

## **Coaley Parish Council Annual Assembly 2019 Chairman's report**

This year saw the retirement of Councillor Burgess as chairman; he has since retired as a councillor due to work commitments. Thank you for almost ten years great work.

Councillor Carter has taken on the responsibility for Allotments.

We have a vacancy for a councillor which can be filled by co-option if a candidate is identified.

The council has responsibility for several areas:

### **Planning**

We are a statutory consultee for planning applications in the village but disappointingly it would appear that we have little influence. For most applications the decision is delegated to an officer, but we are able to call in the application so it's decided by the Development Control Committee at Stroud District Council. We have done that twice recently when we thought the officers decision would be the opposite to our recommendation, but both times the DCC have declined to consider it.

It's worth noting that if you wish to support or object to a planning application your comments will have much more weight if they quote the relevant paragraphs from the Stroud District Council local plan. Parishioners should use the SDC planning website to make comments and not just rely on the parish council to represent them. Parishioners can ask us for advice of course.

### **Allotments**

The allotments generate a relatively small income but the health benefits to the tenant are far more important. We still have plots available.

### **Tennis Courts**

The tennis courts were transferred to the council from the tennis club some years ago. Last year the council stopped charging for use of the tennis courts. Like the allotments, the benefits to health are more important than the income. The arrangement for opening the courts was not easy to manage so we now leave them unlocked. This could result in misuse of the facility and we have had a problem with young people dismantling the bench but we have a plan to deal with this. There is a fault with the lights at the moment and it's proving difficult to find a contractor who is qualified to work on the installation. The surface of the court, particularly the one furthest from the gate is a concern, with the weeds just being kept at bay. We have asked for the trees on the recreation field boundary to be cut back to reduce the amount of leaf fall and hopefully reduce the moss.

### **Newsletter**

This time last year the newsletter was without an editor and was not being published. As the newsletter was quite expensive to produce the council conducted a survey to establish whether it was wanted and in what form. The results showed overwhelmingly that people appreciated it so we decided to produce it again with a temporary editor. We have updated the format and have a new printer which is much cheaper. There is still a vacancy for the editor for which there is a small payment.

### **Footpaths**

The councillors monitor the state of footpaths and stiles and report problems to the Cotswold Wardens. The edge of Norton's Alley had been eroded by flood water which the Cotswold Wardens will be fixing. We have also had problems with young people blocking the ditch to make a bridge for their bikes. There has been a succession of temporary closures to the footpath over the railway due to safety concerns. There is no sign of this being fixed by Network Rail.

Matt and Sara Lorkin were married last year and rather than have wedding presents they asked their wedding guests to make a donation towards something for the village. Between us we have decided to install four kissing gates which will give a stile-free circular walking route from the village centre. We are very grateful for this lovely idea.

### **Village maintenance**

The telephone box has been refurbished and we are looking to use it as an information point. We have replaced the seat at Westend which was damaged by a car and reinstated the plaque. Grass cutting – the recreation ground is recovering from the damage suffered last year but it has also been raked and had bare patches reseeded.

### **Grants**

Grant of £3480.00 for the village hall to carry out the access changes. We get few requests for grants and I would encourage Parish organisations to make use of them. The budget is over £4900.

### **Play Area**

In November we held an open forum to discuss proposals to improve amenities for the older village children and the council has formed a new sub-committee to progress this. In the mean time we have provided new monkey bars to provide a challenge to the older children. Every year the equipment has an inspection performed by Rospa and we have just received their latest report. There are a few issues that need sorting out regarding wear and tear and trip hazards.

### **Shop**

Councillor Waite is the council's representative on the shop committee. The council supports the plans for the shop redevelopment and will provide assistance when required.

### **Highways**

Due to concerns about the speed of vehicles in the village we have conducted two speed surveys. Despite our perception that some people drive way above the speed limit, the survey shows that generally vehicle speed in the village is not excessive. The highways department at Gloucestershire County Council will not provide a remedy without evidence of wide-scale and persistent speeding.

There are a couple of other issues to report:

### **Broadband**

The poor broadband for 860 numbers should be solved when Gigaclear install "fibre to the premises" for those houses. The schedule for this work is being revised and should have been published at the end of March. I've requested an update from Fastershire but not had any response.

### **Communication**

In an attempt to reach more people, the council has recently created a Facebook page. Councillor Carter looks after that. We also have a mailing list which you can sign up for on the website. We send very few messages so you won't be inundated by emails. It's surprising that just 22 people have signed up for that.

### **Thanks**

Thanks to a number of people who have come to the council with solutions, rather than problems. Laurence Bryant and Ron Plumb for the phone box restoration. Avril Burak & Mia Coggins for litter picking. David Wilcox for recreation ground reseeded. Myron Burak and Tim Porter for footpath and stile surveying.

Thank you to the 14 parishioners who deliver the more than 350 copies of the newsletter.

I also need to thank the councillors for their work with their various responsibilities. Finally, thanks to our clerk Lynn Thornton for her advice, guidance and for dealing with the complexities of our finances.

*Stephen Cook, Chairman. 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019*