cover any exceptional expenditure. There are a number of projects that we need to carry out over the next period and our healthy financial situation will provide a solid base for these.

Some of the equipment on our playing field has reached the end of its useful life and we are in the process of replacing the children's cradle swings, the old swings could not be guaranteed safe and the structure has been there for many years. We have also had to remove some of the wooden pieces of equipment which had started to rot and we are reviewing the rest regularly to ensure safety. The remaining equipment is in quite good order although we will need to have some renovation work completed this year on some items. Funding for new adult and potentially children's equipment is being sought and we hope to have this in place later this year. With the restrictions imposed due to the Covid epidemic our Playing Field/ Play Area has been closed at times but it is now fully open and we are committed to improving the range of equipment available to residents and visitors alike. We have surface improvements planned for the car parking area which we hope will also improve the overall look of the area. We are also doing some renovation work on the benches around the village to ensure they have a long and useful life.

Planning issues, as always, have taken up a considerable amount of our time and there have been frustrations and dismay at some of the decisions that have been made. However, as a council, I believe that we have listened to the views of the village and have supported these where we have been able to and put these views forward in a coherent and balanced way. We have no decision-making capacity as a council but our views are taken into account and it is important that we and the village as a whole engage in the planning process. We live in a lovely rural environment and it is always a challenge to try and maintain that environment but at the same time allow sympathetic and enhancing developments.

Road safety is also a constant battle and we have continued to fund regular Speedcam operations in the village. Our Community Speedwatch program has been curtailed due to the Covid restrictions but we are now able to restart and hope to get this back up and running in the near future. Parking outside the Business Park has become a regular theme during weekdays and despite our support of a request by residents for parking restrictions, to allow easy access to driveways and improved safety in the Business Park area, the application was rejected. We continue to monitor this situation but there is little we can do at this time.

Footpaths are very much a part of country life and we have a significant number in our parish area. We are fortunate to have one member of our council who has been interested in footpath

maintenance for many years and along with members of the public helps to keep our footpaths safe and accessible by reporting any safety issues to the appropriate authority.

You will all, I am sure, have noticed the amazing reduction in litter discarded on our roadsides and in the ditches around our village and beyond. This is mainly down to the tireless efforts of two ladies in the village whose commitment to improving the environment is amazing. There are now a handful of others who help on an irregular basis. We have already thanked Louise and Ruth directly but would now like to add our formal thanks to that. We would ask all villagers to be considerate about disposing of litter in the proper way and also to be on the lookout for those who do not.

I would also like to thank the Gardening Club for their efforts in improving the look of our village. There are a number of small projects planned for this year, supported by the council, which we hope will further enhance the environment we live in.

Finally, let's hope that we can get back to normal in the coming 12 months and, as a council, support the community where we are able. We will be marking the end of restrictions with a post Covid party for the whole village.