



# **Sherborne St. John Parish Council**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024**

The Parish Council's three aims are:

- To improve the development, appearance and environment in the parishioners live; ensure that any change(s) do not cause future harm
- To be a strong voice on behalf of parishioners and local businesses, fully representing their views.
- To be well manages; providing sound governance and financial management and be an exemplar employer

**General**

- A bumpy ride of the last 12 months what with coming out of Covid and managing the departure of our guests but we can now see clear water in front of us ( at least for the medium term ).

#### **Finance**

- We are now a parish of approximately 1,760 parishioners and an annual precept of £47.5k. it's worth noting that when The Chair joined the Council some 12 years ago the Parish had about 1,000 parishioners and about £38k in funds. )
- Financially we're in good shape, finishing the year on an even keel ( £74k - 'big ticket' items have been the Neighbourhood Plan, Planning appeals and salaries. )
- No outstanding liabilities and all end of year activities e.g. audit completed.
- Finance Package
  - In progress
- SSJ Precept
  - The precept was raised from £47.34 to £49.20 p.a. for a band D house ( a 4% increase but still less than £1 a week )
  - The Basingstoke increased from £136.42 to £141.42

#### **Parish Council - Comings and Goings**

During the past year.....

- After a number of interviews we settled on a new Clerk, Dan Faulkner. However after short period of time Dan decided that the role wasn't for him and resigned
- Every cloud has a silver lining - we asked Mel to stay on as our Locum Clerk until we find a permanent candidate.
- We will back to full strength once Cllr Rowley gets completes his treatment.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan**

- A revised/new Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to signed off by BDBC
- The updated plan allows for 0 ( zero ) properties to be developed within the village footprint but.....
- Developers have tried to exploit the development period of this new NP by submitting speculative development applications hence the importance of getting the plan made official
- Thanks to the residents who contributed to the plan. This group included Colette Williams, Jemma Burlingham, Adam Rattray, Mike Vonka and others that I've probably missed
- Thanks also to Robyn Milliner, ET Planning, who guided us along the way
- The development of this new Neighbourhood Plan was lead by Cllr James Rowley - a fantastic job.
- More on planning later

#### **The Chute**

- We managed, eventually, to get our 'guests' moved on. As the Chute is not common ground it took longer to remove them than anticipated. The related activities were covered by the PC's insurance so no direct cost to the Parish except for the nuisance value.
- You'll note the new gate/fencing at the entrance - the hope/expectation is that this set-up will deter future attempts by future travellers to grace us with their presence.

- Important to note here that the football club, on their own initiative, cleared up the mess left behind.
- It's acknowledged that there is sometimes a parking issue at the Chute with an over spill into Vyne Road. If anyone has a silver bullet solution, recognising that the Chute brings in significant revenue to the Parish, as to how the parking issue could be resolved then we're all ears.
- We have seen a significant rise in the cost of utilities to the Chute. Utility costs remain high but we are weathering the storm.
- Another issue that the Council is aware of is the longevity of the roof - expected 25 years , currently on year 27.
- The Chute is a very attractive location for both Sherborne St Residents and non-Sherborne St John residents - it brings in a strong revenue stream allowing the Parish Council to minimise other possible expenditures e.g. the annual precept
- Since Covid restrictions were lifted we've seen all our 'regulars' return and an up turn is ad-hoc booking for parties, weddings, etc.
- This coming year will see the PC letting contracts to improve areas of the Chute such as the showers and toilet facilities.
- I want everyone here to recognise the significant effort that the Chute Site Manager, Terry Buller, puts into keeping the Chute, the grounds, etc. in good shape so much so that folk are vying to hire the building

#### **Village Hall**

- The lock and fencing previously installed does seem to have stopped the travellers using the green as a convenient grazing location for their horses and the attached carriages - we now see just the horses.
- How to implement disabled access to the village Green is still being considered given the previous comments re: travellers.

