

SIDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

7.30pm 27TH APRIL 2021

(Conducted online via Zoom)(All reports had been published online beforehand)

PRESENT

Cllrs. J Hayward (Chair), N Deller, C Langdon, A Painter, M Painter, A Prosser, M. Turner, J Sparrow, I Smith;

Revd Jennifer McKenzie; Katie Cook (Head Teacher, Siddington School);

Den Jones (Chesterton AFC); Cllr M Evemy (CDC Councillor);

Gloucestershire Police; Clerk to the Council, R Cowley;

No members of the public were present.

Cllr Hayward opened the meeting at 7.30pm as Chairman and welcomed all those present.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Anderson, and from Cllr Parsons (GCC).

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (2019)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

REPORT FROM GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Crime Breakdown

HO Band	HO Category	Crime 23APR20 23APR21
Violence	Assault with Intent to cause Serious Harm	1
Violence	Assault with injury	3
Violence	Malicious Communications	2
Violence	Public Fear, Alarm or Distress	1
Violence	Assault w/o Injury	3
Violence	Cruelty to Children/Young Persons	4
Sexual offences	Rape of female 16+	1
Burglary	Burglary - Residential	9
Burglary	Burglary - Business and community	3
Theft	Shoplifting	1
Theft	Theft/unauth taking m/veh	1
Theft	Other theft/unauth taking	5
Fraud	Other fraud	1
Fraud	Fraud by False Representation, Cheque, Plastic Card and Online Banking (not Ebay or Paypal)	1
Criminal damage	Criminal damage -dwelling	1
Criminal damage	Criminal damage -non dwelling	2
Criminal damage	Criminal damage -vehicles	0
Criminal damage	Criminal damage -other	4
Drugs	Possession of Drugs(Cannabis)	1
Other notifiable	Other notifiable offences	2
=		46

Summary

This report shows an overall reduction in crimes by 27% on the previous year.

Safeguarding

We continue to work with local schools and housing agencies, health agencies and social services to provide safeguarding assistance to vulnerable members and all members of our community.

We have recently visited Siddington C of E primary School and given presentations to Key Stage 2 about personal safety. We hope to visit more as restrictions start to ease.

We speak regularly with Clare Painter from Bromford to maintain an awareness of local residents and any vulnerable members of the community.

We also hope to be able to visit more local community groups as restrictions start to ease.

Traffic/Lorries

We have been made aware of lorries using the road through Siddington. We have been completed checks in the area and during these times we have not identified any large lorries using the road although we continue to monitor the area.

Community Alerts

A reminder to sign up community alerts to be made aware of any neighbourhood incidents or good news stories. Sign up at <https://www.yourcommunityalerts.co.uk>

Reminder

Always call 999 for emergencies and to log any other incidents on 101 either by phone or online.

Q – How do this year's figures compare with last year's?

A – We will find out and let you know.

Q – Are there any crime categories to be concerned about?

A – Burglaries and shed break-ins. Reassurance visits can be arranged. Advice and shed alarms and dummy cameras are available from Cirencester police station.

REPORT FROM GCC COUNCILLOR SHAUN PARSONS

The year has of course been dominated by the pandemic and has shown clearly how strong, resilient and community spirited Gloucestershire is as a county. Covid-19 has tested us all, presented new challenges and above all has brought out the absolute best in people. The offers of support from individual members of the community and organisations has been staggering and proven invaluable to those who have needed help. The Pandemic has showcased the strength and effectiveness of the relationships between the NHS, Gloucestershire County Council, The police, district councils and the voluntary and community sectors. By all working together; helping and supporting those who are most at risk, we have, thankfully seen much lower levels of impact than in other parts of the UK.

That is not to say there hasn't been loss and suffering as a result of Covid-19, there has, and it is important that we remember those who have sadly lost their lives and we look after those who have they have left behind. GCC, which has a specific statutory responsibility to look after everybody in the county will continue to do all it can to help minimise the pain and grief that comes with losing a loved one.

