



ITCHEN VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL

(Serving the villages of: Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas & Martyr Worthy)
CHAIRMANS REPORT FOR THE 2017 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

This year started with two vacancies on the Parish Council. We had a good response and after the somewhat lengthy proscribed process was followed we were able to co-opt and welcome Zazie Carter from Chilland and Richard Stoodley from Easton. Mick Philips who had been our footpaths coordinator for some time resigned from the Council later in the year and we thank him for his diligent work in that role and as well in the previous year chairing the Planning Committee. Stephen Andrews from Itchen Abbas was co-opted and joined us as his replacement.

As financial matters are a separate item on the agenda only a brief note is needed here. They are in good order and thanks go to Henry Labram who has chaired the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the last two years. It may seem to some that we have accumulated large sums and not spent all our budget but as can be seen below there are items and projects in the pipeline for which we need to save for over one year and at the same time we need to have contingency funds available for the unexpected.

A considerable amount of time has been spent on matters of governance and our new Clerk Alan Weaver helped by Yvette Riley, Oliver Denniss and others have put in a considerable amount of hard work in this area. Not only have more stringent rules come in but there are a number of areas where we have been in a “catch up” situation. This involves changes to financial risk assessment, ownership of land and assets, insurance, registration of trustees and transparency rules. Hopefully once such matters are in order annual revisions will only result in minor changes allowing time, effort and funds to be directed to more productive areas.

Planning matters as ever have been of major concern. Christopher Langford has chaired the Planning Committee for the last year; a role in which it is hoped he will continue. His professional knowledge has proved invaluable. On specific applications, we have made recommendations based upon guidelines of both the Parish Plan and South Downs National Park policies. Often much to our dismay the decision making authorities appear to take little account of our recommendations. We are endeavouring to meet with them to try to come to a better understanding. We have also attended meetings and commented on some topics outside the Parish but which are close enough to have an impact on us. An example is proposed sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showmen, which many will know is an on-going matter; another example is the equestrian centre proposed at Itchen Stoke. On strategic planning we have made comment on both the Winchester Local Plan and also the South Downs National Park Draft Development Plan. After our submission in 2015 we were disappointed that despite our comments as far as this Parish was concerned no changes had been made to the original proposals. We have therefore commented again as we feel that the present proposals are neither appropriate nor realistic. As a result there has been considerable discussion as to whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan or one of the other options should be instigated. In the present state of uncertainty it has been decided not to pursue this topic again until at least later this summer.



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We have also expressed views on devolution of local government as well as taking an interest in the Central Development in Winchester (better known as Silver Hill). While the latter is on-going it would seem that for the present the former has come to a halt.

A more local issue has been making it clear to BT that although not used often the telephone boxes are needed, especially the one at Couch Green where there are safety issues involved.

There are three areas in terms of recreation and entertainment which are on-going. First is cycling. Two large cycling events are programmed to go through the valley this summer. While exercise and sport are to be encouraged, once large numbers are involved, factors such as safety and organisation have to be considered. Not only for the participants but also for the remainder whether residents or visitors. We have held a meeting with event organisers to address these points. Secondly, as ever a watch is being kept on Boomtown. At last year's event the severe traffic problems on departure day has made it clear that plans to prevent a repeat are required, not only by the Boomtown organisers but all organisations and services so that there is effective coordination between them. Thirdly for those who enjoy the valley on foot we have been trying to maintain a balance between their requirements, the overall ambience of the flood plain and the needs of those grazing cattle and managing the land on behalf of its owners. It is hoped to arrange a meeting with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wild Life Trust representatives later this year.

The Lengthsman scheme has continued to prove to be of excellent value. Our Clerk, Alan Weaver now manages this on behalf of twelve parishes. We have a new lengthsman Mike Ring who is doing well. In summer most of the time is spent keeping footpaths open. Since departure of Mick Philips the task of co-ordinating lengthsman's work in the Valley has been taken on by Paul Moffatt. Once again it has proved to be of great value to have someone who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the area. The Council has supported the Watercress Way project and it is pleasing to know that much of the section in the Valley uses the old railway line.

Hampshire County Council Highways Department has been kept informed of our needs in terms of road repairs. Pot holes are being filled and some minor roads are being surface dressed. Lobbying continues to try to get the stretch of road from the West end of Easton to the Cricketers properly resurfaced. After visits by the highways engineers the drains around the Plough and School Lane in Itchen Abbas have been cleared. Work has also been done to alleviate flooding in Church Lane Martyr Worthy. However it remains questionable as to whether the action taken so far will provide a long term solution. Outside the Parish, but of great significance to many residents and others, we have expressed views regarding the situation at the Cart and Horses junction. Hopefully one day sufficient funds will be made available to provide a safe long term solution.

Changes are being made to the way play equipment on our two open spaces is being monitored and maintained. It is hoped that funds will soon be sufficient to provide



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replacement equipment for some of the ageing items at the McPherson Field in Easton. Worthy Football Club has continued to use the field at Couch Green on a regular basis for some of its young players. The changing rooms have reached such a state of dilapidation that they are no longer fit to use and refurbishment has proved to be too costly to be worthwhile. It has therefore been decided to remove them. This has led to consideration of how we might improve the King George V playing field and make it a more attractive location for sporting activities for the Valley and surrounding areas. This is likely to be a long term project but could provide a great asset for future generations.

Once again we have managed to organise a successful Litter Pick morning. A sunny day helped and it was a good community event. Thanks go to Steve Andrews and his helpers for organising it and to the W.I. for providing tea coffee and cakes at the end.

On communications like a number of other areas changes are afoot. Starting with the oldest method of all, Notice Boards. These are showing signs of age and refurbishment or replacement is already in the pipe line. Only one official notice board is required for statutory Parish notices and agendas for meetings by the bus stop opposite the Village Hall in Itchen Abbas. Where it is considered appropriate or necessary notices are put on the other four boards in the Valley. Going to more modern systems of communication, electronics is the most widely used method today. With new and more rules requiring transparency, work on a new website is being considered. Rather than a minimal site with only statutory requirements on it, something more comprehensive, inclusive and involving other organisations in the Valley is being looked at. Thanks go to Jonathan Leggat and Zazie Carter who have started work on this project.

This year two Councillors have decided to retire. Zazie Carter who has only been with us since last summer but has made her mark, as mentioned above, in the communications field and Henry Labram who has served on the Council for several years (He and I joined about the same time). Not only has he chaired the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the past two years, he has also been one of the mainstays of the team looking at and updating the vast amount of governance documentation we now need. No small task. I have also valued the advice and guidance that he has given me in my role of chairman over the last two years.

As can be seen from above it has been a busy year for your Parish Council and there is no doubt that this will continue into the forthcoming year. It has involved a lot of time hard work and commitment by all our Councillors and our Clerk. I would personally like to thank all of them for the effort and time that they have put in and the support they have given me. I would also like to thank Jackie Porter our County Councillor and our three City Councillors, Kim Gottlieb, Liza Griffiths and Ernie Jeffs for the support, information and help they have given us over the past year.

Patrick Appleby.