

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRS REPORT 2022/23

A brief overview of what the PC has done in 2022/3 and a look at the year ahead.

On what I might call the 'administrative' side the Council is in good shape. We have a balanced budget that includes adequate reserves. We had a successful external audit and have a full set of up to date policies. Our Clerk, Beccy, is largely responsible for guiding us through these difficult and complex areas and I would like to formally thank her.

Turning to 'operational' matters - the PC has continued to deal with the day to day stuff like responding to residents concerns and commenting on planning applications but I'll just draw attention to some more 'one-off' issues that we've dealt with over the last year.

St Thomas Cross Signage - the PC requested a scheme of improved and simplified road markings and signage funded by the Magna Park development. This has now been agreed by WCC and has passed the Safety Audit. We're awaiting an implementation date which I'm assured will be soon.

Coton Balancing Pond - this pond which feeds into the Avon has been subject to pollution from raw sewage arising from incorrect connections in the housing estate. None of the agencies - RBC, STW or EA - seemed to take it seriously. Repeated nagging by the PC has led to those connections being corrected and the pollution seems to have been reduced, although there's still evidence of builders waste in the pond.

Closure of Newton Road - the road was closed for 3 weeks last summer to allow for the strengthening of the water supply to Europark and also the village. The PC established good working relations with the contractor and the company and was able to keep residents informed throughout.

Adoption of Ellis Gardens Open Space - this seems to have stalled. A year ago Lioncourt was keen to address the defects and pass the land to the PC. However, it's gone very quiet, many of those defects remain and ownership and the responsibility for maintenance remains with the developer.

Lastly - celebrations. Last summer saw the Platinum Jubilee of the late Queen. The PC funded celebrations in both the village and Coton Park. A lasting memorial was provided in the form of the new oak door and commemorative window to the Hall. We were pleased to welcome Lady Susan Saunders, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, who attended the celebrations, dedicated the new door and joined in granting the Freedom of the Parish to Rosemary and Frank Preston.

The PC installed the Christmas Tree and lights and arranged a turning on event with mulled wine, mince pies and carols.

I'm not sure if it's appropriate to call it a 'celebration' but the PC also delivered the Remembrance Sunday service outside the Hall and has also funded the new Roll of Honour displayed here in the Hall.

Looking forward to the year ahead what big issues will we be dealing with? I'll highlight 2.

Firstly, there's the Neighbourhood Plan. We haven't finally decided to proceed but the next step is a public meeting in June. If we do go ahead then I think that's going to take up a lot of the Council's time over the next couple of years.

And finally - Five Arches Wildlife Site. The PC has been funding the maintenance and improvement of the site for the last 5 or 6 years and as well as fulfilling its wildlife role it's now a valuable recreational resource not for the Parish but a much wider area. The Parish Council, in responding to a planning application for a commercial development at Coton Park became aware of the possibility of developer funded eco-offsetting. That has now been secured and amounts to over £200,000. Meetings have been held with WCC Ecology who are happy for the money to be spent at Five Arches. A meeting has been arranged with RBC which owns the site. If we can get their agreement then we can work up a 30 year plan for the area which will include not just the Five Arches but the Great Central Way and the Coton Balancing Ponds.

Ian Davis
Chair - Newton & Biggin PC