

Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report 2019 - 2020

This was my third year of being Chairman and what a strange and peculiar end to the year it has been! Never in our lifetimes have we ever experienced anything like the Covid-19 pandemic with the resultant impact on our lives. I am writing this annual report in the knowledge that the Annual Parish Meeting scheduled for the 12th May 2020, when this report would normally be presented, has been postponed. In addition the Parish Council AGM at which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are appointed has been postponed, along with the regular Parish Council Meeting. I am hoping that we can organise these meetings for July, even if they are held over the internet as virtual meetings.

It was quite a busy year with good progress on a number of fronts as well as a not uncommon set of frustrations. Firstly it was good that Louise Law put herself forward to fill one of our Parish Council vacancies. Louise is an active member of the Village Society so it was particularly good to have more of a direct link with those folk who organise the regular social events in Tiverton. We still have one vacancy, so please put yourself forward if you feel able.

It has been a concern for a while that we only had one defibrillator (AED) in the Parish, based at Tiverton Village Hall, despite the Parish containing two distinct villages. I was very pleased that Cllr Heather Lightfoot, led a very successful initiative to raise funds for and install a new AED at St Jude's Church Hall in Tilstone Fearnall. The AED was installed in October 2019 and was followed by a training session led by Tattenhall First Responders at which 18 residents attended.

As promised in last year's report, United Utilities fulfilled their commitment to replace the water main down Huxley Lane. This indeed was a significant exercise taking nearly 5 months to complete – much longer than either they or us expected. Nevertheless I think we can all agree that the work was carried out very professionally and the contractors were always polite and courteous. There remain some outstanding work that needs completing, notably the repair to Smithy Green and other affected grassed areas along the roadside, about which we remain in discussions with United Utilities.

We had a concerted effort this last year to improve the broadband connectivity in the Parish – in particular for the more remote parts of Tiverton i.e. Brassey Green, which to be frank were totally unacceptable. Cllr Gordon Ibbotson battled manfully to engage with a supplier of Wireless Broadband technology (Voneus) who seemed to be at times both credible and viable. Alas it was not to be. However much better news came from Openreach. Having been brushed off by Openreach for the idea of laying fibre down the trench that United Utilities were digging for the new water main, we were encouraged along the route of the Community Fibre Partnership. Discussions were progressing but just as we were losing a little heart because of the necessary commitment required from our residents, we were notified that most if not all of the Parish was to be included in a FTTP (Fibre to the Premises) initiative being rolled out by Openreach. As of May 2020 much of the work has now been completed, and once Covid19 restrictions on Openreach visiting peoples properties are lifted people will be able to take advantage of this technology.

On not quite such a happy note it became apparent in 2019 that the large Horse Chestnut Tree on Smithy Green had reached the end of its life and had to come down as it posed a risk to passers by. The tree has been completely removed, but a decision on whether to replace the tree and if so with what has been deferred until United Utilities have repaired to damage to Smithy Green.

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The reconfiguring of the junction at Four Lane Ends has been an undoubted success, but the reduction of the speed limit at and around Four Lane Ends (from 60mph to 50mph) is still outstanding. Hopefully this will be carried out this coming year. Highways have helped with improved signage on the A49 near the bridge at Beeston Brook, signage on Huxley Lane warning motorists of pedestrians crossing the road on the Sandstone Trail. They also did a very good job clearing the pathways on the A49 and A51, which had become seriously overgrown. However although our concerns about speeding at Beeston Brook and Huxley Lane are listened to and often followed up with some police monitoring, we are no closer to getting any form of effective speed control measures in place. The condition of our roads is in parts poor, and although serious potholes are generally repaired quickly, problems that don't meet the critical category but still cause problems for residents are generally ignored.

The Parish Council Planning Committee reviews every planning application that is submitted within the parish. Last year the Planning Committee looked at about 30 planning/listed building applications as well as requests to fell trees that either had a preservation order on them or were within a conservation area. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the parish Council has very little say on whether a planning application is approved or rejected, but we do endeavour to ensure that CW&C Planning follow the direction of the Local Plan and our very own Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Please contact the Parish Clerk if you have any issues that you would like the Council to follow up on. Full details of Parish Council meetings as well as local village activities can be found on the Parish Council website.

Ray Mould

Chairman

17th May 2020