

Dear Residents of Shoscombe Parish

As you are all no doubt aware, following the resignation of all but one of the previous parish councillors in November 2015, an election organised by BANES was held on January 14th this year. It was the first time in 44 years that Shoscombe had had a contested election. Prior to this councillors had always been deemed elected or co-opted on to the Council. The impressive 62% turnout was a good indication that residents appreciated being given the opportunity to vote for their own choice of councillors and demonstrated the amount of interest there is in local democracy. 7 of the 14 candidates were elected. I would like to thank those who put themselves forward and to all members of the community who participated in the vote.

The councillors elected in January were Ian Cannock, Rosie Craddock, Lee Crowther-Russell, Grant Thomas, Brenda Whitchurch, Jackie Withers and Mary Upton. They joined Andrew Wilding who chose to remain on the council. At the first Parish Council meeting I was elected as Chair and Ian Cannock as Vice Chair. It was agreed meetings would be held monthly to improve the overall efficiency of the Parish Council and a proposal to increase the precept by £1000 was also approved. This was thought necessary to help cover the extra staffing hours and allow for funds to build up to be used for future projects highlighted in the forthcoming Parish Plan.

As the new Chair I wanted this Parish Council to be viewed as an inclusive body of people working for the benefit of the whole community.

At the subsequent meeting councillors agreed to take on individual roles and responsibilities

Jackie Withers Chair, Liaising with the Church and the Elderly

Ian Cannock Vice Chair, Legal issues, Local Government & BANES

Mary Upton, Parish Plan Steering Committee

Brenda Whitchurch Finance and Grants

Rosie Craddock, Liaising with the School and Young People

Grant Thomas, Village Hall Representative and Broadband

Lee Crowther Russell, Burial Board Representative and Public Rights of Way

Andrew Wilding, Planning and Highways

As 6 of the 8 newly elected parish councillors are new to their role, it has been a steep learning curve. In March we had a training evening which we all, including the clerk and more experienced councillors, found beneficial. It has given us all a better insight into our roles and what is expected of us.

These are the areas we have been involved with since taking office at the end of January.

- The terms of reference for the Parish Plan have been amended and approved.
- A new Steering Group has been formed. A budget has been approved by the Parish Council, a time line decided upon and meetings agreed to ensure the Parish Plan is ready for distribution in the summer of 2017.
- Three planning applications have been presented to the Parish Council, two of which were eventually approved, the third is pending. As the lead councillor for planning, Andrew has considered the views of residents and councillors for each application and has compiled a report. which, after the approval of the Parish Council, has been submitted to the Planning Authority. I would like to thank him for presenting such detailed reports.
- Responses on behalf of Shoscombe were submitted by three councillors to the Joint Spatial Plan which is a West of England initiative addressing housing needs, transport and accompanying infrastructure. Any changes to the housing boundaries of our close neighbours and planning applications for those areas, are being monitored by the Parish Council. Also two councillors are now part of the working party for the Joint Spatial Plan.

