

Chair's Annual Report May 2021 to April 2022

Introduction

Firstly, I would like to thank all my fellow councillors and the staff at the Parish Council for their support and assistance given over the past 12 months in what was another difficult year, with Covid still influencing things that we do, but we managed our way through this with a great team effort.

We welcomed new councillors Joseph Boadu, Lesley Doyle, David Green and Raf Nicholson to the council in October filling the 4 vacancies and bringing the Council back to 15 councillors.

Some of our meetings continued as virtual using ZOOM where we could share documents, have invited guests to present to us without the need to travel and the public continued to join the meetings from the comfort of their home.

However, the government special Covid legislation didn't extend to virtual meetings where decisions were being made after May 2021 and Full Council returned to in person from 22nd June but using the larger Community Hall due to Covid restrictions.

We welcomed Kerry Simpson as our new Assistant Clerk in April 2022,

I will now highlight some of the work that the councillors and staff have put into running the services provided by the Parish Council.

Full Council (all 15 councillors)

Chair Cllr Fishwick, Vice Chair Cllr Wooldridge

Full Council including the Annual Meeting of the Council has met 11 times during the municipal year and have a number of Working Groups and Standing Committees that provide reports to Full Council.

Climate Change Emergency working group

The Climate Change Working Group provided an Action Plan Review in September 2021 informing Council on the progress of 24 Actions and introducing 5 new ones.

Updated reports are presented at each Full Council meeting.

Whilst the 64-panel solar system is providing good electricity generation, most of this is being exported to the grid.

As most energy usage for our facilities is after sunset, when there is zero generation by our solar panels and we are importing electric from the grid.

Therefore, our priority has turned to retaining the energy generated by storing it with the help of battery technology and diverting it to heat water.

I have included a summary report on the solar panels produced by Cllr Geoff Harper comparing this years performance with the previous year and I have added the bright sunshine hours recorded here in Winnersh.

We have also created a Wildflower Meadow at Hatch Farm Way, with the assistance of a financial contribution from developers Vistry and Persimmon Homes as well as help from local residents.

We have now gone over to paperless meetings, wherever possible and producing the final paper version of Winnersh Matters which will transfer to a regular e-Newsletter.

Winnersh Sustainable Transport Group

The Parish Council successfully adopted Winnersh and Winnersh Triangle Stations on behalf of the Winnersh Sustainable Transport Group in partnership with South Western Railway and The Community Rail partnership.

The Wokingham Arts Society have created several pieces of artwork to be installed in the waiting shelters on platform 1 and 2 of both stations depicting destinations that can be made from these stations by rail.

All approvals have now been obtained and the artwork is due to be installed during late May 2022.

Additional projects have been put forward by the Parish Council which are being considered by the Community Rail partnership and South Western Railway/Network Rail.

The Parish Council have set up a **Winnersh Community Speed Watch** and following approval of sites submitted to Thames Valley Police are looking to commence regular sessions from late May 2022.

Winnersh and District History Group

Winnersh Parish Council, together with some local residents, has formed a working group whose initial objective has been to collate, catalogue and preserve archival material donated by the Winnersh & District Historical Society when it disbanded in 2015.

This first stage has now been completed and following a meeting with Berkshire Records Office, further recommendations and decisions will be made.

Winnersh Summer Fete

The Summer fete returned on 4th September after an absence during 2020 due to Covid. The event was one of the best attended with a full programme of events and activities and this wouldn't happen without the great teamwork including volunteers lead by Cllr John Southgate so a huge thanks to all involved.

Planning Committee (8 councillors)

Chairman Cllr Taylor, Vice Chairman Cllr Fishwick

Planning Committee has met 12 times over the year all of which were virtual meetings and it enabled Planning Applications to be reviewed and comments submitted to the Planning Authority, Wokingham Borough Council. 5 members of the public attended over the year.

The committee reviewed 117 planning applications and made 19 comments and raised 17 objections including a telecom mast located at Reading Road junction with Arbor Lane that was refused another application for a telecom mast at Arbor Lane junction with Bathurst Road which is now the subject of an appeal and an application by the Borough Council for 87 dwellings at land at Winnersh Farm.

The committee responded to the South Western Railway timetable consultation and made recommendations to Full Council on the Borough Council's Local Plan Update.

The Local Plan Update comments were submitted to the Borough Council in January 2022.

The committee also submitted comments on the Borough Council's draft Local Cycle and Walking Plan consultation.

Recreation and Amenities (8 Councillors)

Chair Cllr Wooldridge, Vice Chair Cllr Hanna

The Recreation and Amenities Committee has met 8 times over the year and also attracted members of the public.

The committee has successfully overseen the third full year at the Woodward Close allotment site and Winnersh Allotment Association, set up in early 2021, have attended committee meetings and liaised with staff, creating a positive working partnership.

The new site continues to flourish, and all plots remain full, with a small waiting list.

The committee also managed the replacement cladding and extension to the Winnersh Community Hall where Winnersh Rangers now store all of their equipment.

The committee through a working group, have continued the feasibility of upgrading the Parish Council's facilities at Bearwood Recreation Ground.

In partnership with Berkshire Youth a programme of weekly events has been provided covering the period April until June 2022 where the mobile bus will visit designated locations every Wednesday in Winnersh and provide a safe space for young people to engage.

Finance and General Purposes Committee (8 Councillors)

Chair Cllr John Southgate, Vice Chair Cllr Linda Wooldridge.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has met 3 times during the year.

The main role of this committee is to oversee the finance of the council, make grant donations to local charities that assist Winnersh residents and review policies and procedures.

£1,000 in Community Transport Grant funding was awarded to 1 charity.

£1,950 in grant funding was awarded to 5 organisations including Citizens Advice Wokingham who are presenting here this evening.

Thames Valley Community Fund

A special mention that the Parish Council were one of 18 successful bids that were made to the Thames Valley Community Fund where the Parish Council have received a grant of £5,000 for upgrading our CCTV at the Bearwood Recreation Ground.

The bid was made by staff member Joanne Yeomans and a great achievement towards her obtaining the CILCA qualification.

Whilst mentioning staff, we are now sadly losing our Parish Clerk Phil Stoneman to Wokingham Borough Council, after the 19th June.

Phil has been the Clerk for the last 3 ½ years and has worked tremendously hard on what was a significant challenge to steady the ship, but there are still challenges ahead and certainly for us, as we need to find someone as good as you Phil!

However, the Parish Council's loss will be the Borough Councils gain and I know that Phil likes a challenge, but as a Borough Councillor I know that they have some big challenges in the future.

So on behalf of the Council, we wish you all the best, but this is not your final your final Full Council as that will be on 14th June.

So, once again thank you for your support over the past 12 months and I look forward to working with you all over the next municipal year.

Councillor Paul Fishwick, Chair Winnersh Parish Council