

First, thank you for your attendance at this Parish Assembly. I am pleased so many of you have made the effort.

Tonight, we will be hearing from a number of speakers on 3 topical subjects that are relevant to the Parish. David Bridges and Rachel Richards will be talking about biodiversity, David Sorton will explain the reordering proposals for the Plaistow and Ifold Church, and Councillor Andrew Woolf will provide a brief update on our new Neighbourhood Plan.

Before we get to our speakers, I am required to provide a short report on the Parish Councils activities over the last year and an indication of our plans for the year ahead.

Let me start with an event that had the potential to affect the smooth running of your Council, and that is the appointment of our new Parish Clerk. Clerk is a rather old-fashioned term that downplays what is an important position. It is the Clerk that administers what the Council does and controls our finances.

In January we had a change of personnel following the resignation of our previous Clerk, Catherine Nutting. I believe I speak for all Councillors, when I say we feel very fortunate to have been able to recruit Jane Bromley to join us as our new Clerk. Jane has picked up the batten and made a seamless transition. So, I feel it appropriate to both thank Catherine for her years of dedicated service to the Parish and thank Jane for ensuring such a smooth and painless transition.

Moving on to what we have done during this past year:

1. We undertook a Priorities and Funding survey, and the top priority was to defend the rural character of the Parish. We have and continue to do this in many ways. We have provided very robust and detailed responses to the Crouchlands planning applications which I believe have played

their part in the very recent refusal of the 2 housing applications. And as an ongoing matter we provide careful scrutiny of all planning applications in an effort to resist any creeping urbanisation and generally help protect and maintain the tranquil and rural parish environment we all enjoy.

2. We have successfully lobbied for the traffic calming that has been introduced around the school and for the extension of the 30mph speed limit down Rickmans Lane.
3. We have restarted the Neighbourhood Plan process, more of which is to follow later in the meeting.

Parish Finances

I don't propose to go into any detail tonight but as you can see from the screen, we are in a reasonably sound financial position with good reserves to cope with future planned projects and eventualities.

Councillors

The size of the Parish is such that we should have 11 councillors. At present we have only 9, with 2 vacancies. So this is where I put my recruiting hat on and suggest if anyone is interested or would like to know a little bit more about what is involved then do please speak to myself, Jane, or any of the other councillors. I can assure you it is not particularly onerous, and as they say many hands make for light work!

Bus Shelters

What can I say .. our Parish bus shelters seem to have had a particularly long gestation period. This project was started back in 2019, indeed well before the Notra Dame burnt down. The project has been beset with problems all of which have been unfortunately outside our control. As it is we are nearly there but I certainly wouldn't want to give odds as to whether the rebuilding Notra Dame or our 2nd bus shelter will be finished first. On a positive note the first of the bus shelters at Ifold has been completed and, in my opinion looks excellent. Traditional and in keeping with its setting.

The Year Ahead.

Aside from the completion of the Plaistow bus shelter we are investigating further traffic calming at Durfold Wood and Shingingle. However in order to progress this we do require your comments and feedback, both for and against.

We are moving forward with a small pre school playground within the green space at the front of Kelsey hall. The principal has been agreed and the lease agreement is being prepared by the solicitors. During this coming year we will be asking for opinions as to the type of equipment you would like to see installed, bearing in mind the available space and the target age group.

Biodiversity

David and Rachel will be talking on this and subject to your feedback we hope to engage in a few biodiversity projects within the Parish.

Neighbourhood Plan

Andrew will be providing the update on our Neighbourhood plan which is something the Parish Council is looking to progress during this coming year.

That's about all I have to say so I'll finish by offering thanks to all my fellow councillors for their hard work and dedication and to Jane for helping to ensure we stay on track. Thank you.

