

3. Chairman's Report

Many thanks to you all for coming to our Annual Assembly tonight. It's great to see you all and I wanted to stress how pleased we are, because we exist to support you – the members of our Parish! I'd also like to welcome our guests who we'll hear from in the next hour.

Borough Councillor - John Izett

County Councillor - Tom Thacker

Tim Davis from BDBC Housing team

John Dullingham and Seb Pearce from the Police

Professor Adrian Wander

Please also stay for a glass of wine and some sandwiches afterwards – we'd love to catch up with you if you have any questions.

As you'll notice, we're slightly short of councillors this evening because the re-validation and election process for Parish Councillors caught us out so we only managed to get a couple of us across the line – Mike Sparrow and Marian Dain are unable to be here, but Nick Owen and I managed to get our registrations completed...and we're here!

Can I also welcome our fabulous new Parish clerk – Sarah Jones. This is her first assembly and she's made such a great contribution to the PC over the last 10 months.

On the posters behind me you'll see all the things that we as a PC are responsible for. Let me draw out a few points that I'd like to make you aware of.

1 - Firstly, planning. We see all the applications for planning that are submitted in the Parish. However, I must stress that we're not planning experts, but we do like seeing you to hear about your planning, and we aim to represent/support you effectively within the limits of our remit. If you have planning applications coming up, please do attend the meeting at which it's being discussed so that we can understand more about the application.

2 - We've been trying to help alleviate the parking problems that exist in Oakfields Close. Whilst it's not within our area of responsibility, we're aiming to support the residents by lobbying the landowner/s to see if they'll act.

3 – We have pushed hard over the last 12 months on Broadband and the Vice Chair and I went to meet our MP, Kit Malthouse to raise the profile of the issue. He was very well informed about the situation and advised that he'd been in contact with BT Openreach who, at the time, were prioritising our area. We have now got Superfast Broadband and it seems most of the village has access – although I know there are quite a few houses on Back Lane which are yet to receive it. Does everyone here receive reasonable speeds? (a show of hands was almost unanimous although many said the speeds weren't all that they should be),

4 - We've had a spate of fly-tipping in the Parish and I must congratulate BDBC who are incredibly efficient at removing stuff when it's reported to them – normally within 48 hours. (www.basingstoke.gov.uk/flytipping). Please report any fly-tipping to us or to BDBC directly.

5 - We have spare allotments – if you'd like to take one, or know some who does, please let us know. We have a special offer of the first three months free to get you started.

6 - The hard winter has taken its toll on our roads with an epidemic of potholes. I know Tom Thacker will talk more about this; suffice to say that most of the bad potholes in our area have been reported and will be on HCC's radar – but who knows when they'll get around to repairing them. Let's keep fingers crossed – I have noticed recently that white marks have appeared round some of the bigger holes, which may indicate that BDBC have been out to mark them up for action.

7 - The PC has again supported the Echinswell May Fayre this year (hope you enjoyed it last weekend!) which we believe is a great draw for our village. We've also been lucky enough to receive a donation from the May Fayre committee which we will use to improve the area round the old phone box opposite the school once the phone box has been removed by BT. We will be doing some planting and put a bench out there so it's a much nicer area and a great improvement on the bank of nettles that normally grows there.

8 - As it's the centenary of the end of the First World War in November this year we are having the war memorial professionally cleaned and also getting an additional soldier's name added to the monument. Adrian Wander – who's speaking later – will give us more information about this person whose name seems to have been omitted.

9 - We've set up a Parish Facebook page – how many of you use Facebook? (a show of hands only revealed about 20% of the audience) well, I hope those of you who have Facebook will join the site and post comments for the enjoyment of other users of the site.

10 - As I said earlier, we have a guest from BDBC who will talk about the results of the affordable housing survey we undertook in March/April. You may remember we held an extraordinary PC meeting earlier this year to discuss and about 20 residents turned up to listen to our deliberations. We were delighted to see everyone because they helped us as a council get a fuller understanding of the need and sentiment that existed. Virtually everyone who attended agreed that we had a need for affordable rural housing – as long as it was only available for people who had a close association with, and a need to be resident in the Parish/village. We will hear the results from Tim Davis tonight.

11 - Finally, thank you all again for coming to this assembly. We really appreciate your time and, if you think you'd like to become a Parish Councillor, we do have vacancies and we'd very much welcome anyone who puts themselves forward.

Now I'd like to hand over to Sarah Jones, our clerk, for her financial report.