

Parish Council Chairman's Report 2019 - 2020

This time last year, we were approaching the unusual (for Clanfield) experience of a Parish Council election - I believe it was the first for about 30 years; now, we are in the midst of a global health emergency which has changed everyone's way of life, at least for a while. In between, a great deal has happened and it is heartening to know that, from the work that has been done in the last twelve months, there is much to look forward to when the current restrictions can be eased.

We are very fortunate. We don't just live in an attractive location on the edge of the National Park. We live in a community which cares and which has an abundance of goodwill and talent. This has been exemplified by the Clanfield Coronavirus Community Support Group which, in no time at all, has been set up, and is providing, much needed help and comfort for elderly and vulnerable residents during the present health crisis. The work of the Group has been rightly applauded as an exemplar of how best a community can respond to an emergency situation and the Group can be very proud of what they have achieved and what they are doing.

When I was elected Chairman at the Parish Council's AGM on 14th May 2019, I said that I thought we were at a point when we had a golden opportunity and a challenge. At the time, it was thought that the remaining land transfers to the Parish Council from the developers of St James Place were only months away. That proved to be somewhat optimistic as they have still not been completed but the delays have not in any way lessened the relevance of both the opportunity and the challenge.

The opportunity was (and is):

"....to put Community, Health and Wellbeing and Sport at the centre of our agenda to promote awareness of what our village has to offer for its residents, to maximise participation, to encourage co-operation between the various stakeholders and to help to create a sense of belonging to a strong and mutually supportive community with a common purpose".

And the challenge was (and is) to establish:

"....the most effective management structure for all the land and property which we now look after...(because)... the estate is much bigger and more complex than in the past".

In response and during the last year:

- the new Clanfield Bowls & Sports Club has opened with great success; and
- we have supported the Clanfield Sports and Community Centre in its first full year since opening; and
- we have launched the Clanfield Public Art Project with the opportunity for people of all ages to be involved in creating a strong and distinctive sense of place for the village; and
- we have held the first Summer Activities for young people which we hope will become an annual programme of events; and
- we have agreed initial proposals to form a Clanfield Youth Council in the coming year; and
- we have taken steps towards declaring a Climate Emergency and to bringing forward environmental proposals for local implementation; and
- we have formed a Property Management Working Group of the Parish Council to guide the management of the land and property which the Council looks after and its future planned maintenance; and

- we have consulted on, and progressed, our plans for the restoration of Down Farm Barn (formerly known as Crimea Barn) to provide a much-needed Parish Office, art studios and a range of other community-related uses. A planning application is just about to be submitted and funding possibilities are being explored.

This is a big programme for any Parish but we believe that it is vitally important for the future health and wellbeing of our community that all our residents - of whatever age - can feel that they are involved, that they can contribute and that Clanfield is a good place to live for them.

I would like to thank all of my Parish Council colleagues - members and officers - for all they have done during this past year to bring forward the new initiatives on top of an already busy programme of work which has included thirteen full Council Meetings, ten meetings of the Planning Committee, regular meetings of the Council's three Working Groups and literally thousands of emails. We have also re-tendered the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract resulting in significant pro-rata savings and we have completed the digital mapping of the Council's land and property holdings (except for Down Farm Park which will be added when the land transfers there are concluded). The maps are on the Council's website. Furthermore, we have commenced a review of the Bylaws - again to be completed when the remaining land transfers are completed.

It is a privilege to lead such a very strong and committed team comprising:

Councillors - Terry Collins (Vice Chairman of the Parish Council); Rosemary Clarke (Chairman of the Down Farm Barn Working Group); Laurent Coffre; Stephen D'Este Hoare; Brian Foster (Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Working Group); Dave Harris; Peter Hurst; Margaret White (Chairman of the Planning Committee) and Stephen Williams.

Officers: Diane Duffy (Parish Clerk) and Emma Barritt (Assistant Clerk / Open Spaces Officer).

There are other people to thank as well for their contribution to the life of Clanfield and Chalton during this past year - our County and District Councillors, Officers of both HCC and EHDC, all those who run the various clubs and societies that cater for a range of interests and sporting activities, our local shopkeepers who we value even more for what they are doing for us in the current emergency, Clanfield Online that keeps us so well informed, the team that organises the very popular Christmas Celebrations and many more.

I am sure that all will join me in looking forward to when we can get back to full community life and to helping to shape its future. In the meantime, the most important thing is for all to take care and keep well.

John Bannell
Chairman of Clanfield Parish Council
(and Chairman of the Parish Council's Property Management Working Group)
April 2020