

## Chairman's Report 2018

It seems this year we have been particularly busy however having said that most of the time we were just keeping the wheels on. The Swan close development has been completed and one has been sold.

We had a successful application for S106 moneys to renew and upgrade the playground equipment and work started this week. Both playgrounds should be ready and open for the school Easter holidays.

We also had a successful application for a grant to set up the Ashington Rangers. So far they have put in 2 sets of bollards in the high street and as more equipment is procured more ambitious tasks can be taken on. The next project is renovating a horse box they have had donated into a mobile workshop.

The precept this year has had to go up marginally by 2%, well under the RPI of 3.9%. This has been due to increased costs ie the cost of the wardens. The Wardens account for 45% of our spend. 20% is spent on maintaining public open spaces, hanging baskets and play areas ; 11% on the joint venture of a youth worker. The Public Works Loan for the Community Centre around 8% and the remaining on administration and other necessary costs. We have received further payments from S&F Bank in Iceland. As all capital money has already been returned, we are now just receiving outstanding interest as and when it becomes available. The Budget is of course, available from the Clerk on request. As always Councillors again voted unanimously, not to draw any allowances and have claimed only very modest expenses for costs incurred on Council business.

We now have a management scheme for the ponds in the village and it was particularly pleasing to be congratulated for the varied wildlife and differing species that by default we have encouraged.

The Parish website, Facebook page and notice boards, which sometimes soon will need renewing, are regularly updated in order to keep Parishioners informed of Parish Council Activities.

We have completed a review of the Youth Partnership with the Parish Church and have voted to keep this in place for the foreseeable future reviewing and signing on a rolling annual basis.

Following a review of Wardens, they have had their priorities confirmed which will hopefully raise their profile with all villagers by increasing foot patrols. The clubs that support the elderly has now been taken over by volunteers freeing up valuable time so the wardens can focus on other areas that need their attention. It is only right that the wardens are thanked for initiating the clubs in the first place. They are invaluable for some of the elderly and vulnerable.

The mini bus scheme goes from strength to strength with Rita Seymour taking over the administration on behalf of the village. 3 councillors are now registered drivers, Sam, Judith, and as of 2 weeks ago myself.

Monthly reports from both the Youth Worker and Wardens are available on our website.

The Neighbourhood Plan is gaining momentum thanks to the extremely hard work of Councillor Currell and Karen Dare our Neighbourhood Plan Clerk. We are now at the assessment phase for the sites submitted.

The Neighbourhood Plan Clerk attended and spoke for the Parish Council at the Chanctonbury Nurseries Inquiry. Having given a solid performance the planning inspector found in favour of Ashington PC and the appeal was refused. This is the second win Karen has had in 2 years and she is available for rent at a very reasonable cost.

I would like to thank Karen for all her hard work in steering us through a process that can only be described as a mine field and also her work as RFO.

The Emergency Plan was reviewed and updated as it should be to keep it as a living documents.

Councillor Kearney and myself went through the torturous training course as playground inspectors and are now both qualified under the playground scheme, at least we can go on all the equipment legally!

Our Parish Clerk Celia has been on several training courses and is close to completing her ILCA exam. She has been vigilant in seeking answers to local problems and queries and I would like to thank her for her diligent work throughout the year. She has dragged us screaming and kicking into the 21<sup>st</sup> century but our processes are now correct and up to date and we are ahead of the curve on the compliance laws that are coming in later this year.

However she has decided to step down. I am not sure Celia realises the impact all her work has had on the village. She has been a joy to work with and certainly made my job as chair somewhat easier. I for one am very sorry to see her go.

I would like to formally thank her for all her work and wish her well for the future.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank all Parish Councillors for the time they have devoted on a voluntary basis to ensure that our village remains a lovely place to live.