

## **Swindon Parish Assembly**

**May 2016**

### **Chairman's Report**

I am Peter Allen the Chairman of the Parish Council and I should like to thank you all for attending this evening.

First I should like to welcome the representatives from the other organisations and societies who are here tonight to provide us with an insight into what they and their colleagues and members do.

These organisations provide important roles and links within our community. Many of them have to rely heavily on the time and motivation of enthusiastic volunteers to manage and administrate them and to support them on every level.

There has been an expansion in the number of organisations who call on the support of unpaid volunteers who are needed and who fulfil a diverse number of roles.

Parish Councils are one of the longer standing community organisations and this Parish Council is fortunate to be supported by people who are keen to ensure that the needs and views of this community are promoted and brought to the attention of the County and Borough Councils.

The brief descriptions contained in the published minutes of the parish council do not reflect the time, effort and self-motivation required to try to promote the interests of the residents of the parish.

I should therefore like to commence my report by expressing my gratitude to all of the parish councillors and to Shaun our Clerk for their dedication and support during the year.

Unfortunately we recently lost two parish councillors, Shannon Kerr was our youngest parish councillor and has left to continue his training as a paramedic and we wish him luck. Dr Arran Stibbe has been struggling to find time to continue with Parish Council duties in addition to his work and to his commitment to the work of Save The Countryside.

Arran together with Councillor Helen Wells still continues the work that he started when he was a Parish Councillor on the promotion of the Swindon Parish Green Space proposal.

We have been fortunate to have Stuart Deakin who stepped forward at the right time to fill one of those Councillor vacancies. But we are still not up to full strength as I believe that we still have a vacancy for a councillor.

The Joint Core Strategy still hangs over Cheltenham and continues to cast its biggest shadow over this parish. There appears to be little interest by the developers in recognising the needs of the existing communities as they are trying to encircle the village and turn it into a suburban area of Cheltenham. Although through negotiations that Arran Stibbe and Helen Wells have had with developers they have managed to achieve an agreement with one of the developers for the protection of some of the Green Spaces in the Swindon Parish green space proposal.

As you may be aware the inspector has closed the examination of the JCS until the autumn but we are expecting a summary of her decisions to date to be issued in the next few weeks.

Shaun in addition to being our Parish Clerk also gives his time and efforts freely to support the Parish Council.

Shaun having given the Parish Council web site a complete overhaul he continues to maintain it providing a means of not only communicating with our community but also linking with the organisations, societies and clubs that are part of our community or influence it heavily. We hope that it includes those who are represented here tonight.

The Parish Council have been pleased to see that there has been a small investment in repairs to some of the roads but are disappointed that most scheduled repair works are running behind program. We are asked by the County Council to request that anyone who sees a pothole or area requiring repair should report through the County Councils new and improved on line system.

We have also been requested to ask parishioners to report any smells to the environment agency who continue to monitor them.

Councillors Bernie Fisher and Flo Clucas attend the Parish Council meetings and have also been very supportive during the JCS examination process.

A number of planning applications have been dealt with this year which although few in number the proposals in some of them have contained issues that may not have been immediately apparent but could have an impact on the community. The application for the development on the corner of Kingsditch Lane and Swindon Road would remove the unofficial footpath and as a result rob us of an important link.

You will be aware that all levels of Local Government are having to operate within a very tight budget. Whatever happens in the election this May this situation is not going to change for the foreseeable future. The Parish Council's financial perspective remains in a sensible position with balanced books and a very small reserve. The Council have tried hard over the years not to raise the precept but this year we took the difficult decision to raise the precept. The Council has found that in order to fund essential maintenance such as the unexpected work that was required to the trees in the amenity area, repairs to the bus shelters and improvements to the allotments we needed to increase the reserve. The mosaic sundial is also in need of repair which we have yet to obtain any details or quotations for carrying out the works.

### ALLOTMENTS

I should particularly like to thank Ian Brown for all of his hard work in managing the allotments.

### PARISH COMMUNICATIONS

The world of communication is changing and although emails outnumber phone calls there are still many people who do not own or have any interest in computers and technology. We are very grateful to the team of volunteers who edit, print and distribute the Village News relies heavily upon a team of committed volunteers.

### MOVING FORWARD

As we move forward we can look forward to continued engagement with the developers, planners and highways regarding the proposed developments.

If anyone would like to join us you will be pleased to know that you haven't missed the deadline for the applications to fill the vacancies that we have.