#### **General**

- **Electric Vehicle Charging**
  - No progress - we asked for a grant but the man from BDBC said no.
  - This seems to be an expensive item, not something that the Parish Council can fund out of its own monies
- **Allotments**
  - No Issues
  - All allotments are currently taken
- **Access to Parish Council**
  - We discussed moving the PC meetings back to the village hall in order to make it easier for residents to attend vs. the Chute.
  - We held the July 2023 meeting in the Village Hall but there was no increase in attendance
- **Potholes**
  - Like **Speeding** - a perennial issue with seemingly no solution. The HCC process is to complete a temporary repair and then come back at a later stage to effect a full and proper repair. We're told that this is an effective way of resolving the problem.
- **Speeding**
  - A never ending issue.

- Concerns over Cranes Road being used as a rat run - this is a major concern if either/both of the current planning applications for Weybrook golf course or Kiln Farm go ahead - see **Planning**
- Still speeding issues with the A340 and Vyne Road areas of the village. We have the 'maximum' allowed signage, etc.
- We've had representatives from Hampshire Safer Road Units team attend the March PC meeting. Parishioners expecting a 'silver bullet' solution will be disappointed. The Safer Road team acknowledge the SSJ has issues. The plan is to work with the PC and residents to address these issues
- **Planning**
  - An appeal against the application to develop 26 house at end of Cranesfield was held on April 30th. The appeal has been refused i.e. the plan to develop the 26 houses has been thrown out.
  - The revised SSJ Neighbourhood Plan that the PC 'rushed' to get signed-off by BDBC prior to the appeal date contributed to the decision to refuse the appeal.
  - There are planning applications for significant developments on or close to the village boundaries that will impact the village - increased traffic flows, reduced strategic gap. The applications at Kiln Farm and Weybrook Farm, both with approx. houses are two of the key developments we must fight against over the next year.
  - Many plaudits are due to Collette Williams, Mike Vonka, Jenna Burlingham and Adam Rattray ( plus no doubt others ) for leading the parish objection(s) to the above developments
  - However we must be ever vigilant re: new development applications, small or large. Even applications for 1 or 2 houses can have a big impact on the village if, for example, said application breached the strategic gap.
- **Transport**
  - The PC funded bus to Chineham is still being regularly used.
- **Audits**
  - The PC is 'legal' as it has passed all its 2023/2024 audit actions
- **Telephone Box**
  - Flourishing
  - I was against it in the first place but.....
- **Lengthsman**
  - Active in the village and completing jobs at the behest of the PC
  - Please contact the Clerk with any jobs that you could envision the Lengthsman completing.
- **Vandalism**
  - There have been a small number of incidents re: threatening behaviour and some damage to the church infrastructure
  - All incidents have been reported to the local police and the PC have been promised that there will be ad-hoc patrols of the village in both marked/un-marked vehicles
  - The Hampshire Constabulary resourcing merry-go-round seems to stopped, at least for the time being. We now have a designated village officer, PC Simon Denton. Invites to attend Parish Council meetings have so far not been accepted.

- **The Shop**
  - Going strong and is becoming more and more an integral part of the village
- **Vicar**
  - The Parish has a new vicar, Stewart Deering. I've only met Stewart two or three times so can only offer scant opinion. However I have to say I find Stewart a man of strong faith, compassion and a man 'of the people'. Long may his tenure in SSJ last
- **Thank you**
  - To my fellow councillors
  - To our Locum Clerk - Mel Camilleri
  - To Martin Stewart, our Litter Picker
  - To Terry Buller for his stewardship of the Chute
  - To our Borough Councillors for their advice ( not always heeded ) and their concern for the Parish.
  - To our HCC councillor, Rhydian Vaughan for his measured advice and guidance in the ways as to how to interact with HCC
  - To those folk who I may have /probably have missed re: their involvement in objecting to all the recent SSJ impacting planning applications

On behalf of **Sherborne St John Parish Council**

Richard Morgan,  
Chair  
24/05/2023