

Batheaston Parish Council Meeting, 16th November 2020 – Clerk's Report

Summary

I continue to be very busy, and we have had a range of issues of governance and administration that are unhelpful, and regrettably divert our focus from activities that are about making Batheaston a better place to live.

There is however also a lot of positive activity, and completion of initiatives to provide much improved communication with residents and amongst ourselves is within sight.

Residents and the Community

I have seen a marked increase in communication from residents. Some asking questions, but a number that are critical, including a formal complaint (on the agenda) and an informal complaint. Two major topics are that streetlights are not working, and the management of the car park.

Council Facilities

The recent introduction of tighter restrictions has had less effect on our services than the previous lockdown; all can remain open, at least to some extent (see below). I have contacted staff to ensure that they follow the latest guidance (see <http://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>).

Rhymes Pavilion

The guidelines state that events of the following sort can continue: "Pre-schools, education (e.g. primary school use, home schooling, forest schools) and childcare (e.g. before and after school clubs)" and "Organised support groups providing mutual aid or therapy or other forms of support ...". "Penny's Pantry is therefore continuing, as is a parent-and-child support group. Other bookings have however been cancelled.

Playground and Public Toilets

Government guidelines are that these can remain open.

Developments

Playground. I understand that Andrew Lea is making good progress in getting quotes to repair the equipment which is most urgent.

Highways. With the considerable help of Cllr McCarthy, and others, we have been in contact with BANES about a diversion of the Footpath on Oakford Lane, to check that it is acceptable. Our disappointment with the delay to the repair work on the path at the bottom of School Lane leading into Elmhurst and on towards the garages.

In brighter news, I believe that 8 of our 17 **streetlights** will have been repaired today (Monday 16th). I have also requested an estimate of the cost of upgrading these lights, which I propose to include in the budget for 2021/22 as a possible item. I would expect that we would review other options at that time, including removing some or all of these lights, and negotiating with BANES to take over their maintenance.

New Finance System. I have finally reached a point with AdvantEdge, the suppliers of our new system, where we can talk turkey about getting the system up and running by Christmas. With Catherine Gregory, we are currently agreeing the chart of accounts, to provide us with something

that provides the basis for efficient data-entry, and the reports that we will need to understand our income and expenditure. I will be having training on the new system next Tuesday 24th, with Rachel Orme (our booking Clerk) joining the session.

The **new website** is referred to elsewhere in the meeting. If this is approved to go live, recent Council documents will need to be loaded onto it, to meet Transparency Guidelines.

Council Email Accounts: I am awaiting replies from a few Councillors confirming their confidence, and preferred name for the new email system.

Mid-year visit by the Internal Auditor. We have booked a half-day engagement with our Auditor to confirm that we are progressing well towards an un-qualified audit this year, which Catherine Gregory will attend. I will be preparing for this over the coming 2 weeks, and expect that there will be tasks and changes to practice that arise.

Noting the passing of Michael Tabb, a former Councillor. I have been notified of the death of Mr Tabb, who was a resident of the Parish for many years, and served as a Parish Councillor for a number of years. I ask Council **to formally approve** the sending of condolences on behalf of Council to the family and friends of Michael Tabb.

Richard Maccabee, Clerk to Batheaston Parish Council