

## **Wouldham Parish Council Chairman's Report 2021/22**

Our year started slowly as we were still governed by Covid 19 restrictions, and we had to have several of our meetings on Zoom which, if we are honest, was not a raving success. Due to technical issues.

The decision by Nicky Grimes to resign meant a selection process was put in place to find her replacement. A new Clerk, as always anything dealing with personnel and change of character means that it takes time for things to reach a smooth-running level however a new clerk was found, and Tina Miles has achieved all this in a short space of time.

Also in this year, Cllr Jenny Head also decided to retire, her knowledge of the Parish history and her energy will be missed by the Council.

Our Community Warden, Vivienne Hickmott, unfortunately has been on long term sickness, since October, and we have therefore been without that link to TMBC. Although after conversations between Tina and Sandra, Vivienne's supervisor, it has been decided that Sandra will be our point of contact for the foreseeable future. We wish Vivienne a complete recovery.

The Village Hall Committee also suffered set-back with several members of the committee resigning for various reasons, but a new committee has been set up and is dealing with the day-to-day management of the hall. Anne Marr and Tina have started a fortnightly coffee morning for residents to come and spend a couple of hours discussing different topics, all are most welcome to attend. Gentlemen have put in appearances along with some of the very young residents.

Peters Village section of the Parish has suffered greatly from an avalanche of cars mainly at school opening and closing times. The PCSO has been present on a couple of these occasions which has highlighted the danger to the children. Unfortunately, another serious problem has become apparent, the increase in ASB throughout the Parish which has greatly increased. This includes benches in Peters Village and the Recreation ground in Wouldham being mindlessly smashed up, all of which were purchased by the Parish Council with resident's money over the past months since the government relaxed Covid restrictions. Theft and vehicle damage is more prevalent, and to help combat this the Parish Council has decided to install a better CCTV system in the recreation Car Park, along with a better lighting system.

The Parish Council have spent a good amount of time on looking into play equipment in the Parish, but it seems that the biggest expense is the safety surfaces which KCC seem to insist on, Peters Village should have had play equipment installed under an S106 agreement between KCC and Trenport, but not a lot so far. We have once again spent too much time trying to progress the work with both of the antagonists refusing to budge.

During the year, Cllr. Kennedy (KCC) came to us with a proposal for a system around Wouldham Village. This meant the High Street would be one way as part of the proposal. After a public survey of the residents of Wouldham Parish it was decided that this proposal, which was discussed in a very heated way on Facebook,

but very silent when it came to attending Parish Council meetings. It was therefore decided that this proposal would not be proceeded with. However, we have not given up on this and KCC are still talking to Parish Councillors regarding a trial system for the High Street with added implementations of highway signage. The famous “watch this space” is the order of the day.

A large amount of volunteer Parish Councillors' time is taken up with matters including planning applications, which in many cases need specialist knowledge both of the local environment and government legislation which means keeping up to date with mountains of bumph from TMBC and KCC and other bodies, so that we can try to make the correct decision on behalf of residents. Parish Council Meetings are held once a month when the working groups report on the latest problems or fantastic ideas that they have been working on for the previous month, keeping the rest of the Council up to date and hopefully making decisions so that we can move forward.

The Clerk, with support of the Chairman, have put in many hours in arranging a new grass cutting and spraying contract due to our previous contractor deciding not to proceed with a new contract. This has now come to fruition, so the village can once again start to show its true potential. The new contractors will obviously need time to settle into the contract that has been arranged.

Our School Traffic Control Officer (Lollipop Lady) in previous years has been paid for by monies received from certain developers on the Peters Village site. Unfortunately last Sept this money ran out and the Parish Council raised the money in order that our school traffic office could continue to keep our children safe whilst crossing the road. Once again, the Parish Council decided to put aside monies for this to continue for 2022/2023, although under the one-way system originally proposed, this would not have been needed as there would have been a zebra crossing included at the bottom of Knowle Road.

It is with some pleasure that the Parish Council have managed to decrease the charge to residents by 5% for the ending 1st April 2022 and by a further 2% for the year ending 1st April 2023, this is in direct contrast to TMBC and KCC who have both increased by 4%. How long the Parish Council can carry on with this decrease will depend on how much we have to pay out to get the projects for the Parish as a whole completed.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Councillors for their support over the last year, and sincerely hope that the projects we have before us for CCTV and lighting will be fulfilled shortly. Our new Clerk has settled in and Liz, our litter picker, has recovered from her injury, and is now in full swing once again, our thanks also go to Liz's husband Russell for filling the breach during her absence.

Let us now move forward in 2023 and beyond as a Parish for the benefit of all our residents.

Eddy Bell,  
Chairperson,  
Wouldham Parish Council.