

Dear Barwellian,

Writing this report a year ago, I said that I was looking forward to a much better year in 2021. Sadly this was not to be and this year has also proved very difficult. However, there now seems to be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel and we can start hoping that some sort of normality will return sooner rather than later. I would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who have done such a wonderful job over the past months- keeping an eye on neighbours, doing shopping, collecting and delivering prescriptions and anything else that needed doing. As a beneficiary of their kindness I am aware of how important their contribution has been. Barnwell certainly has an admirable community spirit which I feel confident will continue long after the present crisis has past.

Over the past months Barnwell Parish Council has endeavoured to maintain the village.

We decided to curtail the grass mowing for a few weeks at the height of the pandemic last year in order to protect our residents, but we felt confident enough to reinstate it having seen the robust risk assessment and operating protocols produced by Turneys.

Several Councillors met with Henry Hammond from the Environment Agency to discuss and take advice on the future management of the brook. A timetable for clearing the brook bi-annually was agreed.

We then produced a new mowing schedule following requests from several residents to ensure the protection of wild flowers in the village. This entails leaving certain areas uncut until the buttercups, primroses etc. have finished flowering.

After a great deal of nagging of NCC, Councillor Brown finally managed to get the trees at the southern end of the village trimmed. We are pleased that Highways have finally accepted responsibility for the trees on the village green although I foresee an awful lot more nagging ahead when anything needs doing!

Councillor Brown, aided and abetted by several brave volunteers, tackled the serious flood we experienced in February. With the aid of a pump, kindly donated by the Shacklock family, they managed to prevent any house being flooded. Those properties which are most at risk of flooding now have pumps and sandbags to hand in the event of another flood. Flood warning signs have been requested from the appropriate authorities but are proving hard to obtain.

Speed warning signs! Well, it has been a very frustrating experience as both signs have not worked properly since soon after installation. However, the good news is that Nick Bould, who has been very patiently dealing with this, has discovered what the problem was with the Well Lane sign- namely someone had removed the fuses which are located at ground level! The fuses have now been replaced and the Well Lane sign is working again. Nick is going to try replacing the fuses in the Armston Road sign but if that does not work he has arranged to courier the unit back to the supplier (at their cost)to be fixed.

It is really nice to have the Church clock in working order and chiming again. After a request from the Church, and bearing in mind that the clock was donated to the village, we agreed to make an annual donation of £185 to the Church for the maintenance of the clock.

The good news is that the Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code have been completed in draft form ready to be printed and go to consultation with the Parish. I would hope that you will all receive a copy in the next 2-3 weeks. I do urge you to look at both documents carefully and we will welcome any comments you may wish to make. Details of how to respond will be found on the response form attached to the plan.

I am pleased to say that the children's playground is being well used. We are aware that there are a couple of areas on which we need to lay some safety matting and grass it over. This work will hopefully be carried out at the beginning of June.

In response to calls for more wild flowers in the village we decided to create a dedicated area in the Recreation Field. Our Ward Councillor, Geoff Shacklock, kindly donated £100 from his Council allocated Empowerment Fund for this purpose and we are very grateful to him. Councillors Soans and DeBock have spearheaded this project with other residents' help and we are looking forward to enjoying the fruits of their

labours.

We are hoping to acquire some more sports equipment for the Recreation Field to add to the football posts already installed and we are in the process of obtaining quotes.

We are also hoping to install a bench up there.

Once the equipment has been installed we will have to be more vigilant about dog fouling. We would be very reluctant to ban dogs completely from the field as is quite common practice where children's play equipment is sited, so PLEASE keep an eye on your pets and, if necessary, clean up after them.

We have been aware for some time of the deteriorating state of the bus shelter on the old Oundle road. As this is one of the Parish Council's assets we had several discussions about what to do including moving it etc. Eventually we decided that we would do essential repairs and leave it in situ for the time being. We must thank Councillor Brown for gallantly undertaking the repairs.

Councillor Soans, with the help of Councillor DeBock and their families, spearheaded the Litter Pick this year. It was a great success with more volunteers than ever. Our thanks go to everyone who took part.

We have, whenever possible, attended Joint Action Group and Rural Co-ordination Group meetings. These meetings give us the opportunity to meet with the police and to discuss local issues with representatives from surrounding villages. The impression I get from these meetings is that problems such as speeding and parking are common to every village and can prove very difficult to resolve!

During the past year we have received several complaints about foliage from residents' properties growing out over pavements and footways and causing them to become difficult to navigate. Whilst we have tried to help in the past, in fact this is not something over which the Parish Council has jurisdiction and I would therefore urge you to approach the owner of any property where there is a problem to try to resolve the matter. Failing a resolution you can contact Highways at NNC.

Barnwell Parish Council now has a new website which our Clerk, Nicki, has kindly set up and I think it looks very smart and fit for purpose.

Since the pandemic hit last March we have been conducting our Parish Council meetings by Zoom. I have heard that several councils have struggled with this technology but we seem to have managed very successfully under Nicki's very capable hosting. We are now obliged to have face to face meetings again - obviously with tight precautions- and will continue with these as long as we are allowed to.

Earlier in the year Councillor Shacklock stepped down from the Parish Council. We were fortunate that Catriona Forrest presented herself as a candidate for election to fill the vacancy and I would like to welcome her at her first face to face meeting.

At the recent local elections Councillor Nick Bould decided not to stand for re-election.

Again we are fortunate that a candidate has come forward for co-option which will take place ahead of our next meeting in July.

I would like to thank both Geoff and Nick for their invaluable contributions to the running of our council.

As I am standing down as Chair this is my last Chairman's report. I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors, for being such a great team to work with and for all their co-operation and support for which I am very grateful. I will certainly try to support the new Chair as much as I can. I also want to thank Nicki for being a real pleasure to work with and for doing her job so efficiently.

Thank you.

Heather Hanlon