Gloucestershire, and the Cotswolds in particular, is generally recognised as a great place to live, work and do business. Most local people enjoy a high standard of living, and our levels of health and well-being are comfortably above the average for the country. However there are challenges. Gloucestershire's population is ageing more quickly than the UK average. The increasing number of retired people in the county will bring experience, resources and time to their communities, but as they grow older and more frail they will also need more support from health, social care and safeguarding services. The county is also

seeing increasing number of people with disabilities and long-term conditions in all groups. At the same time our 18-64 population is expected to remain static. While living standards are high overall, there are some areas of the county which fall well below national averages, as a result, local people are more likely to depend on the services provided by the county council. 19,415 people (3.1% of the county's population) live in areas amongst the most deprived 10% in England.

Along with councils up and down the country, GCC has declared a climate change emergency. GCC is already close to achieving carbon neutrality as a council and has made a strong commitment to achieving a carbon neutral county by 2050.

GCC is committed to improving the County's infrastructure. 97% of premises within The Cotswolds now have an internet connection. The county has made a significant contribution into the A417 Missing Link and it would seem that construction work will commence towards the end of 2022, and also Junction 10 of the M5. The resurfacing of major routes within the county was able to continue throughout the year, and more is planned and budgeted for in the current financial year.

Lastly, before moving onto Siddington Specific issues GCC's finances are in excellent order. Central government has covered all COVID related costs and the County's general reserve, there to meet unknown emergencies which might arise in the year is circa £18m. Council tax is one of the lowest in the South west.

Turning now to Siddington.

The exceptional rainfall in December saw totally unacceptable levels of flooding at several locations in Siddington, noticeably Cherry Tree Drive, Wildwood Park, the churchyard and The Common. Some remedial action has taken place. A working party from the parish council with help from Bathurst Estates has cut back vegetation, and cleared some gullies. The new owner of Wildwood Park has accepted their response was much too slow and has put in place new arrangements to respond more quickly to any future flooding incidents. As I write the county councils flood risk manager is arranging a joint meeting of all the relevant parties (including Highways, CDC, The Environment Agency, Bathurst Estates and the parish council) to sort out responsibilities for maintenance at various locations with specific reference to the bridge by Siddington Mill. However there are more fundamental issues which need to be addressed. Meetings of the joint working committee, attended by representatives from The Environment Agency, Thames Water, CDC, Cirencester Town Council and parishes will recommence and meet quarterly under the chairmanship now of the county council (previously the EA). This working committee last met in November 2019.

Some other issues are still ongoing and are proving difficult to resolve for example legal responsibility for the culvert which goes across private land from Parkway West to the canal. Further work needs to take place to put in place effective preventative measure to stop so many HGVs ignoring the weight limit on Parkway West in particular.

On a happier note after a long struggle Highways England accepted full responsibility for the redundant Ashton Road railway bridge, cleared the culvert, and will continue to monitor the situation with a promise to take prompt remedial action when required.

Excellent progress was made in upgrading the canal footpath from Siddington into Cirencester. Further work is required at the Cirencester end, though this is outside of the parish boundary. Following significant financial contributions from the parish council, Bathurst Estates and from the Highways Local budget under my control, the long awaited footpath from Spire View to the school was built. The footpath is of a standard acceptable to the county council and will now become a PROW. It is anticipated some post construction remedial work will take place this summer.

Lastly, Siddington, at long last benefited from the county's £150m resurfacing programme and the worst lengths of two major roads through the village were re-surfaced. (Further lengths of road will be re-surfaced as the programme is rolled out.)

REPORT FROM CDC COUNCILLOR MIKE EVELY

This is my first report to the Parish since my election as your District Councillor in 2019 due to the cancellation of last year's meeting. Following my election, I was appointed by the new Leader of the Council to act as his Deputy and the Cabinet Member for Finance – a role I continue to hold.

Not surprisingly, the last year at the District Council has been dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council has provided additional support to homeless and vulnerable people during this period as well as administering Government grants and reliefs to support our businesses. The Council has been hit hard financially through both increased costs and through loss of income. Major factors were the enforced closure and restrictions on its leisure centres and a big reduction in revenue from its car parks. However, the Council has been able to set a balanced budget for 2021/22 and I am hopeful that we can work within that as we come out of the Covid-19 restrictions.

