

Itchen Valley Parish Council Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting April 2018

We started last year with vacancies for two councillors. Since then we have been joined by Chris Jeffes and Alistair Ward-boughton-leigh both from Itchen Abbas. Chris has taken on the task of development of our footpaths working with the Ramblers Association on replacement of stiles with kissing gates. Alistair as an introduction to Parish Council work by being given the task of organising the litter pick.

Once again we start our new year with a vacancy. Oliver Denniss having left the Valley has resigned. He has been with us for two years and in that time has carried out the major tasks behind the scenes of bringing our asset register up to date, seeing that the various pieces of Parish Council land have been properly registered and that we have assets realistically insured. There is some work still to be completed and Oliver has offered to do this, for which we thank him and all his past work. We wish him and Amanda well for the future.

Details on finance are reported separately but overall our accounts are in good health. Some of the money accumulated over the past few years is now being spent (see reports on open spaces and communications below). On the administration side new internal and external auditors have been appointed and the outcome of their forthcoming inspections is awaited. Work continues on the review of statutory documents which should become easier each year but when new legislation is introduced there is a significant increase in the amount of work required. We have to thank Yvette Riley, her team on the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Alan Weaver our Clerk for a great deal of hard work in these areas.

Planning issues continue and the Planning Committee meets each month as well as being discussed, when necessary, at Full Council Meetings. The Parish Plan and South Downs National Park Policies are used as guidelines. As mentioned in previous reports there are times when we feel little account is taken of our views. It is interesting to note that when talking to councillors from other local parishes they feel the same. When there appear to be breaches of planning the question arises as to whether it is the Parish Council's responsibility to bring these to the attention of the enforcement officers. As an agreed policy this is now done. Continued representations have been made to the South Downs National Park Authority regarding their strategic plan and three parish councillors together with one of our City Councillors and our County Councillor visited their offices in Midhurst. Unfortunately it would seem that our views fell on deaf ears. Outside the National Park, Winchester City Council have called for SHELAAAs and we have highlighted this with local land owners who may have potential sites. It is important to remember that with any development there is a need for local social or affordable housing. When checked earlier in the year there were seventeen cases in our area where an application has been made with this need. Thanks go to Christopher Langford and his Planning Committee for their hard work and vigilance in a difficult area where there is often bound to be a level of controversy.

As can be seen from the accounts there has been considerable investment in our play areas and open spaces. Following a safety inspection of the play equipment new fall matting had to be laid both at Couch Green and the Old School Field in Easton. This has been a considerable expense. It is now in place and should last a number of years. Provision of a new play tower for the Old School Field is now under way and should be installed in the not too distant future. Money has also had to be spent improving the fencing at Couch Green as well as fitting a lockable barrier to the car park.

This has been done following several warnings of potential occupation of the fields by travellers. Some may consider this to be unnecessary but to do nothing and then find travellers had moved in is not a wise alternative. One of the most noticeable achievements is the removal of the old changing rooms from the King George V playing field and for free. In the short term we are now looking for a moderate storage container for keeping equipment safe. In the long term there is potential for a project to improve the facilities at this location and three of your councillors have visited other parishes to see what can be achieved. Thanks go to Yvette Riley, Paul Moffatt, Richard Stoodley and Christopher Langford for their involvement with all the various aspects of looking after our open spaces.

Before they happened discussions were held with the organisers of the two cycling events held last summer. This seemed to have helped as there has not been any significant adverse comment coming back to us. Thanks go to those who volunteered to act as marshals for the event which was fund raising for charity.

