

Chairman's Report 19h May 2021

This was our first contested election since May 2013. Prior to the election we said goodbye to Cllrs Selina Thomas, Mike Woodhouse and Mervyn Thomas who all chose not to re stand for election. We would like to thank all three for their services to the community. A special mention must go to Mervyn Thomas whose service to the council ha been a truly long one. Unfortunately time has caught up with Mervyn but his dedication to the parish over such a length of time (40 years +) is to be admired and commended. We also have to say goodbye to Kath Worthington who sadly was not re-elected but who did a great job over the years especially as a link to The Buzzard and Ludlow charities.

Following the election we have been joined on the council by Cllrs R. Morgan, T Pardoe, G. Neden, A Rattu and those councillors who have been re-elected Cllrs D. Hedgley, T. O'Boyle, S. Povall, R. Povall, and A. Watson extend a warm welcome to them.

Main Issues.

1.The major issue this year was COVID and the effect this had on holding meetings to comply with the Governments Covid Restrictions and also make meetings open to the public and transparent. Last years Annual Parish, General and Ordinary Business Meetings due in May 2020 along with the election of Parish Councillors were cancelled on Government instructions and the Chair/vice Chair remained in office. Emergency powers were delegated to the clerk until May 2021. Using guidelines from the Shropshire Association of Local councils and National/Government guideline our remaining Parish Council Meetings were held on Zoom.

2. We have continued Liaison with DVH Committee over the funding of the upgrade of car parking facilities to meet community needs through the input of (CIL) Community Infrastructure Levy funds . We are still in negotiations with Shropshire Council over accessing these funds. Due to Health and Safety concerns some funds have been drawn down from parish funds set aside for this to repair parts of the car park.

3. We are still engaged in enhancing local safety measures with the purchase of the Mobile Speed Monitoring Unit to raise speed awareness on the B4368 in Diddlebury and pursuing the purchase of a mirror for traffic emerging from the Bache Mill turning. We have also now issued Smart water kits to everyone in the parish and police notices to this effect have been put up. Salt bins have been purchased following residents requests and Shropshire councils failure to provide them.

4.The Chairman and Clerk have spent time dealing with issues raised by a parishioner concerning a councillors use of a camera at Zoom meetings , a councillors intention regarding standing for election this May and council minutes which led to a Code of Conduct complaint being lodged against the Chairman which was not upheld by Shropshire Council.

5. A decision was taken to support Westhope Village Hall Committee with the purchase of the hall from Lady Dyer.

6. Discussions with the Parish plan steering Group over another Parish Plan possibly in 2022 and the publication and development of a Community Led Housing initiative.

Precept 2021-22

Following the council meeting on the 27th January 2021 the precept for the next financial year was set at £8,666.88. This was an increase of £1,714.88 on last years. The overall increase in the precept will be approximately £6.30 per household.

The extra costs related to an increase in the clerks salary as per national scales of £338.00 and the recoup of the extra costs of £806.88 incurred in the purchase of the additional Smart Water kits needed to supply everyone. Last year we invested £1,500.00 for the purchase of Smart water kits which we obviously do not need this year but as below we are this year donating £2,000.00 to Westhope Village Hall Committee for the purchase of the freehold of Westhope Village Hall. The council thought that this was something that it should support in principle. However funding for this will not be released to the WVH Committee until DPC has seen documents satisfying the council that it is an unencumbered freehold which is being transferred to WVH Committee. The above items and some small increases in running costs equates to the £1,714.88 increase.

Having committed to the donation to WVH we declined to add any more to the DVH car park fund as along with other parties the council is exploring other funding routes. Likewise we felt that we could not contribute to a Defibrillator purchase fund at this time but would encourage any interested party to fund raise for Defibrillators. This has already happened in Bouldon who have successfully sourced one from a charity. We are due an election in May but again we have put off budgeting for this until next year when we will know the exact costs. The election does not have to be paid for until next year. Other council costs have largely been kept in line with last years budget.

Planning

22 Planning application have been received this year all of which bar 3 were supported. This compared to 19 with 3 not supported last year. Two non supported applications from last year went to the Planning Inspectorate who upheld their non approval. Of the 22 application 4 related to tree work. One proof of local residence was submitted.. No enforcement enquiries were lodged this year. One EGM was held in August to deal with a planning application at The Moors, Diddlebury.

Responses to Consultations.

Community Governance Review.
Safer Neighbourhood Teams feedback
Local Plan
Leisure activities survey.

For obvious reasons there were no physical public sessions this year.

External Meetings- DVH car park with SC

Sample of other topics arising.

Ditches being cleared, roads collapsing, potholes, landslips
HSBC and their continued support of our account.
Road side signage. Footpaths

Over the last year the parish council has yet again continued to work closely with the Flood Action Group, the village hall committees of Diddlebury and Westhope and the Parish Plan Steering Group. The continued presence of Corona 19 has caused the need for a lot of adjustments to be made this year to meetings and working practices. As Chair I would like to thank my colleagues for the work they put in within a voluntary role and the extra work our Parish Clerk has had to absorb as well as Councillor Motley for her continued unstinting support.