

Walberton PC

Chairmans report for the year 22/23

Hello and welcome. Your parish council has had another busy year with an exceptionally strong team of councillors that have worked hard on the issues facing the three villages. Perhaps the most memorable was last summer saving the fish in the fast-disappearing pond. One of your councillors was thigh deep in mud catching and transferring them to a holding pool.

We meet just after the local elections and a few changes to your council.

I have stepped down from the council after 5 very interesting years and I wish the team well for the coming years. Also stepping down is Sam Wicks who I thank for his contribution. If you are interested in joining the council or know someone who might be interested, please approach one of us or the clerk as there are still --- vacancies out of the 9 councillors.

Most of the councillors work full time so their valuable time is much appreciated. I should also mention Andy Pepler our clerk who keeps us all in order and manages the council's affairs so well. This year he was joined by Amy Nation working on a part time consultancy basis to help drive forward some of the complicated projects I will touch on shortly.

The Parish Council has regular meetings most of which are held in public so you're most welcome to come along. Apart from full council meetings every two months there are regular subcommittee meetings covering Finance & Legal, General Purposes and Planning. There are numerous other meetings attended by some councillors like the Community Play Centre or Village Hall trustees then others with Arun to name just a few.

The A27 Arundel Bypass dominated much of the work again last year. At the start of the year, we had just completed the public consultation but it soon became apparent that a supplementary consultation would be needed to address traffic issues in Walberton. Whilst some improvement was proposed for the eastern end of The Street these secondary proposals created further issues to the west of the parish. This involved considerable lobbying with National Highways and we are all grateful for the important support and efforts of residents and action groups. I would particularly like to thank Mike Davis, Edmund Cameron Cuss and Emma Tristram for their much valued work and contributions.

We don't know what made the final difference but the bypass is now well and truly in the long grass until the next round of road planning is published. This is called RIS3 which covers the roads strategy from 2025 to 30. Let's hope that a more sensible bypass will emerge but, in the meantime, we need to remain vigilant.

Whilst on traffic you might have noticed the new Speed Indication device bought by the council to encourage motorists to slow down when above the speed limit, this is now being managed by the local speed watch team and will be used in three locations.

Your council's finances are healthy and again there was no increase in the council tax precept for the parish. We finished the year just below budget with a small surplus, but also used some of our reserves for upgrading the kitchen and the changing rooms in the pavilion. These will eventually be funded by Avisford Grange when the S106 payments come through. The Play area was also refurbished by using S106 monies.

Our bank balance is very healthy at the moment after we received £180k from the Dandara site in Fontwell for use on improving cycling within the parish. Originally conceived for connecting the cycle path between Walberton and Fontwell which is difficult to achieve we are now investigating how best to legally use this money rather than giving it back in 5 years if unused. This is one of the projects Amy Nation will be addressing.

You may have noticed that the new tennis courts are almost complete and, in this summer, a new pathway around the playing field will connect with these. The path will also be widened to the school and the pavilion.

Fontwell is close to having its allotments and the first part of the public open space. The new community building is now being built and will be ready this autumn. The sports area or MUGA is still to be started but planned along with areas of paddocks as the building activity concludes. They have now started all the houses but sales have slowed of late so a finish date is not known.

The first Fontwell verge has been planted with flowers and shrubs to make it more attractive and it is planned to do a further nine verges in Fontwell for which volunteers are sought. If you are interested, please contact the clerk.

And residents near Blacksmiths Corner will be please to know that this will be tidied up with regular maintenance going forward.

Finally, whilst we only have --- councillors today, I am confident we have a high calibre team to take the parish council forward. I have thoroughly enjoyed my 5 years on the council and being chairman of late and would recommend it to anyone who is interested.