

# Lighthorne Parish Council

## Parish Meeting – April 2021

### Chairman's Report

#### **Arrivals & departures**

Our last Parish Meeting was in May 2019, which seems a lifetime ago. This is my first annual report as Chairman having been elevated to the post in November last year. I'd like to start by thanking Alan and Hermione Archer for their service to the Parish Council, and wish them a long and happy retirement in Little Kineton. Alan was Chairman when I first became involved with the Parish Council in June 2015. Alan has always been helpful, patient and unflappable – qualities which I may struggle to replicate. I would also like to thank John Hunter who stood down as a councillor earlier this year.

Since our last Parish Meeting we have said goodbye to two Parish Clerks. Our thanks to Des Thomas and Ian Wilson for their service. I am delighted that Laura Newberry has agreed to act as our Parish Clerk. Her knowledge of Lighthorne, of the Parish Council, and her organisational and communication skills make her ideally suited to the role. We also welcome Bob Middleton and Natalie Shedden as new councillors. We still have a vacancy which we would be delighted to fill if anyone would like to join the team. Please have an informal chat with any councillor, or the Clerk, if you are interested.

#### **Keeping in touch**

This Parish Meeting is being held via Zoom, something that we have all had to get used to. We all hope to be able to return to meetings in person as soon as it is safe, especially as meeting by Zoom may exclude some people who would otherwise attend. To help counter any sense of exclusion we are now reserving space four times a year in the Mid Fosse Parishes Magazine, which should reach every household without the aid of the internet.

#### **Reflections on the past year**

The many and varied activities that together form the social framework of Lighthorne have necessarily been curtailed since lockdown. Whether it is services in St Laurence's, the wonderful hospitality of The Antelope and The Pavilion Café, the History Society, Film Club, Festival of One Act Plays, or any of the other Village Hall delights to which we have become accustomed, we are all looking forward to being able to spontaneously socialise again. We are not there yet.

My induction as Chairman coincided with absence through ill health of our previous Clerk, and I quickly came to realise how much we depend on a fully functioning Clerk. My colleagues and I have been through a steep learning curve to establish new processes for managing finances in particular, and have engaged a very experienced internal auditor to help guide us through the audit process for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Early indications are that we are in good shape, but any improvement opportunities arising from the auditor's report will be carefully considered. Our statutory annual return and the auditor's report will be published as soon as they are ready.

The community response to Coronavirus has been remarkable, with many volunteers coming forward to offer support to their neighbours. Demand for our prescription delivery service has fallen, but we will continue to offer it while there remains a genuine need. It is particularly pleasing to be able to offer this support to residents at Redlands Park, who may sometimes feel a little isolated.

## **Planning**

It has been relatively quiet on the planning front. An appeal from the Home Farm developer to convert a garage into a dwelling has thankfully been dismissed. Our application for the safe path to the sports field has been granted, although land owner permission is still to be obtained before work can commence. Permission may be linked to the proposed Managed Ecological Reserve on the old quarry site, but since the GLH developers are not obliged to deliver the ecological reserve until 1,000 GLH houses are occupied we continue to vigorously lobby for permission before the reserve is operational.

In general the Parish Council will take a neutral view on planning applications unless there are clear indications in favour or against. Those indications may include representations to the Parish Council, but we always encourage residents to also comment on planning applications where they have an interest. Several comments from residents that raise legitimate planning points help the Parish Council to make representations. Of course, if village opinion is split 50/50 then it can take the Judgement of Solomon to resolve! It is worth noting that planning consent is often required for any change of use of an existing building, and not just for construction or alteration.

Parish Council representation can be reinforced with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan and an up to date Housing Needs Assessment. Creating a Neighbourhood Plan and getting it adopted is a significant undertaking, and we have no current plans to follow this path. This need not be led by the Parish Council. We would offer support and encouragement to any group who wishes to pursue a Neighbourhood Plan. A Housing Needs Assessment is an easier exercise, and our 2013 assessment is due a refresh.

## **Village maintenance and improvement**

The theft of the Bakers Well pump necessitated replacement, and a suitable item was identified on ebay, acquired and installed. Thanks to all those involved. Tree maintenance has been carried out in Mountford Rise, and further tree maintenance is planned.

We have commissioned the repair of some faulty street lamps, and will be assessing the benefits of conversion of sodium lamps to LED. Two broken street lights that may cause a light disturbance to adjacent dwellings will remain unfixed until we can assess options for mitigating light disturbance.

We hope that the 30mph limit will soon finally be moved beyond the entrance to Farriers Way along the C96 Wellesbourne Road. It is ironic and annoying that this work was not mandated by Warwickshire County Council as a condition on planning consent for the Oberry Fields development. We will now receive a substantial bill from WCC for this work, hopefully partially offset by a WCC grant.

Those with young children may have noticed our new equipment in the play area. We hope it is good now for another 20 years. All equipment is inspected annually as part of our insurance obligations.

There are a number of village residents who quietly and selflessly improve the environment for us all by litter picking, fixing things, and reporting issues to the appropriate authorities. You know who you are, and your contributions are greatly appreciated by many. We plan to organise occasional working groups to assess potential issues that can be reported en-masse in the hope that this can improve productivity for the responsible local authorities.

## **Public participation**

This annual meeting is intended specifically for residents to raise matters of interest and/or concern, and the floor will be given over to you for this purpose. However, residents are always welcome at our regular meetings at 7:30pm on the second Tuesday of the month. A slot early on the agenda is set aside for questions from the floor. It is a truism that we hardly hear from residents when everything is going smoothly, but when things go wrong we can fill the Village Hall!

Finally, I would like to thank Mike, Richard, Bob, Natalie and of course Laura for their unstinting support and contributions. I think we make a good team, and I hope you agree.

**Andy Smith – Chairman, Lighthorne Parish Council**