

Good evening ladies, gentlemen and fellow councillors and welcome to the Sidlesham Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting. We trust you will find this report informative if not entertaining, but I will do my best to make this report as interesting as possible.

The agenda is very simple: My report followed by questions and hopefully answers. Followed by tea and biscuits and then a presentation on Scams by Mr Moorey of Chichester District Council followed again by questions and answers. Since the passing of David Baron, our highly respected Neighbourhood Watch representative we have lost a go-to expert who protected us from scams and the like. We now have Mr Moorey to help us fill the gap at a time when there are evermore scams, the last one more ingenious than the previous one. We know you will leave here much wiser thanks to his presentation.

By the way we still have a vacancy for a Neighbourhood Watch representative so please let us know if you feel you could fulfill this very important role in our village. Opportunity one, please note and if you like count.

You will probably notice that there will be a theme to my report this evening and that is to get you as parishioners more involved with the parish's activities. Your parish needs you as will hear through this report. So stay awake and please spot and take up the opportunities.

So on to my report.

Firstly my apologies for the confusion and change of date. We were incorrectly advised that our parish meeting would be subject to purdah. As you know purdah is an Indian phrase for a curtain, especially one serving to screen women from the sight of men or strangers. In election jargon it means that no influence can be brought onto election results by meetings such as this where there are party affiliations if they are too close to the election date. I don't see the connection with Indian curtains but that is the way it is a veiled secret.

Having established therefore that none of our councillors has any political party connections we are free to return to the normal date for a pre-election meeting at the end of April. This has some advantages

This means that having completed a full financial year I can report that we operated within the precept forecast for the year 2022/23 to the end of March, our financial year, in fact with a modest surplus.

Secondly the later date has allowed us to be ahead of the game in terms of elections. We now know that there will not be an election for Sidlesham parish council as there were only six candidates who put their names forward out of a total of nine. We therefore have a vacancy for two councillors who will have to be co-opted onto the council. I will explain the maths on this later but one councillor was not put on the list

because of an administrative error and this councillor will be co-opted as a priority, if the person agrees of course.

We are therefore desperately looking for two young(ish) councillors, e.g. young retirees perhaps to take up the challenge and make a serious contribution to village community life. I hope you will see from this report that the council has operated successfully over the term and that there are some very exciting prospects going forward. Opportunity number 2, please note.

I trust you will confirm that the fact that there is not an election means that the parish is happy with the way the council has operated and that this is there a vote of confidence in the council. I sincerely hope that it is not a vote for apathy.

Turning our attention from the general position I would now like to address some specific areas of council activity.

This report is meant to cover the entire four year period of this council but I will concentrate on this last year and look back on prior years when and where necessary. It must be said that this council worked exceptionally hard to maintain business over the Covid shutdown period. Covid is now behind us and council life is much easier, but Covid did represent a severe disruption to everything as you will hear in the coming sections.

First of all to planning. It is one of our most important functions holding a dedicated section of our council meeting. Ironically our input to the District council is only advisory but thanks to the diligent work of Adrian Harland and Tricia Tull our views are mostly acknowledged. However it must be said that planning decisions will not always find favour with all parties. We are very keen to maintain the character of Sidlesham and this often guides our decisions.

We did finally persuade CDC to issue a guidance note on Class Q legislation to prevent the irresponsible conversion of old buildings and greenhouses not suitable for conversion.

Of course, together with our adjoining parishes we have put pressure on CDC to restrain housebuilding on the peninsula and it looks as though our efforts are bringing forth fruit as in the new local plan further housebuilding on the Manhood is being blocked. I have heard that it was primarily last December's rains and subsequent floods that persuaded CDC to limit further housebuilding on the Manhood.

In addition to floods other infrastructure problems have been highlighted to CDC and WSCC.

I think we are all aware of the water pollution problems on our coast and Pieter Montyn, our WSCC councillor, should be thanked for his efforts at Sidlesham sewage plant. The latest plan is that two large holding tanks will be installed in the near future to better cope with storm overflows.

As for the other infrastructure problems I have to report on no development on implementing capacity improvements on the local and main road network. In fact the situation on the A27 has worsened because of increased through traffic as well as increasing resident numbers through house building east and west of Chichester. There is meant to be a new consultation on the A27 by Highways England but no sign so far. On local roads there has been progress. Thanks to our efforts and those of WSCC councillor Pieter Montyn we will be seeing this summer a new 20 mph scheme around the school, flashing lights and all to improve road safety. Like many other roads in the network the increase of traffic has turned quiet rural roads like Highleigh Road into rat runs coping with the overspill from the A27 in particular, but also the A286 for Selsey traffic in summer.

One recent feature on our local roads has been the increasing number of accidents. Blackspots are in particular the Donnington road junction and of course the Anchor bend. We had three accidents in quick succession after the pub re-opened after lockdown. Pieter managed to persuade the WSCC highways manager to come and look for himself and he identified the problem. Funnily enough there was an accident at the junction minutes before his visit. At least it helped to get the message across. No one was hurt by the way.

It is now up to us via a community scheme to shout loud to WSCC to get the necessary works on the list. We have written to you all via the local media to notify us of incidents and accidents, but your response has been disappointing.

As with other projects which I will mention it is vital that the authorities CDC and WSCC know that there is community support. I cannot stress how important that is. So please send us any details of accidents, when and where, of the recent past. We need to build a dossier so help us please. Please send to the parish clerk - parishclerk@sidlesham.org. The thicker the dossier does matter.

