

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

SWINDON VILLAGE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

18th April 2018

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As Chairman of the Swindon Parish Council I am pleased to welcome you to your Annual Parish Assembly.

I should 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.

The role of a parish councillor is unpaid and can seem at times to be more than an uphill struggle to promote the views and the interests of the community that we represent.

As you are all aware 2018 is election year and it would have been nice to be able to report that Shaun will had been inundated with requests for application forms from eager potential councillors. Sadly it appears that there is to be yet another uncontested election.

Moving Forward

The Joint Core Strategy is now in place but it still lacks any details or proposals for traffic management and air pollution.

It is difficult to comprehend how the parish will be affected by the planned construction projects and resulting increase in people and traffic. Certainly the impact upon the Village will be considerable unless the planning and highways department are willing to recognise the needs and aspirations of our community and not just plan to meet the needs of the new developments.

We hope that we will remain informed and that we will be included and our voices heard in the decision making process. The need to fulfil the Government directive to provide more housing should not become an excuse for bad and ignorant planning.

Whilst it true that it will not all happen once it is also true that the first application will contain the framework for everything that follows.

Making junction 10 'all-ways' does at least appears to be under discussion and receiving serious consideration but how far this progresses before becoming a victim of cut-backs is an unknown. It is very unlikely that the junction works will be at planning stage let alone on its way to completion in time to support the developments proposed along Tewkesbury Road and alleviate the traffic, safety and air pollution issues in Princess Elizabeth Way and along the Tewkesbury Road.

In addition to increased traffic numbers from the developments to the North West and West of Cheltenham there is also the cumulative effects of traffic from the ever-growing community of Bishops Cleeve and from the development in Prestbury that are likely to impact on the roads around the Parish.

After considerable efforts over the years Shaun has managed to arrange for a meeting with one of the planning officers to allow us to discuss the concerns of Swindon Parish Council.

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

The Cheltenham Plan

At planning stage this document will be consulted together with the JCS and will address issues that will strengthen Cheltenham's needs and aspirations.

This document was out for consultation until 9th April and is now to be submitted to the Secretary of State who will submit them for consideration by an independent Planning Inspector together with all responses that have been received.

We are fortunate to have had our Green Space proposals accepted by Cheltenham Borough Council and included in the Cheltenham Plan, they are also referenced in the Joint Core Strategy.

The Car Transporters

These continue to create problems despite the loss of the Renault garage.

Traffic Calming

The Parish Council plans to work with the County Council to improve traffic management in our area and to mitigate the effects of the new developments to come.

Boy Racers

This has been a topic of discussion and debate for a number of years. The police have reported that since the Autumn of last year the boy racers have moved to Gloucester and sightings of them around Kingsditch Lane have reduced. Unfortunately, the Parish Council are not convinced as the boy racers have reappeared whenever the weather has improved. The police have promised to be vigilant and to respond to any attempt by the boy racers to return.

Highway Repairs and Pot Holes

Last year we reported that Wymans Lane had been repaired and we were waiting for the insertion of the cats eyes. Unfortunately cats eyes are being removed in many areas of the country without any intention to replace them.

Pot holes continue to be an ever-growing problem which has been exacerbated by the recent winter weather.

In previous Parish Assemblies we have been told about a 'one-stop-shop' idea that never got off the ground because the County acknowledged that they barely had sufficient funds to maintain the roads in their current condition let alone improve them. Then we were informed about the 'miracle hole repair compound'

We know that the contract for future road repairs has been taken away from Amey but they will be continuing some works for which contracts have already been signed.

Whether the new contractor combined with the proposed change in the way in which the works are managed will result in improvements will have to be seen. We believe that it is unlikely that before commencing any new and larger projects there is going to be an intense period of repairs and catching up. It is more likely that repairs will be fitted in as and when they can be with a focus

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

on repairing only those holes and areas that are deemed to be dangerous. Certainly the guidance of a hole needing to be at least 50mm deep to be considered for repair is still relevant but so many holes exceed this that it is not possible to see what criteria will be used in moving forward.

It is difficult to know how our County Highways Engineers will be able to provide us with roads and footpaths that are fit for purpose.

Finances and Projects

The Parish Council's financial perspective remains in a sensible position with balanced books and a very small reserve.

In addition to funding repairs to the mosaic sundial and to essential repairs and maintenance to the amenity area the Council is intending to use funds to provide additional amenities for the community.

Allotments

I should like to thank Ian Brown for his efficient and effective management of 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. The Parish Council are attempting to determine how best to structure our information and communication.

The editing, printing and distribution of the Village News relies heavily upon a team of committed volunteers.

Snow Plough

We discovered this year that the Parish Council have access to a snow plough.

We found this out when Shaun was contacted by the person who was in charge of the snow plough as he wanted Shaun to inform the Parish Council that he would like to step down from the position and had made arrangements to pass on the plough.

*Peter Allen
Chairman, Swindon Parish Council
17th April 2018*