

Parish Council Chairman's Report for May 2023 April 2024.

This past year has been a particularly difficult year for the Parish Council as we have lost two of our councillors and unfortunately David Lomax has also been unable to continue as chairman and so has passed on the baton to Clive Bunney. I wish to thank David for his considerable contribution to Parish over many years and wish him all the best for the future.

However, I would like to welcome Cllr Jake Sturgess who joined the Parish Council in October. Jake has taken on the role as Parish Council liaison with the village hall committee. The Parish Council has been unable to fill the outstanding vacancies, and this has left us 2 councillors short for this year. I would urge anyone who wishes to contribute to the community to contact Laura Evans. Depending on your circumstances this can be as little as 1 evening a month. However, having a full complement will significantly reduce the workload on our Councillors especially as the Swindon Borough Council are further divesting their responsibilities to the Parish Councils.

Due to changes in bookings at the hall we are now able to hold our full meetings in the main hall. Whilst these meetings have been starting at 6.30pm which was due to the hall being booked later in the evening this has now changed, and we are proposing to change the start time to 7pm from the June 2024 meeting as it is felt that this would be more convenient for both the public and council sessions.

Village Appearance.

I would like to thank Adams and Watt for the continued excellence of their work in grass cutting and general maintenance around the village. Richard Adams has always been very accommodating at fitting in extra bits and pieces of maintenance as they arise. This included installing a kissing gate on the west side of the playing field which improves access and repairing the kissing gate by the footpath leading onto the B4192. Thank you.

Planning.

Following on from the now rejected Science Park development we are now facing another issue with the proposed development of a Biogas depot on the corner of Commonhead roundabout. We have made representations that an environmental impact assessment is required and that such a development would cause major traffic issues on the B4192.

The Allotments.

Much work had been done to improve the allotments, and to make them suitable for new tenants as a result there has been more interest and 3 plots have now been taken by new tenants leaving only 2 plots vacant. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact Laura Evans for details.

To monitor the state of the allotments an allotment committee has been set up which is being chaired by Cllr Poppleton. This has been instrumental in instigating co-operation between allotment holders. One of its first tasks has been to investigate the provision of water for the site. Following discussions with Thames Water it was deemed that connection to the mains water supply would be too expensive and that an alternative of harvesting rainwater was a more cost-effective solution. A working party was subsequently set up to construct a rain capture system. This has been partly funded by the Parish council and the allotment holders.

Road Safety.

This continues to be the biggest concern brought to the attention of the Parish Council.

Although the main road is the responsibility of SBC, Ward Councilor Gary Sumner said that while he agreed that speeding was a concern, there was nothing the SBC could do as enforcement is solely a police matter. The Parish Council has urged SBC to introduce traffic calming measures such as chicanes at both ends of the village but have been told such measures are allowed by the highway's agency due to the B4192 being a diversion route for the M4. Other measures such as putting in a bike lane to narrow the road width would have an effect on speed. Whilst SBC agree in principle it is difficult to get them to act on these proposals. The usual cry is it cannot be afforded. And yet SBC is now proposing very expensive residential 20MPH zones which following on from a consultation will include the street. As far as enforcement is concerned, the Police emailed us to say that as approaching motorists could spot a parked police car a mile off, they had usually slowed down so could not be nabbed. Added to which, the officer wrote that Purley Road was not a high priority road for enforcement as the road did not have high reports of KSI (killed, seriously injured). This seems to be the wrong attitude as prevention is far better than cure.

Footpaths.

The Parish Council have the responsibility for clearly marking the beginning and end of public rights of way. Due to issues in the dell with gun club we have now clearly marked the public footpath dog leg thereby avoiding the static containers owned by the gun club.

Liddington Hill Trees.

So far, we have been unsuccessful in receiving grants for improving this area. This is partially due to the area being on private land. We are still investigating how best to repair the damage and encourage more sensitive usage.

Hillfort Millennial Viewing Platform.

Due to collapse this was fenced off as it needed extensive repair. Thanks to the efforts of Cllr Aftelak we were able to receive a grant from North Wessex Downs Sustainable development trust to reconstruct the viewing platform and work was carried out in August. This will hopefully last for many years to come and is a delightful place to visit.

Website

Due to changes in legislation, it was determined that the Parish Council would require an independent website that is managed by Council members / parish clerk.

The website has been completed and is now operational.

The web address is : www.liddingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Each Councilor also has a unique email address:

councillor'sname@liddingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk,

i.e. clivebunney@liddingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

I would like to thank Cllr Aftelak and Laura Evans for their hard work in getting the website set up.

The existing website: www.liddington.org will continue to run as a village community website and will be managed by members of the village. As this is seen also as an asset to the village the Parish Council will continue to fund web hosting.

Village Clean-up days and Jubilee Gardens.

Thank you to those who have helped maintain Jubilee Gardens which in a sense lies at the entrance to the village, and thanks to the dozen or so who took part in our two cleanup sessions. Keeping the litter under control deposited by passing traffic is a continual battle.

Finally, may I thank all my colleagues on the Parish Council for their ongoing contributions to the community, and especially to Laura Evans our Parish Clerk for her precise running of our affairs.

Clive Bunney