

Chairman's Report for the year ending 31st March 2020

This has been a difficult year for the Parish Council caused by the merger of two district councils at the start of the year and the disruption following the outbreak of the Coronavirus, towards the end.

2019 was an election year and five Councillors were elected uncontested – Margaret Blogg, David Lacey, Charles Silverlight, John Nutt and David Mitton. Sarah Drury and Louise Peace were co-opted at the May meeting to replace Colin Rayson who had retired and Chris Hannath who had moved out of the parish.

As in previous years, one of the Parish Council's main responsibilities has been the maintenance of the playing field and the play area. The contract for the grass cutting is now with Somerset West & Taunton but the merger between the two district councils resulted in some teething problems at the beginning of the season. The grass on Silver Street Green has been cut and other small areas around the centre of the village. The area around the War memorial is cut frequently and maintained to a high standard. The hedges in the playing field were cut in the autumn and the hedge in the play area reduced in height and width to keep it more manageable. The shrubbery in Stoford Lane and the approach to the M5 roundabout was also trimmed back from the highway.

The annual inspection of the playing field was carried out by Somerset Playing Fields Association last summer and issues in their report addressed. The replacement goal nets were not erected as planned, due to the poor condition of the playing field during the winter months. A training session was attended by Cllr. John Nutt on 'planning and playground awareness' and he regularly inspected the playground until the 'shut down'. Hi-viz jackets were purchased so that people were aware that he was carrying out the inspections on behalf of the council.

Work has started on the refurbishment of the cast iron finger posts in the parish. The finger post at the top of Buckland Hill has been repainted and re-erected. The work on the damaged finger post at Budgetts will take place when 'lockdown' measures are lifted. Cllr Charles Silverlight attended a training course to enable him to paint the finger posts near to the highway.

Paint has been purchased for painting the posts and work will start as soon as possible.

Each year, the Parish Council gives a grant towards the upkeep of the churchyard. A donation to the Royal British Legion was made as usual but the poppy wreath from the previous year was 're-cycled', as it is made of plastic. A grant of £100.00 was made to Taunton and District CAB and Councillor John Nutt attended their Annual General Meeting.

A Face Book page was set up as an additional method of communicating with parishioners. This has been well-received and is regularly updated by the Clerk.

Councillor, David Mitton, is the Parish Paths Liaison Officer and can be contacted about any problems experienced by walkers while using the footpaths.

As Chairman, I would like to thank councillors for all their help and support over the last year and I hope the Parish Council can return to normal meetings as soon as possible.