

proposals would be seriously considered. National Highways in particular were very cognisant that we had been warning for some years that it was only a matter of time before a serious accident occurred on this stretch of the A49 which divides our village in two. Because of this, I am confident that steps will be taken to control excess speed on this road. With money being a particular rare commodity in Shropshire Council, the RSWG recommendations to curb excess speed within the village, although accepted by Shropshire Highways, would be trickier to adopt. However, the Parish Council can partly fund some of the simpler changes and again I am hopeful that these will be implemented.

The accident, therefore, has had the beneficial effect of providing a catalyst for action. A pity it could not have been done proactively.

Always close with good news they say. In this case, it is the fact that the temporary traffic lights by the Three Fishes will have been removed by the time you read this.

Cllr R Ruscoe, Chairman

Budget 2025/26

| <u>Cost Centre</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Administration | £17093.25 |
| Community Open Spaces | £5183.13 |
| Buildings | £15768.39 |
| Repairs and maintenance | £11325.00 |
| Grants | £29156.00 |
| Staffing | £135585.90 |
| Street Lighting | £21800.00 |
| Tractors | £3320.00 |
| Lythwood Sports facilities | £2500.00 |
| Rents, rates, utilities | £2452.12 |
| | £244183.78 |

All information about the Council can be seen on our website

www.baystonhillparishcouncil.org.uk

The Parish Office can be contacted on 01743 874 651

Or email clerk@baystonhillparishcouncil.org.uk



Bayston Hill Parish Council Chair's Annual Report 2024/25

Welcome all to our Annual Parish Meeting. This is an occasion which I look forward to as it is a valuable opportunity for the Parish Council to interact with the community and hopefully show what has been achieved in the village and our plans for the future. It is also where we hear about some of the excellent volunteer groups which exist in our village. I say some because I believe there are over forty separate activity groups using the Memorial Hall alone! This, to me, is a fantastic reflection of the community spirit which exists in Bayston Hill.

Just to mention a few of the things that the Parish Council has been involved in over the past year:-

A complete survey on our street lighting had been carried out about 18 months ago which identified issues with some of the concrete lamp standards which needed repair or complete replacement. This work is now complete and the replacement of the old sodium lights with more efficient LEDs is ongoing as the older lamps fail.

There has been extensive pruning works carried out at the Sensory Gardens and the re-timbering of the pedestrian walks around Parris Pool was carried out by our own staff – many thanks go to Ian for this work.

The first week in June saw the Eco Fair held on the Glebelands. This, like the previous two years, proved to be a popular event with hundreds of villagers enjoying the various stalls and presentations and showing support for our target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Unfortunately, this could be the final public event to be held on this site after 75 years of usage. More of this later.

On 28th June, the brand new Zipwire was opened on the Longmeadow playpark. This, I have been told (I definitely haven't tried it myself!) has proved very popular with the children.

The third annual cake and coffee event was held in the Memorial Hall in September and a total of £168 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support. Thanks to Julie our Parish Clerk for once again organising this.

Another annual event was the Apple Pressing on the 5th October. This was organised by Cllr Underwood and Peter our Deputy Clerk and again was held at the Pavilion along with wreath making demonstrations. I had never attended this

before and was amazed to see how many people turned up with their own apples to augment those garnered from the orchard in the Sensory Gardens. I was also amazed at the sheer volume of apple juice produced! All of this was taken home by villagers – some in containers, but most of it, I suspect, carried home internally by the many children present!

Having a military background, one event I was really looking forward to was the Remembrance Service at the Memorial Hall in November. This was particularly poignant this year, not only because the date fell on the actual eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh day of the official armistice of 1918, but also because it was also the centenary of our revered Hall. The first wreath to be laid was by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Claire Crackett and a roll call of the fallen in both World Wars was read out by Allan Caswell. Thanks must go to Stephen Jones of Ford and District Royal British Legion for leading the service. We will hear more of the centenary celebrations later in the evening.

As regards the refurbishment and extension of the Pavilion, we are currently awaiting the planning permission from Shropshire Council so we can press ahead. Things are in a state of flux at SC at the moment with the move from the Shirehall to the Guild Hall in its final stages but, we believe this permission is imminent.

There was a small turnover of Parish Councillors over the year with Cllrs Fairclough and Lewis leaving us. Three new additions were Cllrs Jones, Parkhurst and Engler. I would like to thank all the Councillors for their hard work and support over the past year. I am proud in the knowledge that all the Council are here for one reason – to do the best for our village and community.

On the staffing side we said our goodbyes to Rachael. We welcomed two new staff members – who are already proving to be great additions. Again, a big vote of thanks to Roger, Ian, Martyn, Rachel and Sally for all their efforts over the past year. Since taking over as Chairman, I have quickly realised how much work goes on in our tiny little office; work of a much diverse nature. My final thanks therefore, is for our Clerk Julie Hodgkiss and her Deputy Peter Orrell for dealing with, not only the routine stuff, but also for the curved balls that constantly challenge us.

This brings us to the not so good happenings.

One of the first things I did after becoming Chairman was, along with representatives of the Scouts and Guides and The Friends of the Glebes, attend a meeting with the Diocese of Lichfield and their land agent. This meeting was to see if there was a way forward to retain the Glebelands as a cherished public space and for the Scouts and Guides to be able to refurbish their headquarters. All our arguments and reasoning were reverently listened to by the Diocese representatives before they then stated categorically that none of our pleas would

affect their implacable determination for the Glebes to be sold for development and not only would the Scouts and Guides have to abandon their building, but no further lease, temporary or otherwise would be considered. The land agent then went further with a threat to fence off the area from the public. This was 'to protect our assets'. This, I assume, is so they will be able to claim non-use of the land by the public in a future planning application.

This threat was duly carried out without notice in October of last year. This, to me, constituted a cynical and unchristian act to deny our community use of the last area of green space in the centre of our village. The Parish Council will continue to oppose development of this area and will keep battling to prevent its loss on the altar of money.

Another proposed development, of course, involves the building of 118 houses on a site off Lyth Hill Road. Redrow homes already had a planning application lodged but with over 200 objections registered on the planning portal, they asked to meet with the Parish Council. This meeting, also open to the public, took place in a full Christchurch. After listening to a host of public speakers – all opposing this development, Redrow gave a presentation which was intended to garner support for their project. Unfortunately, from their point of view, this presentation only served to reinforce the Council's concern that the village infrastructure, particularly as regards drainage, access, roads and schooling, was already operating at or beyond capacity. With the increasing amount of significant weather events caused by climate change, drainage problems in particular are becoming a serious concern in certain areas of the village – especially on Lyth Hill Road, Grove Lane, Betley Lane and The Huntings. The Council unanimously voted to remain firmly opposed to this development.

With Shropshire Council's draft Local Plan being rejected by the government inspectors, this leaves our village under even more threat of extensive development. The Parish Council is currently looking into adopting a Neighbourhood Plan which would at least give us some say in where any areas of development could take place. This is not a quick or easy process but we consider it worth proceeding with. This will involve, not only the Parish Council, but local residents too. We will keep all of you updated via our website and our newsletter.

Talking of the newsletter. If you wish to be kept up to date with all that is happening in our village, just send your email address to Julie and she will add you to the list.

After the unfortunate accident on the A49 in which, thankfully, no one was very seriously hurt, meetings were held with both National and Shropshire Highways in which the recommendations of our Road Traffic Safety Group were presented to them. Some very useful discussions took place with promises that these