

## **Annual Report on the Work of the Parish Council**

### **Welcome**

A warm welcome to you all at this Annual Parish Meeting. It is the first time that we have all been together in one place since February 2020.

### **Introduction**

Unusually, this report covers the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 because the first lockdown of the pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting. The Coronavirus Regulations 2020 dispensed with the requirement to hold an Annual Parish Meeting and an Annual Parish Council Meeting in 2020.

The Coronavirus Regulations 2020 also allowed for Parish Council meetings to be held remotely up until 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Having missed meetings in March and April 2020, the Parish Council has met monthly via Zoom since May 2020.

I would like to thank my fellow colleagues for their continued commitment and enthusiasm for the work of the parish council throughout the many challenges of the past year. Despite the difficulties and the restrictions of a series of lockdowns, we have continued to support and deliver services whilst advocating for the community on local issues and concerns.

### **The Parish Centre**

The Parish Centre was well used by local groups and training providers up until March 2020 when it had to be closed because of Covid-19. During the past year, the room has been made available for occasional use by teachers, free of charge, to assist the school. There were no paid hirings. We hope that as lockdown is lifted the meeting room will again be used by local groups, although there will be reduced capacity while social distancing is still advised.

### **Events**

There were all the usual parish council events in 2019/20:

Senior Citizen's coach trips to Llandudno and Chester, the Priorslee Summer Fete, community litter picks in St Georges and Priorslee, the popular fish & chips and bingo evenings and the Macmillan Coffee Morning at the Parish Centre. In addition, the parish council supported the St Georges Day and Christmas Lights events organised by the St Georges Partnership.

Sadly, all events in 2020/21 had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. We did what we could safely within the restrictions. Banners were put up to celebrate VE Day and VJ Day, Remembrance poppies were affixed to lampposts and there were small-scale

Remembrance Day and Christmas Lights switch on events which were filmed and livestreamed via the St Georges Partnership Facebook page.

The parish council had set aside a budget to support the 2020 Christmas Lights event which could not take place. Instead, some of the money was used to buy chocolate selection packs for all the primary school children in the parish.

## **The Environment**

The previous 'PET Team' was disbanded on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. Because of this, in March 2019 Jess Ellis was employed for an additional 5 hours per week of environmental duties. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 onwards the parish council has shared an idverde 'Added Value Operative' with Wrockwardine Wood & Trench Parish Council. Roger works for this Parish for two days a week and has worked hard keeping the parish clean and tidy.

The lawnmowing service for 30 parish residents who are over 70 or disabled was started in the Summer of 2019, with the lawn mowing provided by a local gardening contractor. This was successful in 2019 and was repeated in 2020.

The parish council paid for a display of hanging baskets in the centre of St Georges and alongside the Flash in Priorslee in 2019 and 2020.

Unfortunately, an application for grant funding to create a 'Pocket Park' on the green area behind the Grove Street houses was unsuccessful.

In the autumn of 2019 the parish council purchased bulbs and replacement trees to be planted by community volunteers around the Teece Drive community field.

## **Parish Grants**

The grants budget was £5,000 in 2019/20 and £5,000 in 2020/21. Grants were allocated to eleven organisations in 2019/20. In 2020/21 there were fewer requests for grants since the activities of many local groups were suspended during the pandemic. Grants were given to six organisations and there were also contributions made towards Telford & Wrekin Council's Kindle Kindness appeal (£500) and towards purchasing laptops for school pupils, in the four schools within the parish (£2,770).

## **Community Projects**

Six new permanent Christmas trees were planted in November 2019 with support from Cllrs I and V Fletchers' Borough Council Community Pride Fund.

The new Priorslee Clock was installed in December 2019. The clock tower has a 'silent soldier' affixed to it and it has a weather vane with a silhouette of soldiers on top, so that it acts as a war memorial. Better lighting was added in September 2020.

Since August 2020, supported by a grant from Telford & Wrekin Council, the parish council has been distributing weekly breakfast packs to families with children eligible for free school meals. An average of 20 families with around 50 children have been supported.

### **The Gower Project**

At the Parish Plan meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, it was resolved to explore the option for the parish council to refurbish and occupy the whole Gower Building. There followed a feasibility study by Telford & Wrekin Council's Architectural & Project Management Team, a public consultation and a more detailed Business Plan commissioned by the parish council. At an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, it was resolved unanimously that the proposal to take on the Gower building and to carry out a stand-alone refurbishment of the building should be rejected on the grounds that it would not be financially self-sustainable. It was also resolved to continue dialogue with Telford & Wrekin Council regarding an alternative option for the Gower that would deliver refurbished community facilities, ancillary office space and new homes to rent.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Parish Council resolved in principle to rent community and office space within the refurbished Gower Building and to move its offices from St Georges C of E Primary School, subject to planning permission being obtained.

At the Parish Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020, it was resolved to set up a Gower project working group. The working group and the Clerk have had a series of meetings with Telford & Wrekin Council and Novus Property Solutions Ltd, the contractor appointed by Telford & Wrekin Council. Every aspect of the community space in the building has been discussed and there have been opportunities to input into the design. A community consultation is on-going.

### **Staff Changes**

Wendy Tonge, Parish Clerk, retired on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and Audrey Atkinson, Community Projects & Events Officer, retired on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Vicky Brain started as the new Parish Clerk on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. (Catherine Lane started as the new Community Projects & Events Officer on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021.)

On behalf of all of the Parish members and residents, I would like to thank the small team of staff, past and present, for their hard work and commitment.

Richard Overton

Chairman, St Georges & Priorslee Parish Council

18<sup>th</sup> May 2021

