

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 16TH MAY 2022
CHAIR'S REPORT

Thank you so much to Harbour Master James Bateman and Michael Kynvin of Border Force for attending and telling us about their work and I hope everyone found the talks interesting.

Well, it has been a very bumpy ride over the last few years in more ways than one. First although I hate to even mention the nightmare of two years of Covid, but we all got used to Zoom and were able to maintain our meetings and these were attended by quite a few residents who were able to log in. At times it was a bit hit or miss as to whether one would be left in the waiting room or get access and whether the chairman would see who wanted to speak, but we got there in the end.

Then we had our clerking problems through resignations when I found myself asked to take the acting clerk role and we hired a locum clerk to deal with the finances and complete year end. The workload was huge, but I managed to get all our Policies updated and onto the website, deal with all the correspondence and various other matters that reared their heads. We survived and the upside was we saved a lot of money on salary as we all worked voluntarily for the parish.

We also had councillor resignations and a Parish Poll called by Winchelsea, so it was all very interesting. The outcome was that we got four new councillors and a returning councillor bringing us back up to a full complement of members and I worked closely with the Rother Monitoring Officer and Electoral Officer to achieve this. I want to publicly thank Lisa Cooper the Monitoring Office, Richard Adams the Electoral Services Manager and James Waite Digital Services Project Manager at Rother who gave me terrific website support which saved me a lot of time.

Recently you may have read in the Parish Magazine that a week ago the previous Chairman, Peter Turner, stepped down. I was elected as his successor at our meeting on the 9th of May. On behalf of the parish council, I want to thank Peter for all his years of service, and we wish him well. And I would like to thank all those who supported my election and I look forward to working with David Smedley the new Vice Chair and all the IPC councillors.

Since the last Annual Meeting we have four new councillors Ian McConnachie Winchelsea, Ian Mann Rye Harbour, Angela Thompson, Darren Kitteridge and Clare Rice of Icklesham, and David Smedley re-joined the parish council for Winchelsea.

When our clerks resigned last year, we knew we had to make changes if we wanted to improve the way we did things and retain staff. We had already lost two councillors who said that we made decisions at meetings that were never followed through. We also had at least three pages of works that still needed completion. So, the Staffing Committee consisting of Steve Tollett, Peter Turner, Ian McConnachie and myself as chair set about interviewing potential new clerks. Two candidates stood out one,

Jenner Sands from a legal background who we appointed as the Responsible Financial Officer, and she deals with all administration and finances. Thanks to Jenner we now have a good filing system etc..

The other candidate was Danielle Haffernan who we appointed as our Assistant Clerk who came from a grounds management background and who looks after our assets for us. Thanks to Danielle we have changed some of our contractors who have under-performed over the years and I hope that residents have already seen a marked improvement as our playing fields are looking vastly better than they ever did. I drove past Coronation Field at Rye Harbour a few weeks ago and literally had to stop my car – I did not realise it could look so good and the same for Harbour Field. Fences and bus stops have been repaired by Mark Saunters who has been our small works contractor for many years and many thanks to Jenner, Danielle and Mark who are working well together and getting things done. Danielle has also argued, and we have received refunds from Ideverde our previous contractors of just over £4,000!

Also, we have now completed our purchase and installation of defibrillators throughout the parish.

We have commissioned a report by GTA Consultants to look at the traffic calming at Winchelsea and there will be a meeting on 21st May 2022 in this hall so I would urge residents to attend and see what schemes are being proposed.

The gate at Jubilee Field has finally been installed thanks to Herington's legal advice and Marton Fencing for the installation work.

We continue to try and deal with Southern Water regarding the flooding and sewerage problems at Winchelsea Beach – Sally Ann Hart MP has taken over from Amber on this and there was a meeting last month regarding this.

We are also trying to solve the problem of being able to install an extra bus shelter at Winchelsea Beach and this is ongoing.

A new disabled ramp to access Harbour Field has been installed for which we received a 100% grant from Rother District Council and we were the first parish council to have the grant work completed. So huge thanks to all those involved.

We have had vandalism with the play equipment at Icklesham, but this is being monitored and we are hoping that we do not have to close it off for the children if it gets worse.

We also have issues with the car park at Rye Harbour, but our local PCSO is on the case. The fence there has been repaired and looks great and donations for the car park this year have raised £17,335 - up over £3,000 on the previous year..

We have also sacked Rother's cleaners for the toilets at Rye Harbour who failed to provide the results we needed especially during Covid when we paid extra for so called Covid cleans. A new local company has been engaged and things are looking so much better now. We are also trying to recover costs from Rother on this.

The allotments at Cricket Field are now looking excellent and most plots are let. We are preparing extra allotments at Rye Harbour to satisfy demand, and these should be in circulation within the month.

Basically, we are demanding value for taxpayers' money and Danielle is inspecting regularly and holding our contractors to account and they are realising that we are not a pushover, and they need to work to our high standards instead of us over the years accepting their low standards.

We have also given grants to:

Rye Community Transport

Pett Level Lifeboat Rescue Service,

Winchelsea Beach village sign

Nature Reserve at Rye Harbour.

All this together with our annual grants of £1,725 for each of the four village halls.

Our Schedule of Works is now reduced to just one page and we have a few projects that we will be working on this year i.e. speed calming throughout the Parish, development of the toilets in Winchelsea Beach, a parish office for our clerks to work from and hopefully adult exercise equipment which we hope to get funding for. If residents have any ideas for improvements, please let the clerk know and it would be good for all of us to think of a way we can mark the Queen's Jubilee this year. On her 90th birthday we planted 90 daffodil bulbs in each parish which bloom every year since.

We thank residents for all their support and patience during our difficult times which are now firmly behind us, and we look forward to the coming year with our new clerks working hard to help us achieve for the community.

Cllr Jacqueline Stanford

Chair