



Boxley Parish Council

Chairman's End of Year Report 2019-2020

We have reached the end of a year where some ambitions were realised. New staff joined the office, others sadly left and again a year where much dedicated work to a very high standard was carried out by Councillors and office staff.

There was much sadness at saying goodbye to Pauline, our dedicated Clerk for over 20 years but an excellent celebratory evening held in the Acorn Room to wish her every enjoyment for a long retirement and well deserved.

A new clerk was appointed Daniela Baylis who has stepped into the void left by Pauline's departure and she has coped admirably particularly during the latter part of the year where we have been experiencing the Coronavirus epidemic.

We said goodbye to Angie Candy going to new work pastures. I think I speak for all to say that she will be greatly missed for her efficiency, hard work and a constant smile to brighten the office. Her replacement however Jane has proved just as hard working and a big new asset to the office.

I wish to repeat a phrase here that I used last year, highly commending the 3 committees for their truly diligent work and commitment. We have a reputation that spreads far and wide and they have enhanced it further this year.

Dealing firstly with the **Environment Committee** this was chaired very ably by Wendy Hinder until her very sudden illness and subsequent passing in February. This has been an enormous shock to you all not least me as her husband and we mourn her untimely passing. She will be remembered for her dedicated commitment and passion for the residents of Boxley.

Again, throughout the year many contentious planning issues were discussed, fought and in one case in particular a proposed care home adjacent to the KIMS roundabout was successfully refused at appeal.

I would here though urge residents to consider carefully that this committee can only deal with matters of planning and emotive reasons cannot be taken into consideration.

It was pleasing to note that the new roundabout in New Cut has been completed 9 weeks ahead of schedule, with minimum disruption.

More daffodils were purchased to continue to create a more pleasant vista throughout the parish again thanks to the volunteers.

Finally, we saw the completion of the new lease for Franklin Drive play area and await installation of new equipment (delayed at present due to the epidemic).

Estates Committee has again been very ably led by its chairman Vic Davies and all have enjoyed the fruits of their efforts by using the Acorn Room. Minor snags here have been largely overcome and

new hirers have paid compliments regarding this new facility. I would here wish to pay particular thanks to Councillor Paul Dengate for his enormous contributions without which we would have struggled.

Finance Committee has again been led most ably by Ivor Davies and it was very satisfying to report that budgets balanced, and no financial hiccups occurred – well done. They did recommend an increase in the precept this year, but very detailed and comprehensive reasons given for doing so were accepted by the Parish Council.

There have been developments regarding the creation of the CIO for Walderslade Woods there is now firm interest from developers and the Parish Council are in the process of obtaining the Charities Commission approval in order for the new management plan to be implemented.

I now reach my comments regarding the unprecedented situation we all find ourselves in with the outbreak of Coronavirus. The Parish Council had contingency plans in place which have been implemented very efficiently. It has led to a change in work patterns for the staff and virtual meetings being implemented for the committees. We had to close the hall to hirers with all the necessary financial implications, but we have received welcoming assurances from them that once life returns to normality they will return.

May I close by saying that I have found the past 4 years as Chairman most rewarding and interesting, but the sad loss I have had has made me realise that this is a very appropriate time to welcome new blood, initiative and different visions to the role and I therefore reluctantly state that my time as your Chairman has come to an end.