**Parish Annual Meeting 16th May 2024**

**Report from the Chair**

The Parish Council is made up of 10 volunteers who give their time to help and protect our village and our community. Our Council is currently full with Councillor George Harrison joining in 2023. Our main organizational change this year is that Julia Ford stood down as Chair. Julia has been a member of the council for more than 12 years and Chair for 5 years. Her fellow Councillors are all grateful for her dedication and leadership and her collaborative and inclusive style. It is not the easiest role but I am sure everyone will agree that that having volunteers like her, dedicating a huge amount of time and effort to our community helps immensely.

The Parish Council meetings are held monthly, on the first Thursday and are open to the public. There is always a forum for villagers to raise issues to the council at the beginning of the meeting. If you have a concern about the village you can raise it at this forum. If you are applying for planning permission come and discuss it, we will be glad to contribute, we can tell you what will be supported and what won’t be.

Within the council we have a number of working groups that look after our village today and plan for tomorrow. I want to highlight three of those groups:

Playgrounds group is led by Peter Blundell. Through his efforts all the fixed assets of the council are cared for. From updating playground equipment, replacing benches and looking after the playing field.

Footpaths and rights of way is led by Steve Laister, he makes sure footpaths are open and liaises with landowners when paths are blocked. He was quite busy during the winter storms.

Our Neighbourhood plan is led by Richard Gamble. This is a very important set of documents as it details the areas of the village we wish to protect and preserve, the visual impact of the village, and where we will support new housing. When there are material changes to the plan, as there was in 2018 when the village was obliged to increase our housing, referendums are held. The referendum in 2019 voted for the new houses to be built on what is now the Hayfield development.

Another working group is our emergency plan which features later.

**In other news.**

Our Remembrance Avenue, sits above the village at the top of Rams Cliffe. Our wooden gates were stolen in 2023. These were replaced and now have our village name routed and burnt into them to make them less attractive. An insurance claim was made.

We now have parking restrictions at key locations in the village. These came as a result of complaints from residents on two points. Safety of both pedestrians and vehicles, and Access of emergency vehicles, (Fire engines and ambulances). The issues first raised in 2019 were considered first by the Parish Council and then by the Parish Council and Wiltshire Highways. This culminated in a public consultation in the summer of 2023 and a traffic order placed in April 2024.

The A360 has been resurfaced through part of the village, works still continue between the village and Tilshead. While none of us miss the potholes, having the best road in Wiltshire has led to a noticeable increase in speed, so we have made a request to Wiltshire Police for some enforcement visits. Please be warned.

Our project to erect Speed Indicator Devices in the village nears completion, we have funding agreed and are now waiting installation. Speedwatch was suspended in 2023 and we are in the process of reapplying. This involves new traffic surveys, it will happen but will not be quick.

Road works continue, the crossing on Lavington Lane is due to be installed at the end of July and there is a second closure in July for BT to work on poles. Please keep an eye on Parish Communications in News and Views, website and Social Media.

Development of housing within the village, we welcome new residents that are moving into finished houses to our village. New housing construction is about to start on the Hedges House site. The home has now been demolished and we are waiting for information from Aster when construction of the 19 news will begin. For neighbourhood plan purposes, these are not additional houses, they are replacements and do not count as an increase as far as our statutory requirements are concerned.

Sewerage leak into Semmington Brook reported last year. This is a fault in the sewer pipes. During heavy rain the sewer at the bottom of Russell Mill Lane bursts out of a manhole and floods the brook. The Parish Council are continuing to fight for our stream with Wessex Water, who are responsive but slow to act.

Grants to support community efforts are made by the council. In the past year the council has supported the Village Hall, Streetscene, the Friendship Club, Youth Club, Village Fete Committee amongst others.

I am certain lots of questions will come up later, in the meantime we will invite our Youth Club to tell us all about themselves.