

Brewham Parish Council

Chairman's report to the Annual Parish Meeting

Annual Report 2020/2021

Once again, I would like to reiterate our unending thanks to the NHS, who have now completed well over a year of intense nursing without a break. I do emphasise our thanks to all those involved.

'Light at the end of the Tunnel' What a difficult year it has been, with lockdowns, isolation from family and friends, and exiting the EU, and subsequently we must admire our wonderful administration of the Astra Zeneca & Pfizer Vaccines that has given everyone a small ray of light of returning to some form of normality.

Are we not proud to be British while the EU squabble?

'The Sussexes'completely forgot the old quotation: 'Don't burn your bridges'
enough said.

Planning:

Not much to report this year; three extensions, one garage, one log cabin, two demolitions for new rebuilds, two minor Listed Permissions and an Agricultural Section 106 discharge; the latter is a pet annoyance of mine and I personally think all 106's should be dropped, as they are not upheld or treated equally. Planning has somewhat become rather a joke! The speed at which decisions have been made in the last year have been disastrous.... SSDC explaining that planners are either sick or left the job? One of our applications has taken almost twelve months this year.

(Brewham Holiday Camp), approximately thirty Yurts materialised overnight, in the field opposite the Bull Inn during July, I understand that neighbours were not previously informed, nor were the Parish Council. The PC were questioned; but all was legal and within planning laws because the site was only temporary.

Highways:

The usual on-going potholes and blocked drains have been reported and slowly dealt with by SSDC, not all have been repaired as SSDC report they have spent their budget. Traffic on Kingsettle Hill increased during lockdown with a huge number of people walking in the woods around Alfred's Tower and from the Yurt campsite in July/August. Complaints were received from homeowners on Kingsettle Hill, but the roads are there for all users, regardless of quantity. The Post Box in the hedge outside Gordons Cottage on School Hill was removed by the P.O. due to damage and we are hopefully looking forward to its return. This box is important, as the P.O. Box on the bridge, opposite The Stores, has a history of slugs & snails eating letters before they are collected.

Thanks, go to Richard Hiscock for re-filling grit bins within the village.

Footpaths:

Earlier this year Claire Haskins (Footpath Officer) informed the Parish Clerk that she would be dealing with matters that were outstanding, and could the Clerk please tell her which repairs to prioritise. Subsequently she informed us that her areas of responsibility have been changed and she has been replaced by Eve Wynn who is now our new Footpath Officer. Priority work will be the re-opening of the footpath through Swanton Farm (blocked off since 2016) and the path between Hoofprints and Cook's Farm; other styles need attention as well and any problems should be reported to the Clerk.

Village Hall:

The Village Hall has been closed for yet another year, hopefully it will be open for the Elections in early May and then until mid-August, when it will again be shut for a further six to twelve months while the final stage of restoration works are being done. The Village Hall Restoration Group have worked extremely hard and been very successful fund raising and gaining grants for the final stage, the most successful is £100k from Viridor, together with a grant of £10k from the Bernard Sunley Foundation and applications have been made to the Community Lottery Fund, Garfield Weston and the Tudor Trust. Patricia Stainton, at our last PC Meeting updated us on the quotation from Burfitt & Garrett to complete these works (£174,014.23 + VAT). It was noted at the meeting that £128,000 had already been spent on stage one and on completion the final total would be approx. £336,000.

Church, Churchyard and Burial Ground:

St John the Baptist Church was open last year from September until November and again for Christmas. From the start of this year it has been open/available for private prayer and funerals until Easter when again services began (twice monthly). All services being well attended, especially the festive services. At the Easter Service we welcomed our new, young and enthusiastic Priest, Jonathan Evans from Christchurch.

The Parish Council would again like to thank Clive Thorman for continuing the mowing and maintaining of the right-hand side of the churchyard and the Church path and keeping it neat & tidy. Also thanks go to David Nye (and his helpers Chas Blacker & Holly Pepper) who manages The 'Living Churchyard Wildlife Habitat' and has again organised sheep to graze the left of the footpath – the sheep do a wonderful job and set a lovely scene while doing so. Thanks also to Robert Jackson who filled in the sunken tomb and latterly re-filled and levelled after settling occurred. Simon Hicks, The Trustee of Somerset Wildlife Trust visited the Churchyard and reported back very enthusiastically. Thanks also to Paul Brett for repairing the damaged Living Churchyard Sign and re-locating it back into the ground.

Policing:

PCSO Tim Russell was unable to attend most meetings due to them not being face to face, but in those instances he sent reports, crime being mainly in the Wincanton area, and he regularly reminded us that we must be aware of suspicious vehicles roaming the countryside. The team make regular patrols through the villages. Most crimes are opportunists looking for unlocked or poorly secured sheds and are agricultural /garden related. There have been reports of livestock being taken from fields and suspicious people roaming about at night and leaving gates open. Our thanks to Tim for keeping us updated on police issues.

Below the Tower 2020/21:

Many thanks, must once again go to Ric Rogers who designed and typeset the 14th Edition of 'Below the Tower' which was published by Brewham Parish Council in 2020.

Finally, I would like to thank our Clerk, Sue Price, for all her hard work and outstanding assistance to the Parish Council. I would also like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors, Patricia Stainton, Richard Hiscock, Eddie Harper and Robert Jackson. Thanks must also go to our County Councillor Anna Groskop and our District Councillor Robin Bastable for their consistent support throughout the year. I would also like to thank Charlie Lane for serving as our internal auditor, the members of 'Our Brewham Support Group' and the Village Hall Restoration. Also, thanks to parishioners who have joined our Zoom meetings and contributed their comments, as well as those who still give up their time and energy helping with village life.

Stay safe, get jabbed and keep well.

David Dabinett
Chairman, May 2021