

Lighthorne Parish Council

Parish Meeting – May 2022

Chairman's Report

Arrivals & departures

The Parish Council has enjoyed a period of stability since our last Parish Meeting in April 2021. No councillors have retired from the PC in that time, and in September we welcomed Susan Knapton. LPC have for some years sought a representative from Redlands and so we were particularly pleased when Susan agreed to join us.

Councillors are elected for a four year term, or co-opted where a vacancy occurs between elections. Our next election is in May 2023. Although we have a full complement of six councillors at present, not all councillors will be making themselves available for election in 2023, so please consider if you can contribute to the community as a parish councillor. All councillors or the clerk are happy to have an informal chat with prospective councillors at any time.

During the last year we sadly lost long serving county councillor Chris Williams, and notable village resident Keith Sheppard.

Keeping in touch

Our last Parish Meeting was held via Zoom, but after that the temporary legislation allowing remote meetings lapsed and somewhat confusingly was not extended. Accordingly, LPC was obliged to return to face to face meetings to comply with the Law. This we did with caution at first, but now we are back in the habit and starting to feel more relaxed. However, we continue to monitor local COVID infection rates, and will not be complacent.

We continue to publish an occasional update in the Mid Fosse Parishes Magazine, as well as posting occasional updates on social media. Hopefully by these means everyone in the parish is aware of who we are and what we do!

Reflections on the past year

A 'new normal' seems to have become established over the past few months, which is hopefully good news for our hospitality venues who have perhaps suffered more than most from various lockdowns. Summer is gradually making an appearance and as we all come out to play I hope we can continue to socialise with increasing confidence, especially as we look forward to the many and varied events in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, and the forthcoming Festival of One Act Plays in the Village Hall.

The repercussions of the loss of our previous clerk are now a distant memory, and I am glad to say that preparing our annual accounts for audit has been relatively straightforward this year. We await the judgement of the external auditor, but our experienced internal auditor has signed off on our annual return, which is always encouraging.

Events in Ukraine have naturally been of concern to us all, perhaps with a general feeling of helplessness as we view with horror the devastation of innocent lives. The response of the UK population to the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been remarkable. I understand that Kineton has now welcomed its first refugee family. If any families in our parish are thinking of hosting the parish council is happy to facilitate communication, although the County Council are primarily coordinating.

Planning

The Planning page on our web site lists all planning applications on which LPC have taken a view. We tend to stay neutral unless an application has an obvious public interest, or we are lobbied by residents opposed and/or in favour. Compared to previous years this year has been thankfully light on contentious planning applications. Long may that continue.

Nevertheless, the consequences of past applications continue to affect us, and Cllr Langhorn has been proactive in seeking to ensure the developer of the new houses in Moreton Morrell Lane does all they can to minimise disruption, and at the other end of the village to ensure that mud on the road from significant earth movements is promptly cleared.

However, the long term repercussions of the fiercely opposed decision to build 3,000 homes on our doorstep will continue to require monitoring and scrutiny. The latest aspect to come to our attention is a report that suggests the promised primary health care provision for GLH may be watered down, increasing pressure on existing GP services, increasing traffic through neighbouring communities, and failing to provide convenient and adequate provision for the 7,000 or so residents of the new settlement. As always, Lighthorne will play an active role in holding the authorities to account, and in coordinating the response from affected parishes. We are grateful for the support of local county and district councillors in this.

Village maintenance and improvement

After about two years of continuous lobbying and increasing frustration it is a great pleasure and relief to see our safe path to the sports field now under construction. The firm surfacing of the lower parts of the path and the installation of gates at both ends will be completed very soon, following which we are hoping to get fencing contractors on site as soon as possible. With a following wind we may have the path ready for use by the end of May. Please do not attempt entry until signs go up indicating that the path is open.

We are actively investigating the possibility of extra parking at the Pavilion to include a permanent basketball hoop. This will provide some overspill for the Pavilion as well as facilitating parking for parents of visiting under 11 football players, should plans to introduce regular games come to fruition. As always such developments require consultation and co-operation between all existing users of the sports field. This important amenity is a much valued village asset, and with future safe pedestrian access now assured we hope that it will be enjoyed by many more residents.

Cllr Langhorn conducted a village survey on speed mitigation measures, with vehicle activated signs emerging as the preferred option. Cllr Langhorn continues to pursue this, against a background of WCC policy review causing delays.

We continue to be frustrated by delays in implementing the extension to the 30mph speed limit beyond Farriers Way, and the installation of deer warning signs at Lighthorne Rough. I think LPC has now earned a reputation for relentless lobbying to pierce bureaucratic obstacles, and with the support of our district and county councillor we will get there. But it shouldn't be this hard.

Public participation

A resident is leading efforts to reinstate our Speedwatch team, which may see our speed camera again being used. Just a couple more volunteers will achieve this. Lighthorne is blessed with many people who contribute greatly to our community with a positivity and energy that not all communities achieve. The parish council will always seek to support positive initiatives from residents.

This meeting is for residents to raise matters of interest and/or concern, and the floor will be given to you for this purpose.

Finally, I would like to thank Mike, Richard, Bob, Natalie, Susan, and Laura for their support and contributions throughout the year.

Andy Smith – Chairman, Lighthorne Parish Council