

Ruscombe Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2020

It is with pleasure that I deliver the Parish Council Annual Report. It has certainly been a busy year and I would like to place on record my appreciation for the worthy efforts of the Parish Councillors, of Mrs Ruth Reid our Parish Clerk and of the many residents who have supported the Council in various ways over the course of the year. I also wish to thank Councillor Colin Bell who retires after 3 years of service having been instrumental in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

Turning to Finance; the Parish Council’s finances are stable and we ensure that an objective contingency is in place to meet unforeseen events. Governance of the accounts is properly maintained by the Council and with assurance provided through internal and external audit. For the second year running we have been able to reduce the Parish Council Precept by around 5% without the need to make any cuts to our operational budget.

During the past year the Council has worked hard on behalf of its parishioners and has delivered several items of note. Amongst these are;

- Our Neighbourhood Plan is now substantially complete. We await feedback from Wokingham Borough Council and hope to move toward adoption of the plan in the coming year.
- We have arranged for the acquisition of former allotment land in the Pennfields area with the intention of it becoming a Community Orchard. Thanks to Councillor Paul Cassidy for his work in leading this project – we look forward to this development during the current year.
- The Council has repainted the doors of the garages in the Pennfields area along with refencing of the area. I think all agree this has made a vast improvement to the overall appearance of the units.
- Considerable improvement and enhancement has been made to May’s pond at the corner of Castle End and Waltham Roads
- The Council has continued and expended it’s funding of the flower boxes under the Parish entry signs on the London Road.
- In response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, Ruscombe Parish Council has given funding to the Woodley Foodbank to support families in need in the Ruscombe area.

Unfortunately, some of our plans have been disrupted by the current coronavirus lockdown and related limitations. Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to seed the verges of the London Road with wildflowers this season. As a Council we remained committed to this endeavour and will commence with plans when conditions allow.

The Parish Council is proud to support its local community groups. To this end the Council has provided over £1,500 by way of grant funding to, amongst others: -

- Polehampton Swimming Association.
- Citizens Advice
- Keep Mobile
- Twyford Youth Centre

As ever, the Council has spent a great deal of time considering planning matters throughout the year. We have had great success in our primary aim of preventing the development of Ruscombe's Greenbelt land via the ongoing Borough Local Plan Update. It is with great relief that I am able to declare that the threat of mass development within the Parish has now receded. Notable thanks must be given to our Borough Councillor and WBC Council Leader, John Halsall for his tireless work with and on behalf of the Parish Council. My thanks also to Planning Chairs Mike Evans and Colin Bell for their work throughout the year – Mike's planning report details at length some of the challenges that the Council has faced in this respect during the year.

Finally, we look forward to another challenging and satisfying year ahead and hope to ensure that the Parish remains a vibrant, happy community for residents to live and work in.

Mr Justin May

Chairman, Ruscombe Parish Council