Pyecombe Parish Council - Annual Report 2020-2021

Restrictions to meetings and gatherings due to the pandemic in the past year has meant Parish Council meetings having to be held virtually. Joy Dennis, our West Sussex County Councillor representative, Colin Trumble, Alison Bennett and Rodney Jackson, our Mid Sussex District Councillor representatives, have all been in attendance during these virtual meetings, and my thanks to them for their assistance and contribution throughout the year.

Hope was raised last year when Openreach was encouraged to launch the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to boost local broadband speeds in rural areas like ours. Despite the efforts of the Parish Council managing to secure many residents to sign up for the scheme, it transpired that Openreach needed every one of the 71 properties to apply, and therefore the scheme would not be viable. Our hopes were dashed for now, as it seems the only hi-speed we will see any time soon in our area, is road traffic!

After four years, a final public consultation was held by West Sussex County Council earlier this year, ending in March, for the implementing of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), to alleviate the traffic congestion along Old London Road, and hopefully we may see some sort of progress from West Sussex Highways soon.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the flooding situation at the bottom of Pyecombe Street, where residents have had to endure yet another year of flooding disruption. A possible definitive solution to eradicate the problem, together with quotations from engineering companies, was obtained and then submitted for funding from Operation Watershed at West Sussex County Council, only for it to be rejected by West Sussex Highway Officers, who said they were looking for other solutions. One step forward, two steps back, but let's hope we hear from them soon, in case funding is withdrawn!

The additional litter bins were duly installed, together with the completed renovation of a Village Sign, installed in a new location. Plans are constructively in place to improve the area next to the BP/M&S Garage, together with renovating the remaining Village Sign, once approval has been obtained from Highways England, owners of the land, and then overall approval for the scheme once submitted to South Downs National Park Authority, who are currently holding the relevant funding of S106 money from previous developments in the village, as well as additional funding towards the Village Play Area, which is the responsibility of Mid Sussex District Council.

Last year was to mark the 850th Anniversary of the village Church, and plans were already in place to celebrate the event throughout the year. As part of the history of the Church, we are reminded of the outbreak of a Plague in Pyecombe at the beginning of the 17th century, with

those surviving, fleeing and deserting their homes. Little did we know that over 400 years later another type of Plague was to strike early last year, becoming an invisible enemy, a Global Pandemic, only this time keeping us in our homes, with all events and gatherings cancelled.

The community spirit though, in the village, shone through and was admirable, as people helped out neighbours however, they could.

A year on, and with the pandemic receding, thanks to vaccinations, we remember all those that have lost their lives, including those from our village, Joyce Hill, Carol Taylor and John Cragg, a long serving member of this Parish Council.

As the road re-surfacing of the A23 makes its steady progress south, reaching Hickstead last year, the 'quiet' tarmac that is promised for Pyecombe, has still some way to go.

The improvement to the South Downs Way crossing on the A273 was completed, although Councillors are still concerned as to the safety issue awareness regarding speeding traffic.

Tim and Jane Cullen have become the new editors for our Village Newsletter, taking over from Dawn Langston, who has been editor for the past four years, in addition to being our Parish Council Clerk & RFO. I take this opportunity to thank Dawn, on behalf of the Council, and the community, for her total dedication and commitment towards us all over the past year.

Chris Bere resigned as a Councillor in November as he had moved away from the village, and the vacancy has since been filled by Dani French. My thanks to all my fellow Councillors, in this voluntary role, for their contribution and assistance in the past year.

Several new residents have moved into the village, and I take this opportunity to remind them, and indeed existing residents, that your Parish Council meets on a regular basis, every other month, and assuming conditions allow soon, meetings are held alternately at Pyecombe Church and Wayfield Park Farm Shop, as a public meeting that remains open to all.

David Wilson, Chairman

Tuesday 27th April, 2021