

Churchdown Parish Council Chairman's report for year May 2021 to May 2022

The Parish Council began the year with vacancies in their numbers. A further vacancy occurred following the tragic death of Councillor Roy Nutting. Roy had served the council for four decades in a variety of roles. While I first encountered him as Chairman of the Finance and Admin Committee. He had previously served the council as the Clerk for a number of years. Thanks should be recorded for his outstanding service to the council.

A second vacancy occurred early in the New Year when Councillor Leo Fletcher resigned through ill health. As a result Leo and his wife will be moving out of the parish. Leo has served the parish for many years and has contributed in many areas in particular in green issues. We wish him and his wife well in their new home.

A further resignation occurred near the end of the year when Stephen Wall retired. Stephen has served the council in a number of roles but most recently as the Parish Council representative on the Staverton Airport Consultation Group as well as being the representative on the Communities Committee for the Tudor Mead Park. The Council wishes him well in his retirement.

As the year has progressed the Parish Council has been fortunate in recruiting to fill the vacancies which have occurred and we welcome the new councillors and any contributions they might make in the future.

During the year the council also underwent some office staff changes. Following the surprise resignation of the Assistant Clerk, and following a recruitment process a new Assistant Clerk, Heather Day, was installed in post. A further staff change occurred when a new person was recruited to be responsible for opening and closing the gates at St. John's playing area.

The Staff have not been immune from health matters and I wish to thank all the staff for their work and efforts.

The Parish Council has not been immune from the effects of Covid. A casualty of the restrictions was the annual Christmas party which had to be cancelled at short notice.

The year also saw the return to face to face meetings in the Council Chamber, something welcomed by many. A positive addition to the Council Chamber was the purchase of a loop system which will add to the very good acoustics in the Chamber.

The Council has been looking into the upgrading of its solar panels and power provision. This has been progressing in the hands of a member of the Council who has been investigating the various modernising options.

The council has made a number of grants according to its grants policy for the benefit of parishioners.

The Parish Council has also made donations to various charities as a result of the war in the Ukraine.

We have continued to receive detailed reports from our County Councillor, Ben Evans, about many matters which concern Churchdown Parish from flooding issues to the proposed cycle path from Cheltenham to Gloucester.

We have also received regular reports from our three borough councillors keeping the council up to date with matters affecting it as a result of Tewkesbury borough council decisions etc.

The Parish Council has continued to operate its two committees, namely Finance and Admin and Communities, both of whom will report separately from this report.

Following the pandemic the Parish council has moved to restart some of the provision for the parish and has decided to accept the invitation of a circus to perform for three days at Churchdown Park as a substitute for the fireworks display which has been dropped for a variety of reasons.

I, myself, as chairman have been pursuing how the allocated S 106 monies from the Pirton Fields housing project can be used. To date I have met with two possible firms who are involved with work on playing fields/pitches. It is hoped that this will produce two detailed contracts which could be the basis of a business plan to bid for a section of the S 106 monies.

The Parish Council has continued to explore possibilities for the site of a new burial ground to supplement the existing burial ground on Churchdown Hill which will reach full capacity in the near future.

The Parish council, as a statutory consultee, has continued to examine planning applications submitted for projects within the boundaries of Churchdown village. For those applications where the Parish Council considers a project to be undesirable it has lodged objections under allowed material planning objections.

The Parish Council has been informed that the eastern side of Cheltenham Road East has been purchased by Newland Homes who will be submitting plans for a housing development. Two people have already met with myself and the vice chair to give a rough outline of their proposed plans but Newland homes will give a further outline at the AGM on 11th May.

The parish Council continued to support Churchdown Library through the pandemic via its SLA on a pro rata basis depending on the number of hours opened. However, this year saw the return of full opening hours by the library and as a result the Parish Council returned to providing its full contribution under the terms of the SLA.

During the year two Working groups were established. One to consider youth provision in the village and the other to consider changing the status of Churchdown from a village to a town. The youth working group has progressed to a stage where after approval by full council it is in the process of preparing potential contract specifications for putting out to tender. The other working group has yet to meet.

The Parish Council has throughout the year continued to receive reports from its representatives on external bodies, namely CCA, GAPTC and the Staverton Airport Consultative Committee. Thanks go to those Parish Councillors who have representative the council on these bodies.

Finally the Parish Council has been making preparations for the Queens Jubilee. On June 9th a beacon will be lit by a long serving ex councillor, Pearl Stokes, and there will be entertainment and food to compliment the celebration.

Alan Porter

Chairman of Churchdown Parish Council