

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

The Annual Parish Meeting is meant to reflect upon our activities in the past year, and summarise any events that are, perhaps, a little out of the ordinary. Nobody could have predicted the Worldwide crisis we now face as a result of the Corona Virus, and the total restrictions in place to restrict the spread. We are lucky living in a village rather than a bigger town or city, and it is encouraging to see that social distancing is being observed as people pass the occasional pedestrian in the street, or queue outside the Co-op at sensible distances.

Naturally our meetings are suspended at present, and our discussions are done by e-mail. Who knows when things will get back to normal, but we hope by late summer we will have seen the back of the virus.

The council continued to perform our statutory function to the year, which entails maintaining the assets of the village owned by the council, arranging footpath sweeping, and responding to planning applications submitted to MSDC. The planning applications have been a little more prolific recently, and villagers will be aware that two developments are currently proceeding in The Street and Rectory Hill. The production and finalisation of the Neighbourhood Plan was achieved, resulting in a very professional looking document from the group involved, and this was adopted by the District Council.

As well as the benefits to the Parish of an increased share of the Community Infrastructure Levy (this is the sum of money paid by the developer to the District Council) we will also be looking at ways to use the document to the benefit of the two villages. But with the initial meeting ' on hold' because of the virus, this will have to be put on the back burner.

The most controversial buildings application was for the pizza shop in the old Post Office and newsagents next door to The Bell. The third application was refused by MSDC but went to appeal and was eventually passed just before Christmas. This means the applicant can proceed, so the furniture and antiques shop is long gone. Whilst there is not much going on as I write this, there is a pile of plasterboard in the shop. The provision of signage would have to be subject to a further planning application.

As well as the buildings side of the planning, we also see the tree applications. It is evident that more householders are applying for permission to fell or greatly reduce trees that have grown too large adjacent to their properties. Trees that were acceptable when a house was built, say 20 years ago, are now overshadowing or causing problems to drains. The costs can be considerable, so I would urge you to consider the final size if you are planting a new tree in your garden. Certainly, the tree applications are increasing, with usually three or four each month.

We have new vacancies on the Council, if anybody would like to join us. In normal times, this would be one meeting per month, and the occasional course or meeting elsewhere. You just have to live or work in Rickinghall or a small radius around, and we would particularly welcome younger applicants - something to add to your CV!

Take care, everybody.

Geoff Short
Chairman, Rickinghall Parish Council