**Tisbury Parish Council**

**Chairman Report – APM May 2021**

**The Parish Council in 2021**

2020 will be remembered as the year of Covid – and the Parish Council has met chiefly online for the last year – showing great patience and commitment. Special thanks has to go to Sandra who has kept it all under control and working efficiently. It’s been an extra layer of management for her.

The village responded with true community spirit and the foundation of the Tisbury Neighbourhood Response team. Liz is giving a separate report on that, so I will only say huge thanks to everyone who was involved. It made a significant difference to the well-being of the village.

**Looking Forward**

So… after a year of Covid, what’s next for Tisbury? What do we want it to look like in 100 years?

At the moment I think Tisbury has managed to strike a balance between remaining vibrant while still preserving its charm and local character. It’s a difficult balance to maintain and constantly challenged. In response we have created a robust and thorough Neighbourhood plan and part of our work in the coming years will be to defend this and make sure it is respected.

The Neighbourhood plan covers a wide range of issues all of them important – but I think uppermost at the moment is the recognition that we need affordable housing as a priority – and genuinely affordable. This has been and will continue to be a hard battle.

Another challenge is the rise of Social Media. Facebook is a useful forum for spreading news and information – but as we know – also dis-information. It is also a place where people air their views and opinions - sometimes with a lack of balance and respect that wouldn’t be tolerated ‘In Real Life’.

Another Social Media problem is that it is a place where it is all too easy to complain and blame but not a very useful place for solving complex or nuanced problems. At the same time there is the skewed dynamic of people discussing issues online and feeling they have a consensus. 50 people on facebook demanding something be done is not a democratic process.

In response to this I feel strongly that the Parish Council needs to be more active in channelling people to speak to us directly. It is the Parish Council’s job is to represent all voices in the village – facebook cannot replace this.

On the other hand facebook can be a useful tool. At the moment I would say that half the village doesn’t know who we are or what we do. They also merge us with Wiltshire Council and don’t understand the difference. Facebook could help fix this.

In general – we need to raise the profile of the PC. The continuing lack of a full complement of 11 Councillors is still a problem. It creates extra workload for the 8 of us. This is in a time when Wiltshire Council is increasingly offloading services.

But to be positive – we have 2 new Councillors – welcome Julie and Nick!

We also have our great team of paid staff lead by Sandra – Thank you!

I’d just like at this point to thank Janet Amos and Jo Ings who have both made hugely important contributions to the running of Tisbury in their roles as Parish Councillors. They have stepped down this year and will be greatly missed. Thanks also go to Tony Deane our Wiltshire Councillor for all his work with the PC.

**Achievements in 2020**

Covid has restricted many activities – but a major triumph of the year has been the opening of the Skate Park – opened by Pam Shave who has championed it from the start. The PC has worked hard to replace the youth service withdrawn by Wiltshire Council and the Skate Park is a fantastic asset. Once again special thanks has to go to Sandra and Gerry who saw it through all the hurdles and made it happen.

Speeding continues to be a concern, but we have a SIDS and a speedwatch team – For this we have to give a huge thank you to Elizabeth Forbes who devoted so much time in getting this up and running. There is more to be done and we are currently going through the process for extending the 20 mph limit.

**Planning**

Despite Covid, planning applications have proceeded at the normal pace throughout the year and the PC have dealt with a total 38 Applications of 20 were full or modified applications; the remaining applications related to tree or listed building works.

The Parish Council is very lucky to have a Village Tree Warden (Debbie Carter) who gives advice, not only on trees, but also is very protective of nesting birds and bats! Debbie has compiled her own report, which can be found on the website as an agenda paper.

There are ongoing discussions on some key sites around the village. The council is in discussion with the owners of the Station Yard – working with them to try and get the best result for what is a difficult site – with contamination, poor access and the issue of Network Rail’s plans for the station.

People will also be aware that the Coop is actively considering moving their store to the South Western building. Again we are in discussions with the Coop and are waiting for their planning proposal.

We are also working with Wiltshire Council to resolve the Old Sports Centre site.

All this is done by councillors who give up a large amount of their time and expertise freely – they deserve huge gratitude from the village.

**Financial**

In a time of the Covid Crisis the PC was determined to have no increase in our budget – despite having to take on new roles from Wiltshire Council and a general increase in the workload.

With great care we managed this – although the precept rate went up slightly due to there being less rate-payers in the village this year. Perhaps a consequence of the hardships of Covid.

Tisbury PC has a track record over the last few years of sound financial management, and I thank Sandra and Gerry for their care and attention to detail.

… and thanks to everyone who volunteers to keep Tisbury the great place it is. I’m looking forward to a Covid free year ahead where we can all meet face to face.

Simon Davison

Chair, Tisbury Parish Council 2021