

Welford-on-Avon Virtual Annual Parish Meeting (via Welford Matters!)

Chairman's Report

- Welcome to a very unusual Annual Parish Meeting being broadcast via Welford Matters instead of in person. I hope that you are all keeping well and sane in these testing times. As many of you will know we usually hold this annual event in the Memorial Hall and invite all the local clubs and associations to present their wares to the wider village.
- This normally results in 50-60 people coming along, which for an APM is a great turnout. Clearly, we would love to have many more people sharing their ideas about how we can do more to improve our great village.
- When we are on the other side of this Covid-19 lockdown we would love to see more of you?
- It has been another busy year for your Parish Council, with lots of great things happening locally and some not so great! I will list them shortly and of course the other official thing that needs to be done at this time of the year is to update you on the Parish Council finances – these will be posted on our website and the main notice board in due course. The numbers given here are pre audit and therefore subject to change.



People changes:

- Let me start with the sad loss earlier this year of Peter Barnes our long serving District Councillor, our thoughts are with his family and friends. Although we didn't agree on everything, we certainly did work well together and that has been good for the village. We of course now have a new District Councillor; Manuela Perteghella; I would like to **congratulate Manuela** on becoming our District Councillor and of course thank her for the last year as a councillor on your Parish Council. Mike Brain continues to provide the Parish with great support as our County Councillor. **Thank you Mike**
- We now have two councillor vacancies on the Parish Council, one to replace Manuela and the other to replace Kerry Williams who has also resigned from the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Kerry** for her year on the Parish Council and wish her all the very best for the future.
- Our Parish Clerk & RFO Adele Street has been with us now for over a year and is doing a fantastic job for the Council and the village. I think a special thank you is due to Adele for rising to the challenges of a new job in some very challenging times, and let me assure you it's not as easy as you might think!! **Well done Adele.**
- Your remaining councillors are **Natalie Kennedy** who looks after Village maintenance & playground equipment, village repairs and Synder Meadow and sits on the Flood Action Group, **Martin Lake** who oversees our finances and procedures, **Colin Barbour** who takes a great interest in green things and looks after Cress Hill and our fantastic Footpath network and finally but not least, **Jamie Hockaday** who oversees all things planning and is the vice chair. The two vacant portfolios are "website, traffic issues, speeding & enforcement" and "Remembrance Day, APM, Community & School liaison, PC publicity". We do shuffle responsibilities to match people skills, so these portfolios can change. I'll be picking up these areas until we have our new councillors on board and to that end if you're interested and think that you have got the time and energy to contribute to your local community please let me know directly please or via Adele.

Planning applications and issues:

- Planning permission has now been granted for 166 houses in the Parish; let's remind ourselves that the "planning quota" for Local Service Villages like ours (no. 2) within the built up area boundary is 84, we actually have 117. We are now well above our quota, but the applications keep coming!

- The two significant changes that are now helping us are that SDC now have their Core Strategy in place and a 5-year land supply and of course Welford-on-Avon has its Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). There is a copy of our NDP on our website www.welfordonavon.com. Between the two documents it is providing much better guidance for applicants and is controlling new development a little better. We have also updated our housing needs assessment, again this is available on our website.
- However, these don't stop new applications still coming in and we have currently got two contentious ones; firstly Weston House on the corner of the Long Marston Road and the Milcote Road for 7 houses; this development is too dense for an edge of village setting and the proposed access is on a dangerous junction opposite an electricity substation. The second Kehlstein, is off the Barton Road and is for a further 26 houses. The Parish Council is objecting to both applications on material planning grounds, but clearly after the floods we had earlier in the year, our infrastructure has been shown to be at breaking point and the access for the latter development is through Barton Fields cul-de-sac directly impacting those who live there. This runs roughshod over our NDP policy that states "... development shouldn't have a detrimental impact of neighbouring properties.. *paraphrased*". Please continue to help us resist these inappropriate large-scale developments in the village.
- There have been 9 new houses granted planning permission in the village along with many extensions.
- We have commented on about 100 planning applications in the year including developments in Long Marston.
- Biodiversity has been and continues to be an important aspect of our village and we encourage all developers large and small to improve, not just maintain, biodiversity as part of their development.
- We now insist that with all major developments that we have a **construction management plan** as part of the application to ensure access / egress and that working hours etc are clear.
- We continue to push our case for improvements to infrastructure in the village; roads, sewerage, schooling etc **before** we get more housing!



Moving on to other things:

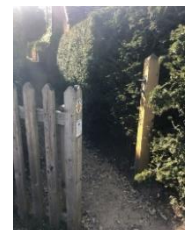
- Welford Flood Action Group led by John Wharam and managed by Sue Fell, continue to push for better flood resilience and preparedness throughout the village; you can get more information from our website.
- During the floods earlier this year, when sadly at least 4 houses were flooded, Severn Trent and WCC were active in trying to improve things with new kit in the pumping station in Weston-on-Avon, modifications to pipework in the village and roadside gully's being jetted & cleaned. However we cannot be confident, and nor are Severn Trent, that we won't get a repeat of the problems earlier this year when we had four places around the village with raw sewerage pouring out onto our roads and paths and then into the surface water drains and straight into the river – not at all acceptable. This is a real-life example of why we need infrastructure improvements before further development takes place. Thanks go out to Mike Brain and Alan Caudwell-Jones for their help.
- The Flood Action Group has been trying to get some grant funding for additional works and we were very pleased to hear that Welford has been allocated £90,000 for flood defence works, however since that news came in last year we haven't heard much more on the matter, we will keep pushing. Thanks to John and Sue Fell.
- As you know we have two Defibrillators in the village. These of course need checking regularly and Brian Stanford continues to do the weekly rounds checking they are working and the batteries are still good; many thanks to Brian.
- Traffic speed continues to be a problem and combined with the new housing developments it is putting the local road system under real strain. The Community speed watch team led by Ian Edwards does a great job and are very effective when they are out there. Anyone who would like to help the team would be very welcome.



