



Woodmancote Parish Council Chairman's Report 2020/21

It has been a challenging and difficult year for many of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Parish Council put into action their emergency plan in early 2020 to provide support to residents if they were in need. This support is still currently in place should anyone find themselves needing any additional help, although it seems that we have all adapted in many ways to cope with the difficulties that have come with the COVID-19 situation and restrictions.

The Council adapted to hold meetings remotely, which were of great benefit so that the Council could continue to function, and we continued to welcome members of the public to our remote meetings during this time.

On a personal note, during the pandemic I was reminded what a special place we live in and the way the community came together to support and help each other was a real testament to that. Whilst collecting prescriptions for various people who were shielding, I also had the opportunity to meet (granted from a distance) lots of lovely people in the Parish that I had not met before. Those two points for me personally were the best things to come out of the pandemic.

New Councillors

We welcomed Roger Noel, who is also a Horsham District Councillor, and Len Fricker to the Council who were both co-opted. We do have one remaining vacancy so if you are interested in finding out more, please contact the Clerk or come along to one of our meetings. David Lewis left his position as Councillor but I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his work during his time with us.

Blackstone Playing Fields

The Council have been working to draft a new lease with Sussex Cricket and this process has been somewhat lengthy due to various reasons. However, towards the end of the financial year the Council decided to obtain a rental valuation for the grounds so that the Council could ensure the only asset the Parish hold is being managed to its best advantage. Work currently continues to progress the lease and negotiate the rent and terms of any new lease. We will be looking at putting the draft lease out for residents to view and comment on, should they so wish, at some stage later this year. We believe that it is important to fully understand residents' views about the future of this site in the Parish and encourage people to review the draft lease, attend a Parish Council Meeting or contact the clerk to make your views (positive or negative) known. I would also like to remind everybody that the grounds are open to residents of

Woodmancote and Blackstone and encourage you all to take a few moments to walk the grounds if you have not done so before. Whilst I am not a cricket player, even to my untrained eye the grounds look spectacular; Sussex Cricket continue to maintain the grounds to the highest standards.

Speeding in the Parish

Speeding traffic continues to be an issue that affects us all and there have been a number of terrible accidents in the Parish in last year. The council has been working to address this and have a number of programmes and schemes underway:

- Community Speedwatch

The Council have recently set up a Community Speedwatch scheme, further details about this can be found on our website or via Steve O'Connell at CSW@sussex.pnn.police.uk and if you wish to volunteer and get involved, please contact the Clerk. A grant application has been submitted to Horsham District Council for the purchase of the equipment, as yet we don't know the outcome of our application, but we are keen to get this scheme working as soon as possible.

- Highways

The Council submitted a Community Highways Scheme for the A281 and surrounding roads in relation to traffic calming and speed reduction, this strategy was implemented following our application for a Traffic Regulation Order to reduce the speed on the A281 being refused. WSCC Highways felt that some traffic calming measures would assist with bringing the speed down so that a lower speed limit could be subsequently introduced on the A281. Our application was supported by Cllr. David Barling. We are awaiting a decision on our application but remain optimistic that we will be able install some traffic calming measures.

- SID (Speed Indicator Device)

Hopefully you have not noticed the SID unit, as it only gets activated if you are speeding! The SID unit continues to be rotated around various locations in the Parish and charged up by the Parish Council team. To enable us to set the SID unit up in more locations we have instructed a contractor to install 6 SID poles which will be installed in the summer. When these are in place the Council will consider purchasing additional SID unit(s)

Finances

The Council continues to hold good reserves and therefore the precept for 2021/22 was increased by just 1% to £8,761. However, due to increased costs the Council will need to look at increasing the precept moving forwards and also have projects coming forward in 2021/22 that will use some of these reserves, for example the SID poles and purchase of additional SID units. Further financial information can be found on our website.

Planning Applications

The Council as always are consulted on applications in the Parish and during the summer attended the HDC Planning Committee in relation to the development of the Blackstone Rise Garage site to which we strongly objected to. However, despite the Council's best efforts, the HDC Planning Committee approved the Planning Officer's report to recommend the application. We understand the site is in the process of being sold but as yet no detailed planning application for the site has been submitted to HDC.

Woodmancote Parish council is now back to holding face to face meetings, currently taking place outside at the Blackstone playing fields on a monthly basis. The council exists to represent the residents of Woodmancote and Blackstone and as such we are always keen for parishioners to join us at these meetings and make your views known. We look forward to welcoming you at a future meeting.

Cllr. Craig Dixon
Chairman
Woodmancote Parish Council