**Your Parish Council- January 2021**

An ‘interesting’ year behind us with many new challenges successfully overcome- new ways of working and Parish Council meetings by Zoom; the cancelation of the Annual Parish Meeting to ensure that the community was not exposed to unnecessary risk; longstanding councillors stepping down and new councillors coming onto the Council (more below); the Neighbourhood Plan professionally guided through many stages of development by Ashley and the Steering Group; and Nicki and Nigel’s unstinting work on the Covid-19 support Network with all the coordinators. A lot achieved despite the circumstances our community has had to endure.

As we look ahead to this year, the Council will be rolling out its Emergency Plan together with Bowerchalke Parish Council. Many thanks to Nicki Tinkler and John Nicholas for getting the work done on this and for the support from many volunteers around the skills and resources that they can contribute, should the need arise.

Finalisation of the Neighbourhood Plan with the community is an important next stage that started in December. Flood Planning will feature as a project for the Council as will a review of the website. Consideration of the re-establishment of Neighbourhood Watch; exploring what the Council and village can do towards a carbon neutral position; reviewing the playground equipment; and continuing to work with partners to improve our village and community are all matters that will come before the Council in 2021. Local Council elections should take place in May but will depend on the C-19 situation nearer that time.

If you have any particular issues or priorities you would like the Council to consider please raise with the Chairman or the Clerk.

**December 2020 Parish Council Meeting**: Usually the December meeting is a light-hearted affair with mince pies and a bottle or two of wine, but with the meeting by Zoom, this tradition was somewhat lost, although the clinking of bottles on glasses from many front rooms, kitchen tables or offices accompanied a very lively meeting with some significant issues addressed!

With Councillor Rachel Holland stepping down from the Council, the Chairman thanked Rachel for her many years of service to the Parish. The vacant position has been advertised but until elections are permitted, it was unanimously agreed that Emma Richter be formally co-opted onto the Council. The Chairman also invited Tim Moss and Simon Dawes as non-voting members onto the Council. This was also unanimously supported by the Meeting and Tim and Simon duly accepted.

Wiltshire Councillor Jose Green reported to the Meeting on key issues for the village from Wiltshire Council, in particular for the Parish Council to submit the priorities it would like to see as part of Wiltshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Councillor Green also raised the issue of rural housing needs and commended the Council on its approach through the Neighbourhood Plan and the Community Land Trust.

There was discussion on the planning enforcement action on land off Bull’s Lane and Cllr Green had sought an update on this; and discussion on the planning application for a new telecommunications mast at Chalke Pyt. A resident had raised a concern with Councillor Green. The Clerk briefed the meeting that this had come before the Council a few weeks ago and the Council had no objections. The Chairman commented that, its fairly ‘isolated’ location meant it wouldn’t really have any adverse visual impact to the village but may well bring improved communications for residents and businesses in Broad Chalke.

October through to December saw significant rainfall and a lot of standing water on our village roads. Water courses, ditches and drainage gullies were all affected by the high-water table level. The Council works closely with Wiltshire Council on drainage and gulley clearance with Councillor Edward Fry in weekly contact. One area that had raised significant concern, and had been the subject of discussions with various agencies to find a long-term solution, was the standing water on the Causeway. In view of the danger posed by the water and with a long-term solution not yet agreed, the Council raised the matter with the landowner and are most grateful for the prompt action taken by Mr Jowett to clear the drainage ditch in Mill Mead and remove the danger posed by the standing water.

The meeting also discussed again the condition of Low Lane footpath. This is a well-used route into the village to avoid traffic on High Lane. Whilst the Parish Council does not have the resources to make improvements (and there is some debate as to whether country paths should be ‘improved’) the Council decided to seek the involvement of Wiltshire Council’s Right’s of Way Officer and, if there was some funding and an acceptable improvement Plan was brought forward, the Council would look to try and progress this.

The Chairman thanked Justin Allison for his work as the new Groundsman for the village. Three months in and Justin said how much he was enjoying the work. The one frustration is the carless disregard by some for their litter and the work required to extract this from hedgerows to keep the village looking in order. The Parish Council would like to stamp this element of anti-social behaviour out. If you see people dropping litter and know the culprits but don’t want to mention it to them, please do let the Clerk know so some action might be taken.

**Parish Council Meetings** The dates of future meetings will be kept under review, but the intention is to hold a meeting on 13 January 2021.

**Contact Details:** The Chairman of the Council, Tom Hitchings can be contacted at: Tomhitchingsbroadchalke@gmail.com

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The Parish Council Website is: **www.broadchalkeparishcouncil.com**