



Chairman's Report For 2021/22



The last two years were extremely challenging for all of us, but hopefully we have all come through it and are ready to face the challenges going forward. We have been able to reopen all of the facilities at the Community Centre and we are pleased to report that we are welcoming back our regular hirers and look forward to attracting new ones. All the Council's staff have worked hard to maintain the premises so that they are attractive to potential newcomers.

It is a pleasure to, at last, be able to acknowledge publicly the hard work of all of the army of volunteers who helped during the pandemic to keep Ditton running smoothly, along with the Book Exchange volunteers. The presentations earlier this evening thanked many of those involved, but for anyone we overlooked we also give our thanks.

Earlier this year we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Ditton Church Pre-School by the planting of a tree, donated by the Parish Council to recognise their service to local children over the years. Events to celebrate the 20th Anniversary were delayed by a year because of covid so it was actually planted in the 21st year. As I was involved in planting this tree, I check on it's wellbeing every day on the way to buy my daily newspaper. Sadly it is not looking too healthy, I would have hoped to see in leaf by now but this has not happened. This will have to be checked out. You may have noticed a new bench on the Village Green dedicated to the memory of Councillor Jane Thwaites who sadly passed away at the end of last year, Jane had served as a councillor for over twenty-four years. For those of you, who like me, have missed the 'Tommy' statue from the green it is now to be found next to the war memorial. Thank you to Andrew Kennedy for the grant to purchase the two Tommy Statues.

I have to thank the committee Chairs for their reports on what has been happening in their departments over the last year.

Planning: Councillor Newman has been very active in investigating the applications made in the current year, and the method he introduced of showing them at meetings has clarified exactly what the applicant wants to do.

The Parish Rate: We have managed, once again, to keep the increase in the precept down to only 0.6% despite costs continuing to rise. We have achieved this by using the council's reserves and investment income for all major items of expenditure involved in maintenance projects and essential repairs for safety reasons.

Parish Council Membership: We still have vacancies for additional people who would be interested in becoming councillors, it would be particularly good if some younger people came forward as they would be better able to represent the views and wishes of the younger generation.

Staff: I am grateful to all members of our staff, both full and part time, without whom the whole place would come to a standstill. The new management in the Kilnbarn have been active in promoting events in the bar which have brought back old customers and introduced new ones.

Events: We were happy to be able to revive the New Years Eve Dance which was well attended and greatly appreciated by those who were able to attend. You may have noticed that this year is the seventieth anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne, to celebrate the occasion the council is holding an outdoor family event with music on the 4th June, this is free for all who wish to attend, with events for children. The church is holding an outdoor service of thanksgiving to celebrate the Jubilee on Sunday 5th on the village green. It is hoped that as many people as possible will come together to celebrate the achievement.

Twinning: We have been unable to enjoy any visits between the villages of Ditton and Rang-du-Fliers during the last two years due to the pandemic and the travel restrictions in force at the time. This year we are hoping that the visits can resume as normal. In March a small group from France were able to come to Ditton for the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate 25 years since the founding of our association, this should have taken place in 2020 but had to be postponed for obvious reasons. The Plaque was unveiled by KCC Councillor Andrew Kennedy and Nichole representing the Mayor of Rang-du-Flier. In July members of the Council and the Twinning Association are planning to attend the Bastille Day ceremony.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their help and support, borough Councillors David Cooper and Rob Cannon, and KCC Councillor Andrew Kennedy who has kindly made several financial contributions to various projects around the village. And last, but not least KCC Community Warden Sue Absolon for her support throughout the year.

Cllr John E. Lover

Chairman, Ditton Parish Council