

SOUTHAM PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

At the start of this municipal year it was thought that the suspension of meetings in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic would be a temporary measure and we could not have predicted that we would still be meeting virtually at the year end. The year has had its challenges and we have adapted to a new way of working. I appreciate that some residents may not have been able to join us at virtual meetings and we look forward to seeing everyone in person again in the not too distant future. At the time of writing our first scheduled meeting in the Village Hall will be in July.

We were saddened to lose two councillors this year, Anna Hollaway and Ken Davey who passed away in November and February respectively. They were valued members of the Council and we are indebted to them both. Anna was also a Borough Councillor and, as a member of the Planning Committee, she provided valuable expertise on planning matters within the parish. She also represented the Parish Council on the Cleeve Common Board of Conservators. Ken also brought a wealth of experience to the Council. He played an active part in council business and undertook a great deal of work in exploring possibilities for recreation facilities in the parish. Both Anna and Ken are greatly missed by their fellow councillors. Both vacancies can now be filled by co-option. The workload is not onerous with the main requirement being attendance at the evening meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month. If any resident is interested in becoming a councillor we would encourage them to contact the Clerk, Liz Dowie, for further information.

Councillors welcomed Carli Burke onto the Council in September and she has already settled into virtual meetings. Carli lives on the Noverton Estate and, having lived previously in Bishops Cleeve, she has detailed knowledge of the local area. We look forward to meeting Carli in person when we eventually return to face to face meetings.

The work of the Council this year has included liaising with Tewkesbury Borough Council on diverse matters such as fly tipping and planning enforcement. With lockdown restrictions in place there has been less impact from events at the racecourse, but we continue to pass on the views of residents to the Environmental Health Department. This year there has been more focus on resolving issues with footpaths and inconsiderate parking, now that more people are spending time walking in the surrounding countryside. We have continued to liaise with Gloucestershire County Council regarding highways maintenance issues and June saw the long awaited re-surfacing of Southam Lane. Following comments from residents we agreed a small increase in the precept in January to cover the cost of increased grass cutting in Southam Village to create a better outlook at the entrance to the village.

The Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications and we examined and commented on 33 applications this year. We are also committed to working with residents to protect the Green Belt land around Southam and to resist most strongly any inappropriate development of this land.

We hope that the upcoming May elections will see a new County Councillor elected and we thank Borough Councillor Mike Dean for his support and for acting as a necessary link to Tewkesbury Borough Council throughout the year.

I would like to thank Edna Smith, Jamie Walsh and the team of distributors for their work on the newsletter, which is a valuable source of information for all residents.

I would like to thank the Community Speedwatch team for carrying out speed surveys in the village when permitted within coronavirus restrictions and for gathering data from the Mobile Vehicle Activated Speed Signs on Southam Lane and New Road. We hope that the information the team is gathering will, together with residents' responses to our recent Road Safety survey, provide a basis for discussions with Gloucestershire Highways and the Police later this year.

I would like to thank David Jones for his work on the website, councillor emails and the Southam information emails which advise residents of local events and other items of local interest. The email list currently has 224 subscribers. Whilst the Parish Council has launched a new Facebook page this year and is exploring the

possibilities for a dedicated website, the Village website continues to prove useful in publicising both the role and functions of the Parish Council and the activities of local groups and societies.

I would also like to thank David and all the co-ordinators and volunteers of the Southam Community Support Group who gave assistance to residents during the pandemic, providing help with essential shopping, collecting medication and providing reassuring telephone calls to those living alone.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow councillors and our Parish Clerk, Liz Dowie, for their input and assistance over the past year and for their efforts in keeping the work of the Parish Council going during the months of lockdown and I hope that we will be able to return to more normal times in the coming year.

1st May 2021