Over the last two years I have regularly attended meetings of the Parish Council to inform myself of matters of local concern and provide advice and support when requested - in the last year on telephone conference calls.

I was actively involved in the response to the flooding event at Christmas which severely affected residents in South Cerney Road, The Common, Cherry Tree Drive and Wildwood Park. I was in the village several times to observe the flooding and speak with residents and parish councillors and subsequently relayed their concerns in the emergency meetings the Council held to respond to the floods. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for the Environment also both came to the village to listen to residents and worked with Ubico to provide direct support to flood affected residents.

As the ward councillor, I have a role in the Council's planning process. If a planning application is the subject of an objection, a Planning Officer will produce a written report and send it to the ward councillor to see if s/he wishes to refer the decision to the Planning and Licensing Committee rather than allow a decision to be taken by officers. On most occasions this role is uncontroversial and the process runs smoothly. Occasionally, a recommendation is made by planners that is strongly opposed by local residents and ward councillors must judge whether there are material planning reasons why the Committee might come to a different opinion to the planning officer. This year we had one such case concerning the compliance application for a drop off point in the Severall's Field development, which had been granted planning permission on appeal. I worked with the Planning Officer and the Parish Council to see if an accommodation could be found which would satisfy all parties. Sadly, that was not the case and the Council granted permission for the drop off point in a location opposed by the Parish Council and other objectors.

I'd be happy to answer any questions parishioners may have at the meeting or on another occasion by email or telephone.

Mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk

Tel: 07850 373022

REPORT FROM ST PETERS CHURCH – Revd Jennifer McKenzie

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of the things that St Peter's Siddington has been up to over the last year, a year lived in the midst of a global pandemic.

In line with the government and Church of England guidelines our church building has been closed for much of this last year. The church however was not closed and we continued to support the community both pastorally and spiritually. We have gathered for worship in different ways throughout the week, preparing worship materials each Sunday and for major festivals for people to follow at home which have been shared via email, Facebook, our website and printed out and delivered to those members of our church family who do not have the internet. We have been using Zoom in a number of different activities including for worship, church meetings, Bible Study, quizzes, coffee mornings, Lent lunches, marriage preparation and various kinds of pastoral meetings. Throughout this last year we have continued to conduct funerals and support bereaved families at such a difficult time, made harder by the Coronavirus restrictions. When the restrictions eased to allow public worship again the decision was made not to open St Peters Church and instead to encourage people who would like to attend in-person worship to go to All Hallows Church South Cerney, which as a much larger building is in a better position to deal with the necessary Covid safety measures. St Peters has however been open for funerals, baptisms and weddings (when allowed and in line with government and Church of England guidelines) and we remain committed to holding Sunday services in the church again once it is felt safe to do so.

Following the November lockdown our already modified plans to mark Remembrance Sunday needed to be changed once again. So with the support of Chris Fenton an act of remembrance was streamed from All Hallows on behalf of our benefice, which includes St Peter's. Representatives from the Royal British Legion and the 99th Squadron of the 29th Regiment RLC took part in the service that included a symbolic wreath laying and the reading of the names from the Siddington roll of honour along with all those recorded on war memorials in the villages represented by our benefice.

The major festivals of Easter and Christmas have needed to be celebrated differently this year which led to some creative thinking. For example at Easter church members of all ages decorated butterflies to place on our church gate as signs of new life and hope. In place of our normal Carol service we put together a virtual Carol service which we streamed via Facebook for people to sing along to at home. Much was filmed on location around our benefice and the three wisemen had a lovely time visiting the local area on their way to visit baby Jesus in the stable. Our thanks go out to our church choir, Blue Notes and members of the community for their support with the singing, to our hand bell ringers and readers and to Chris Fenton who brought it all together.

Through technology we have maintained our strong supportive links with Siddington Church of England Primary School, for example by joining them virtually for collective worship, celebrating the major festivals which the children have taken an active role in and through the governing body.

