

## **Chairman's Report 2017-18**

The Parish Council has met six times over the last year to carry out its duty as representatives of the local community in decision-making for our five parishes.

Every year there are more matters to deal with as new laws are introduced and more power handed down to Parish Councils from higher authorities. We co-opted two new Parish Councillors to the Parish Council during the year Lesley Handscomb in May 2017 who will represent Bishopstone Parish and Lewis Goldwater in January 2018 who will represent Mansell Gamage, Lewis has also agreed to hold the post of Tree Warden for the Bishopstone Group Parish Council.

One long serving Councillor Penny Redshaw resigned from the Council in September 2017

I would like to thank Penny for her many years of service to the Parish Council Acting as Chairman for several years and many years spent producing the parish newsletter and looking after the website.

This year we were informed we would need a Data Protection Officer from May 2018 this caused extra work and worry for our Clerk, only to be told at this late stage Parish Councils may be exempt. Until this is decided an outside organisation will be used to carry out this task.

'The Safeguarding of Children and Adults for Parish Councils'. Another statutory duty for the Parish Council, Cllr Lesley Handscombe kindly attended the meeting and briefed the Councillors on what responsibility the Councillors should know and on what course of action to take if needed.

Cllr Sarah Keefe has agreed to manage our new website it is linked into the Planning Department so all planning applications now come directly on to the site. There is a What's On page as well as the Parish Council pages Cllr Sarah Keefe distributed a paper copy of an information flyer to be delivered to all households - this explained the introduction of a new website and invited residents to access the site for information re planning; Parish Council agenda and minutes; What's On in the villages etc.

The Planning Applications the Parish Council dealt with this year were lower than usual, Witchwater Cottage - application approved with conditions. The Old-School House Byford - planning approved Studio Garage - The Hop Kiln - Mansell Gamage- planning approved.



Our Neighbourhood Development Plan has now reached the Regulation 16. Stage, after the amended plan has been approved by the Parish Council this will be presented to Herefordshire Council. I would like to thank Cllr Sue Hubbard on behalf of the Council for all her hard work, including many hours spent rewriting the plan and putting together all the supporting documents, also a big thankyou to Cllr Sarah Keefe for putting the document together ready for printing. One issue that arose from the plan was the different titles our Parish Council were referred to by Herefordshire Council including calling us Bishopstone District, after an official meeting at Herefordshire Council offices, the Parish Councils legal name has now been confirmed as Bishopstone Group Parish Council.

The lease for the New Bridge Community Centre runs out in May 2020 there will be a meeting with a diocese officer Wendy Coombey on the 30<sup>th</sup> May to try and find a way forward to renew the lease.

The Parishes lengthsman scheme this year has worked very successfully, the parishes are benefitting from the monthly maintenance visits in the summer months cutting back visibility spays, clearing drains and cleaning signs, etc. In this year's budget we managed to employ the lengthsman for two days with his digger to clean out the worst blocked ditches spread throughout all our parishes.

It was agreed by the Parish Council to take part in the Governance Review with a view to moving the boundary so that the bungalows on the north side of the A438 at Sugwas Pool, Swainshill, with one cottage behind them, would move into Stretton Sugwas parish. Balfour Beatty have employed the consultancy firm ADL to carry out the following: Mansell Gamage – Areawide Weight Limit Restriction Review and from Bridge Sollars to Madley a Speed and Weight Limit restriction review. After analysing the results ADL recommended that there was no need to change the existing speed and weight limits although they did recommend some new signage which the Parish Council will pursue.

Finally thanks to all the Councillors for their work during the year and especially thank you to Lesley our Clerk for your work and guidance during what I know personally has been a very difficult year.