

Chairman's Report 2017

It was often quoted by Prime Minister Austen Chamberlain that there was an old Chinese curse; "may you live in interesting times". The concept being that, anything other than the usual and routine, was not to be welcomed. When I was originally asked to join this council I was told that very little ever happened. So what has changed; Mayfield Market Towns and the Locality Act, I suspect?

At the very centre of this council's programmes through 2016/17 was the Wineham and Shermanbury Neighbourhood Plan (WASP). The WASP was approved at referendum by the residents of the parish with a 72% majority in favour, in a 52% turnout of voters. Whilst we recognised that the Horsham District Council (HDC) Planning Framework does protect rural parishes from inappropriate building, our extensive consultation with HDC, Planning Consultants and other parishes across Horsham District and Mid Sussex, informed our policies. We made the strategic decision that a small market housing development would be necessary for a plan to be created which would both provide for affordable housing and give the parish the best possible protection against housing inspectors who, in some cases, overrule District Councils when appeals by developers are lodged. (e.g. the West End Lane development in Henfield.) The housing numbers in the WASP were comprehensively assessed by a number of experts, agreed by HDC and the Government approved independent examiner stated that our approach and the number of new house to be built in the period to 2031, were a "pragmatic" assessment of need.

The very act of consulting on what the residents of this parish wanted during the WASP process created a Pandora's Box of issues that need to be addressed. Perhaps how we react to the issues that leap from the box is the best measure of our performance as a council.

Road safety is a major issue for the parish with speeding on both the A281 and Wineham Lane of considerable concern. This is a difficult issue as some people will speed whatever the conditions and the County Council takes primary responsibility for road safety. But with their assistance, pedestrian refuges on the A281 are in the planning stage to give pedestrians safer access to bus stops. 40 mph speed stickers for waste bins have been distributed throughout the parish and agreement reached to increase speed restriction signage on Wineham Lane. Parish gates are currently being planned on the A281 and will be installed before the end of the year.

A tidy up campaign has been successfully launched along the A281, my thanks to the volunteers who donated their time. West Sussex County Council was encouraged to clear drainage ditches and pipes to reduce flood risk. The renovation of the Parish cemetery has been completed and new areas for graves cleared. However the cemetery is nearing capacity and arrangements to expand it continue to be explored.

We have had mixed fortunes in undertaking community programmes but the old practice of Beating the Bounds, organised in co-operation with the Friends of St Giles Church and the clergy, has been a success, as was a Remembrance Day service held for the first time at the Royal Oak in Wineham.

If there is one success in particular to highlight over the past year, it is the co-operation and team spirit within the Parish Council itself which has enabled so much to be achieved. I wish to personally thank all the councillors and the Parish Clerk for their hard work and comradery.

Trevor J Brown

Chairman, Shermanbury Parish Council