We are very grateful to the Parish Council for their continued support of the church and in particular their support in maintaining our churchyard as a peaceful space for the bereaved to remember their loved ones. We continue to receive many positive comments about the churchyard and so we know that your support is appreciated by the wider community. Thank you.

I am wonderfully supported in my ministry by Joan Townsend, Liz Pearce and Bill Irving our readers, our churchwardens Michael Painter and Allen Howe, our benefice administrator Jeannie Adam and by retired priest Revd Don Adams up until his retirement from public ministry in July 2020. We are very blessed in our churches by so many people who do so many things to support the mission and ministry of our church. My thanks go out to them all for their support and for all that they do in the life of our church.

REPORT FROM SIDDINGTON SCHOOL – Katie Cook – Head Teacher

‘To have fun, do our very best and look after everyone in a caring Christian community’.

It has been an extraordinary time for the school due to the pandemic and therefore the changes to how the school supports its pupils and families. I have also taken on the role as Headteacher and we have welcomed new members of staff, including Miss Smith (teaching the Early years class) and Mrs Manning-Browne (maternity cover for Years 3 and 4).

In the last lockdown the school was open to critical worker and vulnerable children and had about 36% of the school population in school in a typical week. Most critical worker’s children attended part-time, and this meant that we were providing several different blended approaches to learning. All pupils were taught online via live lessons, some children accessed this from home full-time, while others accessed this from school on a full-time or part-time basis. To provide some flexibility for parents with other commitments, we provided some sessions as recorded lessons. The pupils also had access to independent tasks that they completed at home. Work was submitted online so that teachers could provide feedback and encouragement for all pupils.

The school’s teaching assistants supported the learners in school, with teachers attending each week to work with pupils in school. Both I and the office staff remained in school supporting families via phone or in online meetings. The children enjoyed an online Roman and Victorian Day, a visit from an author in Book week, and a virtual Science workshop.

The children have returned to school happy and pleased to be back. The teachers are focusing on ensuring key skills are taught (so that children are ready for the next stage in their learning) but also on providing activities that focus on wellbeing, getting the children outside to learn as much as possible. We have continued our strong links with the Church community and have welcomed Reverend McKenzie to join us for our Christmas and Easter celebrations. We have ensured that the pupils retain their links with our ‘Open the Book’ group, who have kindly offered virtual contributions to our whole school Worship.

The school PTA has remained active. They have provided Covid safe activities to raise money that has provided each child with a cuddly ‘Sid’ bear over lockdown, an Easter egg for each child and a book for each child at Christmas.

The PTA have also supported us in a project to develop a school library. The ‘Library Space’ has a Space theme and has transformed a room into an exciting and motivating place for children to discover new books. Generous donations from parents have helped us decorate the library and update the collection of books. We hope to be able to open the library to all children in the summer term once the project is completed.

Throughout this challenging year the school staff and I have been working hard on improving the school, putting in place consistent approaches to teaching and learning and introducing new schemes and practices. The school now has a consistent approach to teaching reading, writing, spelling and phonics, and a new maths scheme in place. The staff have worked tirelessly to engage in training provided online during this year and we are now seeing the impact of this work. Children are challenged in lessons to master new skills, they are motivated to learn, and teachers can track more accurately what pupils need to learn next. It was important to put systems in place that ensured a consistent approach to teaching and learning the key skills, so that pupils at the school can reach their potential. This focus on improving the school will continue, with a focus on the broader curriculum in Terms 5 and 6. We also need to ensure that the changes we have made are monitored closely and have time to embed across the school. I cannot praise the teachers enough for their commitment, enthusiasm, and willingness for change, during what has been a challenging year.