We know that speeding is a problem and within our means we have acquired via grants a SID speed indicator device on Paddock straight which is recognised as useful.

We would still like to run Genesis speed gun operations but for that we need volunteers for training and operation. Again we need your involvement Opportunity three.

We have been told that speed cameras are too expensive, but we will keep persisting. Our first priority though is to sort out the accident blackspots before there is a fatality.

But here comes another project which will critically need your involvement for the forward strategy of Sidlesham.

The Neighbourhood Plan project has been led by Riach Ryder who has now resigned to concentrate on the SCA project as vice-chairman.

He gave me a script to read out in case he could not attend but if he is here he will be answering the questions.

Again the Neighbourhood plan has been disrupted by Covid (councillors had many Zoom meetings discussing this) - and has also been delayed by the difficulties that CDC has experienced in getting a viable Local Plan - housing and roads yet again. Anyway here is what Riach says:

“Before I start on the update I would just like to thank those who were involved pre Covid in starting the Neighbourhood Plan ball rolling. I will explain in this update why things have been delayed and the PROGRESS made.

For those of you not familiar with what an NP can do for us -

Having a neighbourhood plan gives the community through their parish council the opportunity to influence District Council proposals that affect Sidlesham for example planning and policy plus an increase a 25% of any CIL monies due.

The NP when approved is a legal document and must meet some very specific requirements.

To meet these requirements we have been lucky enough to have the voluntary services of Paul Bedford Sidlesham resident and retired Town Planner and we have also engaged Nicola Timney (Nikki) for IT and website support to help produce the documentation.

Our NP Document covers the following subject areas

Introduction

The Vision and why Sidlesham needs a Neighbourhood Plan

Subject areas

ENVIRONMENT

PLANNING and INFRASTRUCTURE

ECONOMIC and BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY FACILITIES and WELLBEING

Progress to Date

Our final plan to be approved by the inspector cannot be in conflict with the Local Plan.

As the local plan is still not yet finalised (3 years behind schedule) our plan has also been delayed.

However as our plan is about local issues, we have with the help of Paul second guessed what will be in the final CDC Local Plan, and produced a draft document ready for consultation with the Sidlesham community.

The current plan is to lodge this draft document on the PC`s website in June (assuming the new PC agrees) and will be the start of the six week consultation period required. Any revisions coming out of that consultation will go to the PC for discussion and agreement.

This part of the process is described in a `Statement of Public Consultation that CDC and the independent inspector has to sign off`

As you gather from this report we are now at the critical consultative stage.

We will need to show the NP inspectorate that the plan enjoys the full support of the community, so please, not only should you read the plan and comment if necessary, ask for amendments, hopefully not many, but also let us know that you have read it and approve it.

The plan got off to a very good start with much enthusiasm so we need to rekindle that spirit.

The Neighbourhood plan is a document which allows you to have your say about the sort of community you want, and is a defense against big government directives. I recommend it to you

Opportunity 4 for all and for anyone who would like help us to lead this project

Lastly, and I apologise if this has gone on somewhat, but at last, some cheering news. Next month, on May 8th to be precise we shall be celebrating with a Coronation Cavalcade the first event in the newly refurbished Memorial Hall. I trust you have all bought your tickets, starts at 4.30 and before that there is a picnic with a band on the Memorial field.

We have at last a community centre or hub for the village and our neighbours to use and enjoy.

The departure of the football club allowed us to take back control.

Regarding football

We have been able to open the sports field to a variety of football clubs, men, ladies and girls and we have just had the pleasure of seeing our leading men`s team Infinity

win their league, North Hants Div one and thereby gain promotion to their Premier League. This Saturday there will be two matches, a Bognor girls U13 team at 10.00 am followed by Bognor Ladies at 2pm.

Come and enjoy. The snack bar will be open for hot drinks.

Regarding the buildings

There are already a number of events taking place in the various rooms and now together with the renovated hall the scale and range of events can be extended. There are even plans to restore the drinks license

The Memorial Ground, buildings and sports field is now managed by Sidlesham Community Association who have long campaigned for a village hall.

The SCA was instrumental in renting out the buildings to the NHS for the Covid vaccination campaigns and it is the proceeds of this action, coupled with a similar amount match-funded from council reserves that has enabled the refurbishment programme to take place. To the money must be added the efforts of volunteers who have worked to get the hall in particular back into a usable condition. There is still much more work to be done so here is another opportunity numbers five, six and seven and counting

I must stress that this is a win-win for the community. The arrangement made by the PC with the SCA has avoided a rates bill of some £7000 so we all have an interest in making it work.

This brings this report to a close and I hope as I said at the beginning that you have found it informative. I do hope that you take away from here the idea that the Parish council and SCA needs your involvement. You are a vital part of the Sidlesham team and without your input we will not be able to go forward as we hope to do.

We are very aware that we need to improve our communication with parishioners. We do try and put relevant articles in the parish magazine and the Spread as well as posting notices on the notice boards, but we will be improving our web-site to make it more user-friendly as a source of information of what's on and whats up.

I would finally like to thank my councillor colleagues for the work they do. I believe we have done a good job. We look forward to your further and active support.

Thank you for listening and I leave you with a paraphrase from JFK

“Ask not what your parish council can do for you but what you can do for your parish”

MJM 26/04/2023