



Boxley

PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's End of Year Report 2020-2021

This has been a difficult year spent almost entirely in lockdown but hopefully the end is in sight and almost everyone is now vaccinated.

There has been a lot to cope with. My fellow Councillors have learnt to use Teams and attend virtual meetings. There were a lot of initial teething problems but now we are all coping well. Even some computer illiterates amongst us are attending virtual meetings. Well done everybody. Business has carried on as usual with the Council and all Committees managing to hold all of their meetings and carry out their responsibilities. I would like to thank all Councillors for their hard work and dedication over the past year.

As I said, the committees have all continued to function and many thanks to the Chairmen of those committees, Ivor Davies, Chairman of V&GPC, Bob Hinder, Chairman of Environment and Dennis Hollands, Chairman of Estates who have had plenty to do despite the pandemic. Also a special thank you to Paul Dengate for all his advice and work in sorting out our IT. It's all rather a riddle to most of us but Paul has done a brilliant job.

We have said goodbye to John Constable (May 2020), Geoff Hayday (June 2020) and Tony Harwood (January 2021) and said hello to Chris Sheppard, Mick Beckwith and Warren Salter in September 2021. All have settled in well and have already contributed in a positive way. Many thanks to them.

The loss of income from the forced closure of Beechen Hall has been a financial blow for the Council but we are now reopening to hirers in line with current Government guidelines and things will improve. The hall has been Covid risk assessed and all necessary precautions installed. Reluctantly we did agree to increase the precept this year to make up for the shortfall in income. However this still leaves us as with one of the lowest precepts in the Borough.

The office has worked tirelessly throughout the Pandemic with staff working from home or in the office in line with guidelines. This has led to a few problems but staff have coped admirably. I thank all staff for their dedication and hard work during these difficult times and hope that very soon we will all be able to return to some sort of normality.

At the moment we only have two caretaking members of staff who have kept the hall and office clean and covid safe. For much of the year Alan was the only one actually working. Debbie was furloughed but is back working now. Special thanks to Alan who has also carried out many maintenance and repair works at the hall and around the Parish. We will continue to operate with just two caretakers for the time being until business starts to get back to normal when the arrangements will be reconsidered.

The sale of Wildfell Close has finally gone through and work has started on the site. The CIO application for Walderslade Woods is in its final stages and hopefully will be acceptable to the Charities Commission which will then enable us to sort out the finances and set up the CIO.

I have decided that due to health issues I need to take a back seat for a while and therefore, reluctantly, am stepping down as your Chairman. My year as Chairman has been very limited as regards to functions a Chairman normally undertakes due to the Pandemic,

but none the less has been very interesting and there has been plenty to do. Thank you all for your support.

Vic Davies, Chairman