The school has also been able to secure funding for new Phonetic Reading books (that support the new phonics scheme), Reading books that provide age-appropriate material for older readers and whole class sets of books so that reading can be taught using exciting, rich texts. We have also received a grant to develop our resources for Physical activity. We are using these to ensure the pupils get more time outside to be physically active. We are working with Voice 21, a programme that develops the Oracy skills in pupils, as we recognise how important these skills will be in our pupil's futures. We are also working with Achievement for All. This is a charity that supports schools in ensuring pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium funding, or who have Special Educational Needs/Disabilities, are receiving high quality opportunities in school. Our Coach has been working to develop the role of Teaching Assistants and providing training for all staff on supporting pupils with Social and Emotional difficulties.

As you can see, it has been a busy and rewarding year, with many successes and achievements. But best of all, the children are back in school. The school is full of the sound of children playing with their friends and enjoying learning again.

Q – Will the new Chesterton school be housed at Siddington School?

A – There have been hold-ups due to Covid, but we will update when we know, although Siddington is likely.

Q – Does the Parish Council have any say – there would be concerns with parking issues?

A – It is in the very early stages of planning at the moment.

Q – What about speeding traffic issues on Park Way?

A – (JH) Some kind of traffic calming could be looked into perhaps.

Q – is the proposed drop off point in the Severells Field development adequate?

A – The position and size has been decided, but was not what was asked for.

REPORT FROM SIDDINGTON VILLAGE HALL – Denys Young (Chair of Trustees)

The Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the most challenging periods in the near 100 year history of the hall.

During national lockdowns the hall has remained closed to comply with government regulations. Siddington and Kemble Playgroup which uses the committee room have been operating when regulations permit.

There has been an inevitable loss of income without our regular hirers and ad hoc parties. The government has offered grants to village halls and other community buildings to assist them with both the reduction in income and increased costs of making the hall Covid compliant. Signage, QR Codes, hand sanitisers and enhanced cleaning have been introduced. The trustees have been successful with their grant applications, helping to alleviate concerns about the financial viability of the hall going forward.

Before the pandemic struck the trustees were well into preparations to commence a major refurbishment of toilet facilities. This will require some internal alterations, plumbing and electrical improvements and will create better access for wheelchair users. It remains our intention for work to start this year once regulations are eased.

The committee room and entrance lobby are being painted as I write and we hope to make improvements to the side store once the current Covid compliant one way system comes to an end.

The area to the side of the hall has been levelled and gravelled to improve appearance and parking.

Regrettably our annual fundraising events have not been able to take place since 2019. As this year is the centenary of the hall, the trustees are exploring the possibility of marking the occasion by holding an event possibly during the summer and also around December 21st the official opening date of the hall in 1921. We will be calling upon the good people of Siddington to share their ideas and offer support for these celebratory events.

I am delighted to report that we now have a full complement of 10 trustees to oversee management of the hall. Jackie Llewellyn-Bowen and Victoria Wilson have recently been co-opted. They bring new ideas and skills to the committee which will be invaluable as we face a very different future.

Special thanks go to all of the trustees who have been instrumental in keeping the hall in a state of readiness throughout the uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

Let us hope that the hall will once again be fulfilling its purpose in the community providing an excellent venue for regular users and ad hoc events.

REPORT FROM CHESTERTON AFC (Den Jones) Chairman)

In what has been a challenging year for everyone, Chesterton AFC has continued to look forward in many areas of the Club. With a long period of time without any football from April 2020, this allowed us to look at various avenues to improve the club going forward.

We are able to obtain a grant of £2,500 for pitch improvements including seeding, pitch scarifying and weed killing. The initial round of work took place May/June and although the pitch soon firmed up, the results a few weeks later were very impressive. The second round of work took place just before the season started and I think the pitch is the best it's ever looked.

We started the season in Division 1 of the Stroud league and after a dozen games were sat top of the league and there were high hopes that we may have been able to progress to the Northern Senior League for the 21/22 season. With the Lockdown from December to March, the Stroud League took the decision to null and void the 20/21 season. Although very frustrating from a promotion point, we fully respect that the number of games remaining would not be completed in time before the start of the Cricket season where many teams share grounds.

We are now back playing friendlies for the foreseeable future and awaiting information from the Stroud league regarding next season which should kick off late August/September. We have been active in keeping the grass cut and also a big clear up of the clubhouse over the last few months and we have noticed lots of spectators enjoying the games now the restrictions have been slightly lifted.