- Manuela and I have been successful in getting some new safety signage at the top of Welford Hill. The project was jointly funded by Mike Brain and the Parish Council, with the majority coming from Mike's delegated budget.
- There is also a scheme in progress to improve things on the High Street and Headland Road. Mike Brain has been great in helping us get this through and has written about the proposals in earlier editions of Welford Matters
- Remembrance Day was again very well attended this year with three classes of children from Welford School and about 30-40 residents. Four of the year 6 children read poems that they had created at school for the event; They were fantastic. Thanks to Julie Leeman and her team for moving c.90 children around the village!



- The school has had a great 'make over' with a new nursery, school hall and other improvements thanks to lobbying by the Parish Council to bring together S106 monies in the area for school improvements. The new hall was opened by our MP Nadhim Zahawi.
- The two new benches outside the Memorial Hall to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1 are settling in well and are now being used!
- We will have a new 'main' notice board on Bell green and a new salt bin at Millers Close very soon, CV-19 delays it!
- The Memorial Hall Committee led by Peter & Sue Hook are doing a great job improving things: Internet connection, LED lighting, a projector, a new large projector screen and sound system, a great facility for all of us to use.
- The millennium site at the entrance to the village continues to be managed very well by Dereck Tribe and Joe Sugden and Dereck is taking a closer interest in Cress Hill working closely with Cllr Colin Barbour.
- Footpath improvements are underway significantly funded by the Parish Council (Mike Brain WCC Grant Fund contribution) and include the bridleway between Welford and Weston and the network at the back of the High Street.
- A final thankyou to all those who I haven't mentioned for their contribution to village life!
- Unfortunately, we have also had some people taking things into their own hands and criminally damaging public property. The kissing gate on the High street opposite Millers Close has been removed from the end of the footpath. This gate is a safety precaution and aimed at protecting kids and dogs from running straight out on to the main road! So, whoever you are please put it back the Parish Council should not be spending taxpayer money repairing this sort of criminal damage!



Other activities in the village:

- Doug Lewis continues as our formal Tree Warden and provides expertise and comments on all tree applications in the Conservation Area, a big thank you to Doug.
- Peter Deakin took over as Flag Captain and our Standard Bearer is Alan Phillips, thank you to both Peter and Alan.
- Our 'webmaster' Colin Winston continues to do a great job transforming our website and making it more like a 21st century system! Thank you Colin for your continued efforts.
- Lastly and by no means least, the Welford Matters team led by Richard Ham continue to do a magnificent job producing our free local magazine and getting all of the adverts and articles in on time and delivering to every property in the Parish.. there are about 50 sponsors which is fantastic, and I am sure if anyone would like to add their name to the list and make their contribution, then Richard and the team would be delighted. e-mail welfordmatters@gmail.com . The team also includes Norman Leece (Finance & Advertising), Matt Winston (Webmaster), Colin Winston (Webmaster II), David Nicholls (Distribution) and me. Thanks to all.

Parish Council finances and precept:

- The Parish Council had a total income for the year of £35,205 which includes £23,000 from taxation (our precept) £5,475 from S106 / CIL monies (contributions from developers) VAT reclaimed of £4,514 and contributions towards the maintenance of Synder Meadow from the Sports Club of £2,150. Our total

expenditure was £38,624 so we overspent our income in the year by (£3,419) which reduced our general reserves to just over one year's worth of precept at £26,068; we are also owed VAT of £7,462 which will be reclaimed shortly.

- A total of £26,349 has been spent on maintaining and improving the village.
- The biggest expenditure items are the grass cutting of the Churchyard, the Footpaths, Maypole Green, Holland Meadow, Birds Green, Bell Green and Synder Meadow for the football and cricket clubs. Over £10,000 has been spent in this area.
- £4,546 has been spent on maintaining and improving Cress Hill and £7,425 was spent on improving the surfaces of the bridleway between Welford and Weston and from the back of the High Street to Headland Road.
- The new notice board for Bell Green which will be installed post the Covid-19 crisis cost £2,195.
- We made donations of £1200 to the Millennium Trust, £500 to Welford Matters and an additional £800 to the Memorial Hall as a contribution towards the new projector.
- Meeting accommodation costs were £860 with £610 for meetings at the Memorial Hall and £250 for meetings at the Methodist Chapel.
- We finished the year with fixed assets of £97,295.

Covid-19 helpers and village response:

- I could not finish without saying an enormous thankyou to all who have been helping others in the village at this time of crisis. The Parish Council had over 70 volunteers come forward and between us we have been able to provide cover for the whole Parish with a safety net for those who need help.
- We also have free food and toys being delivered to the needy / vulnerable, organised by a parishioner, at this really difficult time.
- Thanks also to Will, Colin and Harriet at Welford Butchers & Deli, Raj and the team at the Maypole Stores and Richard Bluck at the Farm Shop in Weston... The Bell, The Shakespeare and the Four Alls have also done their bit with take-a-ways.. great support from you all.

Many thanks for your continued support

Simon Carter

Chair, Welford-on-Avon Parish Council.