

## Annual Parish Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 – Chairman's Report

After two years of social distancing, it is lovely that we can finally meet again in person for the Annual Parish Meeting.

If anyone reads these annual reports in 50 years' time, one point of note is that over the last year is that we have lost many of our Ash trees from ash die back. The National Trust have been busy felling those that are deemed unsafe near roads and footpaths. And in 50 years' time, will we still be dumping sewage in the Rother? We reported a major leak last August from a broken pipe that had obviously been dumping raw sewage for months from the Stedham pumping station. It was repaired but there is a concern as to why it took so long to detect.

I did actually look back over the old Parish minutes and was intrigued to note that in 1918 there was a suggestion that "*some of the labour from the German prisoners might be used towards repairing the roads.*" And in 1940, roads in the parish were again on the agenda but it was minuted that, "*It was generally felt that under present conditions due to the War, very little will be expected of the County Council....*" In 2022, the frustration is a lack of funds for long term fixes resulting in the current 'patch and repair' approach for our many potholes. I also question the political will when the word 'pothole' was not even mentioned in the recent WSCC highways strategy consultation. Together with a parishioner, we did drive round the lanes with Mike Dare from WSCC Highways and Kate O'Kelly to show them the issues. On the plus side, the flooded culvert under the road below the reservoir at Swallow's bottom has been cleared. I also had a meeting with Landbuild to discuss a solution for Bramblings Lane using monies from Operation Watershed – we still await their recommendation. In the meantime, do please report potholes quickly through the Love West Sussex website.

There is little to report on the planning front. Our efforts to protect Pigeon Hill farmhouse with a listing is looking hopeful. Historic England describe in their consultation document that it is a C15 or earlier Sussex farmhouse with some original features. On the boundaries of the parish, concerns over the developments at Bembrook and Becksfield have led to some enforcement notices and we lodged an objection to the development of Scotland farm.

Whilst the Parish Council is not directly involved with Redford Village Hall and the green, they are important local community assets and we had a useful meeting in September to raise the sensitive subject of parking. After a healthy sharing of opinions, I believe the Village Hall Committee have made a number of improvements, particularly with signage, so that we can all enjoy the community events without undue impact on the neighbours.

And a big thanks to the 16 people who participated in what may be the first parish litter pick. Pretty much all of the road verges were covered and over 20 bags of rubbish collected. Having done it once, I am keen that we repeat on an annual basis.

The Parish Council finances are in good health and it means that we have asked for a 14% reduction in our precept for this coming year. We are also proposing to invest some of the funds in a defibrillator to be located at the Hall.

My thanks to Roger Lovett who left the Parish Council earlier in the year and was replaced by Paul Hansford and to Sally Floyd who is leaving now and for whom we need a replacement. Thanks also to the rest of the committee of Jeremy Burton and Helen Talbot Baker, our Clerk, Lizzie Robinson, and Marion Hansford for looking after the website.

Looking forward to the year to come, we have the Queen's Jubilee event on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June and, at some stage, the opening of new Woolbeding glass house and garden.

Adrian Hearle

Chair Woolbeding with Redford Parish Council