**Your Parish Council- June 2020**

**May Parish Council Meeting**: The Council held its first ‘virtual’ meeting with the Council meeting from everyone’s living room using Zoom Pro. After a ‘stern’ warning by the Chairman at the start of the meeting that he did not want to see anyone drinking, business quickly moved on with just the occasional clink of a glass in the background!!

In all seriousness, this was a bit of a test and went remarkably well with some key issues addressed and decisions and progress made. There is still a need to address some councillor access and IT issues but as a way forward during these continued times of restriction and, as a possible additional way for the public to join meetings in the future from the comfort of their homes, it could be a feature that remains with us.

It should have been the Annual Parish Meeting with reports from community groups, election of Chairman and end of year financial report, but this Meeting has been postponed indefinitely until public meetings can resume.

**Year End Accounts**: The Council considered the year end accounts together with the Internal Audit report that the Clerk had received back on the morning of the meeting. There were no issues identified and this clears the way for the Annual Accounting and Governance Review (AGAR) to be submitted.

In a departure from the practice over the past several years, the Council will be submitting the AGAR to External Audit. This is due to expenditure moving above the £25,000 threshold level where councils can exempt themselves from this process. In 2019/20 the Council had some significant one-off expenditure items that increased the Council’s spend substantially. The Neighbourhood Plan costs formed a large proportion of this additional expenditure, of which 100% was covered by grant. Other costs include the new playground fence and replacement oil storage tank at the sports centre.

The accounts and other documentation related to the Year End process will be published on the Council’s website from 1 June.

Other matters discussed was the work of the **Covid-19 Support Network** that has been very ably managed by Nicki and Nigel Tinkler. The Council agreed that the knowledge gained through this period should not be lost and agreed that work should be undertaken to develop an Emergency Plan for the village. Initial thought was also given to how volunteers locally might be recognised and this will be further debated.

**Scarecrow Competition:** The Valley rose to the challenge with a number of excellent examples bringing a little cheer to our lives in ‘lockdown’. Photos of many are on the Chalke Valley Stores website.

**Giant Sunflower Challenge:** The tallest sunflower reported on the first recording day on 15 May was 52 cms.

**Playground:** This has remained closed in line with Government guidelines and is being kept under review to open as soon as it is safe to do so. However, to prepare for reopening, some additional safety work is to be commissioned.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** Ashley Truluck joined the Meeting to update on the Neighbourhood Plan that will now be with Wiltshire Council following the final consultation process earlier this year. Unfortunately, that is where it will stay until it is possible to hold a Local Referendum on the Plan which is not likely before the spring next year.

**Handyman:** The Council also considered how to replace Ron Chalk who retired as the village handyman in April. Information elsewhere in the Broadsheet invites interested parties to contact the Clerk.

**Planning Applications:** The Council considered a Tree application on South Street and had no comments. It also discussed the application for new entrance to Manor Farm from Fourways crossroads. The Council unanimously objected to the application on the grounds of highway safety.

**Parish Council Meetings** The dates of future meetings are having to be kept under review, but the intention is to hold a meeting on 10 June.

**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**