

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS – 2020-21

INTRODUCTION

Good evening, and welcome to the 2020/21 Parish Assembly. This meeting combines what we have been doing over the past two years, and what The Parish Council will be doing in the future for the benefit of all the residents of Binley Woods.

It has been a most trying of times for everybody as we have all been stuck in this horrible pandemic. Your councillors have tried to carry-on-regardless and get as much done as possible, but with people and businesses slowing down or even stopping, it has been a real test of our resolve.

The following are just a few of the items we have attempted to deal with.

TGI ISLAND

Well at long last we have had a start at the island and I would like to think we have not been too inconvenienced. The first six months we were all in lockdown so most residents didn't even realise it had started. It was very fortunate for me that I knew the liaison officer from football, and he has been sending updates every week without fail. At least we are informed of closures etc and can make alternative arrangements. Let's hope we get the same service when the Walsgrave Island goes ahead.

POLICING

Policing across the Rural areas has suffered with retirements and people leaving which means replacements need to be away for training etc. We did go for a spell without much coverage, but with a new person at the top and further funding, we now have police covering the village we can call on as they have given us their contacts. Once again this is now forming a great communications link with the police.

HIGHWAY VERGES

This is an emotive subject and one we have attempted to address without success. The biggest gripe is that grass verges are being ripped out to install block paving or a dropped curb. The land for the first metre of verge is usually the property of Warwickshire County Council. Having contacted them, they are aware of our concerns and have made representation to the Planning Authority in an attempt to stop this encroachment. Watch this space.

LITTER PICK

How nice it is to have a group of people within the village who have now banded together to do regular litter picks. Lisa Male has badgered residents and now has around 25 to 30 people, and growing each time she arranges a date to go out. Thank you to all of you who have attended, and also to the new volunteers for the next pick. It is greatly appreciated.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Parish Council have been in discussions with the developers who are responsible for Sherwood Farm. It is now at the final stages of design and only last month we were asked to comment on the draft layout. There are 80 properties on this draft of which 8 were starter homes and a further 8 were bungalows. Every one of the Parish Councils requests have been incorporated and after we were asked last month for a final list, the developers agreed to 10 more from a list of 14 points we raised. The other four were under the County and Borough Council's remit. The site will include a young children's play area, Garden of Remembrance,

wild flower meadow and even a pond to take any excess surface water. The developers are now keen to get moving and plans will go into RBC quite soon.

The Speedway has again been raised with a proposal for re-opening, and a counter proposal to build 125 houses, a pavilion and a sports ground. We have made it clear that although this land is not in Binley Woods, we require consultation as it will affect all our residents in one form or another. The considerations should include traffic, health care, schooling (including travel into Rugby) and more. We are hoping we have a voice to be listened to.

There is no movement about developing Popes Garage at present and we cannot find any further information about the site. It was boarded up for security reasons after the windows were smashed, but that is about all we can say.

NEW WEBSITE

After comments about the Parish Council's website not being user friendly and having none of our documents displayed, we decided to have a new site built. We approached a designer in January and it was ready for launching the first week in February. During build, we applied to the Government Office for a .gov.uk platform for the site which we were told, was a two week process. After many complaints and even letters to our MP, this week have we received an email saying the application is almost complete. Once the site is up and running, we will display minutes, legal documents, hire charges and much more. We will also be able to add things ourselves as in the past we have had to send it to one person who is no longer a Councillor.

CARERS CAFE

Two years ago my wife and I started a Carers Café in order to help people who feel isolated with a loved one with illness. This was fantastic and quite a few people received great advice and support (and a cuppa) from the many external groups we invited along to talk to us. I would like to thank Binley Woods Village Hall Committee for helping us start this well needed group by allowing us 6 months' rent free, on the basis that once we had started to show a profit, we would pay it back retrospectively. The event was that successful, the debt was cleared within 3 months. Sadly within 12 months the pandemic hit.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Over the past year we have had repairs to the play equipment at the Recreation Ground. The situation now is that when we have bigger and better play areas, we have larger bills to maintain the area. This past year the area has come into its own, and been a godsend for parents. This also goes for the whole area, for leisure and walking. Putting all the details and photographs on social media has also attracted people from afar to come and see and use our lovely area. One person was even known to have travelled from Halesowen to see the bluebells.

CONCLUSION

This year has seen my 20th year as Chairman, and a lot of changes have taken place in all those years. I joined The Parish Council after attending a rather heated meeting about the closure of the First School. Residents shouted no, no, no to the proposal of 23 houses on the site, and the developer went away with their tails between their legs. When the second set of plans appeared, it was for five blocks of flats within the site. Residents went home with their tails between their legs.

I was always negotiating in my job and it was put to good use talking, along with our Chairman at the time, to Bellway Homes and the Authorities to get somewhere back to level ground. The outcome was the development and Village Green we have today. This seems like a century ago.

As I stated in my opening remarks, once again your Councillors have been busy working through torrid conditions. For this I can only thank them. It hasn't been an easy ride, although we have all put in a shift to try and make Binley Woods a better place. There are a few issues to iron out, mainly the hiring of our public building, but we hope this can be resolved in some way, without too many problems. Thanks also to our Clerk, John Cook, who keeps us all in order, and is always there with advice and guidance.

On a personal note, this year I not only lost a very close friend, but a great working buddy. Tony Kavanagh was a real workhorse, volunteering at the drop of a hat to help me with whatever needed doing within the Village. In September we were planting daffodils, in May he had left us. We both thought we were invincible and had eternal youth. Not so.

Losing Tony has made me realise that none of us are immortal and at our age, anything could happen and at any time. This makes it even more important for younger blood to come onto the Parish Council. I think that most Councillors agree, and would be prepared to 'step-aside' to allow this to happen. There are a lot of major unfinished issues and it would be unfair to leave these for a new Committee, so we would offer assistance as required to get people up and running.

Finally, the Parish Council have received a lot of criticism via social media from some elements over a decision they have taken recently. This decision was not taken lightly, and after looking at all the details, it was decided to give it a try. The Parish Council will not conduct any business through a Social Media platform and have a due process of approach.

Everybody wants something for nothing but how many are prepared to **'do something for nothing'** like your entire Councillors do. This throws out the gauntlet to the younger element to step up and make a difference. If you feel we are doing it wrong, come and help us do it right.

Thank You.