

# CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020 – 2021

Starting a new year always is a great opportunity to look forward but this year looks somewhat different as we have only just come out of lockdown but are still unable to meet face-to-face and are limited to Zoom Meetings.

Our first meeting of this year, normally held in May, wasn't held until July when we held the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council where Councillor D. Waithman was re-elected Chairman and Councillor G. Hunt was elected Vice- Chairman. Our Clerk, Mrs. N. Allton is to be congratulated in yet again having a perfect record with the Auditing of our accounts

The Planning Application for 9 houses behind Townsend Close is still being discussed with increasing objections from those affected by the proposal expressing concerns that if these 9 go ahead what certainty was there that further development on that field would happen. Mr Lillingstone (owner of the land, said that no more development would take place during his tenure but couldn't guarantee what his successors would do. Planning Permission was finally refused on the 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Concerns were raised over the Borough Council's decision to close off the drive whilst refurbishing one of their properties on Austrey Lane meaning that the new tenant(s) would have to park on the road, an already congested stretch of highway where chaos regularly happened with the school bus delivering or collecting children from the school which is directly opposite the property. NWBC said the new tenants could reinstate the drive if they wished but they had no money to do it themselves.

Warwickshire County Council tried to push through a change from the present system of three tiers, County, Borough and Parish to a Unitary system that did away with the Borough Council level. There was considerable objections to this especially as it was done in such a rush that no-one had chance to study the proposal or raise considered objections to it. Fortunately the Government threw W.C.C.'s proposal out.

Throughout the year the playing field has been kept in readiness so that with little effort it could be ready for use if we had the opportunity. We have been advised that Tamworth Cricket Club would only be using our field for alternate weekends this season but the good news is that Appleby Magna Junior Cricket Club wish to play here. We have always been keen to help out with sport for young people and have been happy to say "yes". They are attempting to purchase the assets of the now defunct Austrey & Newton Regis Junior Cricket Club including the practice nets again something that we support. We have purchased a second hand Atco mower from Appleby C.C.. This is the same model as the one we have, bar for a different make of engine, which is now getting a bit long in the tooth

Every year we have the play equipment in the children's playground professionally inspected by RoSPA not only because our Insurance Company require it but because we do not wish there to be any accidents involving children using the play equipment. This year they picked up that the Spring Horse is loose on its clamps to its base. We have purchased replacement clamps that we will fit

when the weather improves. Luckily, whilst the spring rotates very slowly in the clamps it is actually screwing itself into the ground and not in a way that could cause a problem.

Arrangements for the switch on of the Christmas tree lights and the checking and repair of the lights were discussed as was the organisation of this winter's Goose Walk on New Year's morning. It was agreed that we would purchase a tree in future as the one we were using had now grown too big. But it was sadly agreed that the Goose Walk could not comply with Covid restrictions and it was sadly cancelled.

November is historically the Meeting where we set our Precept for the following Financial Year and as it has been such an awful year it was decided that there would be no justification for an increase it should remain the same as the current year.

Also in November it was decided that the Defibrillator box on the wall of one of the outbuildings of Manor Farm needed to be moved as work is due to begin on the Manor Farm site and the electric feed would be cut off. The Telephone Box was chosen as the replacement site and as the Box is looking a bit worse for wear that we get Mr. P. Hopkins, who has restored it in the past, to quote for it. We also put out requests for quotes to carry out the electrical work involved.

It was discovered that the British Horse Society had put in a Restricted By-Way Application to Leicestershire C.C. Despite this Council chasing up this self same project, no-one thought to actually tell us. We found out that the British Horse Society were going round the country and pin pointing all the unrecorded foot routes and putting in applications such as this one. The reason behind it is to make sure they are all recorded before 2026 when the Government will issue a new Definitive Map and anything not recorded will no longer exist as an official route. This may just solve our long-running problem with Salt St.

We have had difficulties with the County Council's tree consultant in that one tree on the wall between St Mary's Grove and Main Rd is dangerously overhanging the footway along Main Rd. Despite this tree being of the same age and type as all the others along the wall and the County in the past has dealt with them, they decided that this one, next to the Duckpond, was nothing to do with them but they would remove the low branches as they were a hazard. They would not remove the rest as, according to them, it was not their responsibility. Fortunately the problem was resolved by unknown residents who were more concerned for the health and well being of our residents.

An 18' Christmas tree was purchased and set up, thanks to the church's regular maintenance team and the lights we already owned were hung around it with a new feed from our existing junction box to power them. Unfortunately, again due to Covid 19, we weren't able to organise our usual switch on get together but quite a few people turned up independently and, maintaining social distancing, cheered as they went on.

We are about to go back into lockdown over Covid 19, which is again raging through the country. Being rural we are slightly better off than our urban relatives in that we can get out and socially distance ourselves with no problem. We are obviously still not meeting face to face and we are still having to hold Zoom meetings over the internet.

Mercia Park, the development at Junction 11 of the M42, after gaining Planning Permission have started laying services into the site, levelling the ground and building the warehouses. They have also organised a Community Committee where all parishes affected have a representative so any problems can be discussed and hopefully resolved. Cllr. M. Ruston is our representative as he lives in No Man's Heath and also represents them on the Parish Council. They also financed a Community Fund that all bodies in the area could apply for funding up to £10,000 but with strict rules of compliance. This funding in three tranches, we are just into the third. Cllr. Ruston also represented us on this body but had to give up as he could not make daytime meetings due to work

commitments. I have taken over this from him but the only meeting since I did I had to miss due to having just come out of hospital.

Numerous efforts have been made to get a Community Speedwatch team up and running in the Parish. Firstly we had to have 8 – 10 volunteers, which we did, then they had to take basic training, which we did and since then we have got nowhere. We need use of a Radar Speed Gun, site(s) that the Police consider acceptable and then training in the use of the equipment and other than a suggested site that could be used and the opportunity to purchase Shuttington P.C.'s gun, too expensive, we can buy a freshly refurbished model for £200 less, we have got nothing. Even a request as to whether or not the safety clothing needs to be marked with "Community Speedwatch" has failed to come up with an answer. We are looking for funding for It is appreciated that we have been going through a very difficult time with Covid 19 lockdowns etc. . Previously the Police & Crime Commissioner had made grants towards the purchase of speed guns but that was no longer available. The Commissioner's position is up for Election this year and hopefully the new incumbent will re-start the funding process