Once again Boom Town feature significantly in our year. At the event there were traffic delays on entry and over the Christmas period the organisers put in an application for a new licence which asked for an extra day, a significant increase in numbers and to allow higher levels of noise. With the help of two of our City Councillors, Kim Gottlieb and Lisa Griffiths, and our County Councillor Jackie Porter a "drop in" meeting was held where people were able to speak to representatives of the Boom Town organisers and the City Licensing Officers. It was estimated that in excess of sixty people attended. In agreement with many others we submitted objections; to increasing numbers until it could be shown that the traffic problems of several years past did not continue and to any increase in noise levels. The organisers withdrew their application for the significant increase in the numbers of the public allowed to attend but the new license allowed an increase in the number of staff and the extra day but not any significant increase in noise levels. As is required the land owner has applied for planning permission to go with the new licence. We submitted our recommendation that this should be compatible with the new licence but not in any way exceed it. On the positive side to Boom Town we received a large increase in the funds which are for distribution to local charitable causes. This was due to a change in the method of distribution amongst the local villages by which the Itchen Valley significantly gained. It would be nice to see an overall increase in the generosity of those involved with putting on this event when inevitably there will always be disruption for the local communities, albeit for a relatively short period. The majority of the funds received have now been distributed.

Once again local foot paths and rights of way have been well looked after, as far as time and funds allow, by our lengthsman ably organised by Paul Moffatt. Our thanks go to Paul and lengthsman Mike Ring. Sadly Mike has decided to resign as lengthsman which is a great pity. Unfortunately although for our parish he has no problem with the organisation of work requirements and schedules some other parishes have caused unnecessary problems. In consequence we are having to look for another lengthsman. Continuing on the highways theme most of our roads compared with some other parts of the county are in reasonably good order. There are exceptions, Easton and its nearby surrounding roads are a cause for concern and have been highlighted with HCC Highways by Jackie Porter and myself. We have also made our views known regarding the Cart and Horses Junction which is still a cause for concern. Although not in our Parish it does affect many residents who are. Having become aware of the proposed M3/A34 link project a meeting was held with a

representative of Highways England. Submissions expressing our concerns have been sent to both the consultation website and direct to the representative with whom we met.

On the communication front there are major changes afoot. The Official Parish Notice Board opposite the Village Hall in Itchen Abbas has been taken down to be refurbished. To maintain the integrity of notices, which by law we are obliged to display, one side will be dedicated to official notices only and will be kept locked with designated key holders. The other side will be free for the posting of any other suitable material. Thanks to Steve Andrews for organising this work. On the electronic information side, after a lengthy and detailed selection a new website provider has been found and they are working hard to get it up and running. Having seen some of the preliminary results it looks a considerable improvement on the previous one, more attractive and user friendly. This site is vital to us so that we can, not only provide the information demanded by transparency regulations but also a much clearer picture of the workings of the Parish Council and more besides. Thanks go to our Web Master Jonathan Legat for his time and patience to get this project underway. Having made that point we now come to the opposite end of the spectrum. In May this year the General Data Protection Regulations come into force. For small organisations like ourselves the official guidelines have yet to be published. The consequence is that many organisations are preparing as best they can. The Parish Council is working to a plan set out by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Alan Weaver our Clerk and Jonathan Legat have been on a GDPR course and your chairman has been to two conferences where this subject has been the main topic. It is not clear exactly what we should be doing and we can only continue on the course as advised. The consequence is that a great deal of time and effort is having to go into meeting a set of regulations which are designed for large organisations but which apply to all and for which official guidance is still awaited.

The problems of waste being dumped seem to be growing. If we know who is responsible we try to speak informally to the party concerned but where this is not possible or there is no likelihood of resolving the matter informally then there is no alternative but to report the matter to the appropriate authority. On the smaller scale litter is still a problem and more than one of us has written on the subject in the Itchen Valley News. We can but keep reminding people and of course holding our annual litter pick. Once again this year's event was a great success with over sixty five people joining in despite having to postpone it for one week due to the snow. Thank you to Alistair Ward-boughton-leigh and his band of helpers for their organisation, to Paul Moffatt and Alistair's father for collecting up the bags of litter and bringing them to a central point and to all those who participated from the litter pickers to the ladies of the WI who provided coffee, tea and a wonderful array of tea and cakes at the end.

As can be seen from this report it has been a busy year and the next one is just as likely to be the same if not more busy. My sincere thanks to all those who have helped us Jackie Porter, our County Councillor, Kim Gottlieb, Lisa Griffiths and Ernie Jeffs, our City Councillors, and especially, Alan Weaver, our hard working Clerk, Yvette Riley and Christopher Langford who chair our two committees and all our Parish Councillors.

Patrick Appleby,

IVPC Chairman.