We are continually looking at all funding opportunities to develop the facilities and also equipment such as ground machinery along with playing equipment and ensuring we are Covid compliant. There are lots of different avenues and funding available to us as we are a Charter Standard Club through organisations such as Football Foundation. This would be a huge task but as a community, I am sure we could pull together to create a great facility for everyone to enjoy.

Cllr Hayward commented that the pitch had never looked so good.

REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – Cllr J Hayward

Thank you all those organisations that have supplied reports. As we don't have any reports from other Siddington organisations, I will start by mentioning a few of them.

1. the Coronavirus Support Group. Formed at the start of the pandemic last year and provided support – in the form of shopping, medicine collection and focal point – ably led and

organised by Jude Grayson. The organisation is still in place but happily not currently needed. A huge thank you to Jude and her team.

2. the Village News. To the team of editors and distributors led by Marion Carruthers, to David Vernon Smith, the treasurer and to the sponsors, our thanks. The News is an important and valued part of our parish infrastructure. The parish council is pleased to support it.

3. the allotments. I have heard rumours of the Grow and Show being planned for this year. That would be a welcome sign of a return to normality - the annual shaming of the less diligent gardeners. I am happy to sponsor the prize for the most pathetic runner bean.

4. the Village Shop. Ramesh, aided by Ann Gibbons, has kept open throughout. It's a business that provides a valuable service to the community which we are lucky to have.

5. Others. There are of course others – the WI, the cricket club.

Turning to matters with which the Parish Council is directly involved,

- the new Elizabeth Way bus shelter overcomes the problem of would-be passengers not being able to see and flag down approaching north bound buses. Cllr Nick Anderson led on that project and I thank him on the parish's behalf for his work on it. The old bus shelter will be partially retained for those occasions when there are more passengers waiting than the new shelter can accommodate. The other half of the old shelter will be turned into a store for sand and sandbags for use in times of flood. The Park Way store will be reserved for road salt.
- Playing field. Allocated funds for replacement fencing.
- Churchyard. The vicar has thanked the parish for its support in maintaining the churchyard. Capacity is a problem. The Bathurst Estate has offered more land and parallel discussions will now commence with the church authorities and the Estate.
- Mowing. Sadly Fred Lovatt who kept our verges so assiduously until well past his 80th birthday passed away. He will be missed.
- Footpaths. The surfacing of most of the Canal Footpath has greatly enhanced that route to and from Cirencester and our thanks to Cllr Parsons for seeing that through. The parish contributed to the surfacing of the Spire View footpath along with funds from the Bathurst Estate and from Cllr Parsons' discretionary budget. There are concerns about the suitability of the surface for buggies and that is on the PC's agenda to investigate.
- Traffic. Speeding remains a problem as do HGVs. The planned instalment of an ANPR camera was postponed due to nationwide concerns about their conflict with data protection laws. Those issues appear to have been resolved and we will be looking again at a suitable installation which is likely to be a pressing problem in the near future as a result of
- Planning. We have major construction work in prospect at both Severalls Field and for the solar farm. Both will generate a large number of HGV movements. Extraordinarily, the solar farm developer's traffic consultant thinks that the best route for that scheme's vehicles is by way of the tight 90 degree bend where Siddington Road and Bridge Road meet and then past the narrow throat outside the village shop. We will continue to try to persuade them that access via the Spine Road is the only responsible route.
- The solar farm should produce a cash payment to the parish by way of community benefit. We remain some way apart from the developers as to the appropriate quantum of that sum.
- The Severalls Field scheme is likely to go on longer than the solar farm and will bring no community benefit as the developers have reneged on their undertaking to provide a drop off point at the school. The provision they are reluctantly making falls well

short of the promises made at the application and appeal stages. The community has been badly let down by the planning system.

- Thanks also to all the members of the Parish Council for attending meetings remotely during the pandemic, and for managing to keep the meetings short(!).

Public Questions

There were no members of the public present.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending and the meeting closed at 8.01pm.