

Rangeworthy Parish Council
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR
2020-2021

Twenty-twenty is a year we will all remember but want to forget. Everyone's way of life has been changed and the tentacles of COVID-19 has reached all aspects of our day-to-day activities.

The Parish Council is no exception. Our last face-to-face meeting was in March 2020 and at that moment Coronavirus still seemed to be something far away, but in a matter of days the situation was on a downward spiral and by the end of the month we were in lockdown.

The Parish Council is legally bound to have a certain number of meetings in a year which must be open to the public, and it took a Parliamentary Act to suspend in-person meetings and allow virtual meetings to take place. The Clerk explored the possibilities of Zoom and signed up to a platform that allowed public participation. So, with this facility in place and the Clerk hosting we tentatively embarked on our first virtual meeting in May. With a few essential items on the agenda which mostly required yes or no answers and little nuanced debate we were all in agreement that the technology worked well and that this was the way forward.

The Parish Council has managed to conduct a meeting every other month and all the log-in details are published in the Parish Magazine for any resident wishing to attend.

PRECEPT – The precept for the financial year 2021/2022 has been reduced from £14,000 to £12,500. With CIL monies available for capital spending on the children's playground and pavilion there has been no need to precept for these. However, we realise not everyone in the village use the playground or recreation ground, but feel all should benefit from the CIL money (a levy on developers) by a reduction in their council tax for the inconvenience that many have endured from the house building such as noise, dust, traffic lights, blocked pavements or electric outages.

HIGHWAYS – The installation of the new LED street lamps took place as scheduled in the Autumn of 2020. These lights are more energy efficient and cause less light pollution as the beam is directed downwards and residents have reported the street lamps no longer illuminate their bedrooms at night.

One advantage of the first lockdown was the lack of traffic on the roads. With essential journeys only allowed, traffic was reportedly at 1950's levels and for a few weeks it was a pleasure to walk and cycle. However, this was a brief respite and volumes and speeds of traffic soon returned to normal. New residents have been surprised at the amount of traffic through Rangeworthy every day. The Police make regular visits with their speed trap van and there has been an effort to reform the Speedwatch Group. Anyone who is interested in taking part, please contact the Clerk.

It is extremely disappointing to report, once again, that the Parish Council has been contacted by residents who have witnessed dangerous crossing procedures by parents with children from the Rose & Crown car park to Church Lane. Please allow a few extra minutes to use the tessellated crossing point or park in the recreation ground car park and walk along the pavement to school with no need to cross the road at all.

Patch Elm Lane is still in need of repair. It has been patched on an ad hoc basis with pot holes filled. Unfortunately, this doesn't last long due to the heavy farm traffic usage and we have been told it is not a priority. We will continue to point out the deficiencies to SGC.

PLANNING – Not surprisingly, planning has been quiet during the last year, after six years of unprecedented growth. There have been very few planning applications but be aware, SGC are now preparing a new Local Plan to take us forward to 2036.

One of the first consultations to have taken place is the "Call for Sites". This asks for any landowners who wish their land to be considered as possible future building land to declare an interest to be registered on the list. With many of the small sites already developed in the village, i.e., garden infilling and small paddocks, what remains is farmland belonging to a few landowners. Most of the green fields surrounding Rangeworthy have been added to the "Call for Sites" and indeed there is enough

land to build some five thousand houses. Looking at this logically, it would mean one new house build completed every day from now until 2036.

For more information, visit the SGC website and follow the links to the Local Plan where you will find updates and a chance to add your comments to the latest consultations.

BIG SPRING CLEAN – Once again the Big Spring Clean has fallen foul of the COVID-19 restrictions but a big thank you to residents who have continued litter picking and reported incidents of fly-tipping. Contact the Clerk should you require a litter picking stick.

PUBIC RIGHTS OF WAY – Once again our public footpaths have been well used as residents have spent more time at home and maybe acquired a dog during lockdown. Please keep your dog on a lead and under control whilst crossing farmland. The countryside is a working environment, not a theme park and there could be a flock of sheep or herd of cows just around the corner which your dog could reach ahead of you.

Green Lane was cleared of overgrowth by contractors from SGC and is now easy to navigate as part of the Jubilee Way.

RECREATION GROUND – The recreation ground has been open for exercise all through the lockdowns although the pavilion has been closed. Our plans resolved in 2019 for a refurbishment of the pavilion had to be put on hold because of COVID-19 restrictions, so we were pleased to have the first stage of the improvements completed during early Spring 2021 with the installation of a new boiler. Further work will be carried out as restrictions lift and contractors become available.

WOODLAND – With the arrival of Spring after a cold and tedious lockdown Winter, it was uplifting to see the blooming of bulbs in the woodland. Once again this has been a calming place to get away from all the woes of the last year and it is hoped all users have enjoyed the amenity.

BOOKSWAP – The community library facility was closed from the first lockdown but it has been kept ticking over with deliveries of books to doorsteps for anyone who requested some reading material. It is hoped to re-open bookswap in the early summer of 2021.

Finally, thanks to our District Councillors Claire Young, Tristan Clark and John Lean for attending our virtual meetings and keeping us informed of happenings at SGC. Thank you to all residents who have kept in touch by telephone or email and reported any problems around the village.

Our Clerk, Paula Evans, has set up and launched the Parish Council's website during the past year (www.rangeworthyparishcouncil.org.uk) where you will find minutes of meetings and forthcoming agendas. Paula has kept everything spinning along even though she has been isolating because of health concerns and with a measure of lateral thinking, has been able to keep business as usual within the restrictions. All the Councillors are grateful for her endeavours during this most difficult year and whole-heartedly endorse my thanks to Paula.

Although the Parish Councillors have been apart during the year, we have still been able to work together via telephone calls, emails and Zoom. Each has worked to their strengths so thanks to Cllr. Moore for painting the bus shelters, Cllr. Livall for general maintenance jobs and Cllrs. Haigh and Steer for attending various on-line consultations, presentations and community forums.

I hope we can all meet face-to-face in the fullness of time and indeed look forward to next year when hopefully we will be able to have an Annual Village Assembly once more.

Cllr. Wendy Moody
Chairman – Rangeworthy Parish Council