- Councillors representing Shoscombe. Parish Council have accompanied the clerk to all meetings of ALCA, the Bath Forum and the Paris Liaisons which have been held since January. This is also helping us to develop links with other parishes.
- A grant for £750 to ensure the Council complies with the Transparency Code, has been awarded which Brenda applied for - our thanks to her. This has funded a lap top, scanner/printer and training for the clerk.
- A litter picking morning was organised by the Parish Council in March.
- There have been meetings with the Footpath Officer who has agreed to put the footpath between Rag Hill and Braysdown Lane as a priority on her list when bids are submitted in February 2017.
- An assessment has also been carried out on the cinder path between the school and Apple Croft by the Footpath Officer and a contractor. The path needs scraping back and boarding and possibly tarmacking. The Parish Council would like to make this a project the community could become involved with in 2016/2017. This path is possibly one of the most important footpaths in the parish as it connects two significant areas of the village. We are looking into possible ways of funding this.
- A check of all the footpaths in the parish was done in April with the help of residents. The most serious problems are being reported to the Footpath Officer who will hopefully be able to make improvements if access or signage is a problem.
- The safety of pedestrians, especially children is of great concern to us as there have been many reports of vehicles speeding through the village. We are investigating ways in which a 20MPH speed limit could be enforced in certain areas of the parish.
- There are now regular updates being given to the Parish Council on Fracking by Chris Upton. There is an even greater need to be vigilant now that fracking has been given the go ahead in North Yorkshire.
- Village website. As we are all aware good communication is the key to the success of any organisation. We have been very fortunate in having the help and expertise of Diana Aiken who has kindly taken on building a new website for the village which will be an amalgamation of the Parish Council and Village Hall websites plus lots of other useful information. It is to be called 'Everything Shoscombe'. This new website will be a great asset to the village and is due to be launched in June 2016. Many thanks to Diana. We are also hoping to have a Shoscombe Blog and make greater use of Facebook to inform residents of any immediate issues.
- A car service to provide transport for the elderly to the Doctor's surgery or Post Office in Peasedown St John will soon be launched which is a Parish Council initiative. Many thanks to all the residents who have offered to support the scheme.
- Problems with drains and potholes have been reported by the clerk to the highways department and have mostly been speedily dealt with. Thank you Jean.
- The resurfacing of Wellow Lane as far as Double Hill has now finally been accomplished. We would like to thank Neil Butters our ward councillor who has been 'on the case' on our behalf.
- Burial Board. Many thanks to Derek Withers the Clerk to the Burial Board for all the improvements he has organised in the cemetery this year. The dividing wall has now been carefully demolished and the stone sold. A tree surgeon has recently carried out a safety check of all the trees and remedial work carried out where necessary. The bulbs planted by volunteers made a lovely display in the Spring.
- The Village Hall Committee must be commended for all the improvements which have been made to the hall. It was recently decorated and its use has increased during the last few months. More meetings are now being held there including a Toddler Group which Rosie helped to set up. Also a Street Dance Class for children and an adult Keep Fit class are held there regularly. This hopefully will help to publicise the hall to the wider community.

Other organisations in the village

The Friends of Foxcote Church have been organising a monthly drop in session at the Village Hall. Thanks must go to Carole and Margaret as this has proved to be a popular community event. Thanks also to all those who have supported it and provided the soup and cakes each month as it has given people an opportunity to meet which is not always easy in our parish with many dispersed settlements.

The History Group have organised a varied programme this year including a walk around the village following the WW2 trail.

Tickets for the Two Towers talk given by Dennis Chedgy earlier this month sold out – 80 people attended including groups from Faulkland and Peasedown St John.

The recent plant sale was a great success netting in excess of £420 for the funds.

History information boards relating to the Somerset and Dorset Railway and the Train crash near Paglinch are being developed. It is also possible that the original station signage for Shoscombe and Single Hill Halt will soon be reinstated and also a talk on the S & D is being organised for September.

The boards giving an overview of the history of our parish are soon due to be on permanent display in the Village Hall. 'Celebrations' is the topic for display this year and can be viewed in the Village Hall during the Celebrations Weekend 11th & 12th. June.

The Shoscombe Ramblers have now walked all the possible circular walks in the parish and are planning to next focus on walks around Wellow and Hinton Charterhouse.

Table Tennis groups are still going well.

Irish Set Dancing – would like to encourage more local people to attend.

Street Dance for children and Keep Fit sessions for adults started recently.

The Shoscombe Wildlife Group has a programme of interesting topics this summer thanks to Phil Hall.

Projects initiated by the residents have included the refurbishment of the seat at Green Street from which there is a lovely view of Shoscombe village and the construction of the boule pitches beside the Village Hall. Many thanks to all those involved.

Shoscombe Cricket Club is no longer in existence but all the equipment is still available if anyone would like to resurrect it. As there are now more young people in the village it would be an activity to be encouraged. If anyone is interested in taking it on, please contact Rosie Craddock. We do need more activities for young people.

As you can see this has been a very busy first few months for the Parish Council. We are still adjusting to our new role and responsibilities, but it is heartening to see the amount we have already achieved. I would like to thank all the councillors and the clerk for their support. Team work is the key. We are all so fortunate to live in such a unique environment which as a Parish Council our aim is to protect and preserve and to be the voice of the people we represent.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns or suggestions on how we can make further improvements. Your attendance at Parish Council meetings would also be much appreciated.

Kind regards,

Jackie Withers – Chair of Shoscombe Parish Council, 24th May 2016.
chair@shoscombecouncil.org