

THRUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIR'S REPORT – 4TH MAY 2022

Welcome and thank you for coming to the Annual Village Assembly – and an especially warm welcome to our guest speakers. As you will have seen from the agenda we will be addressed later in the meeting by our PCSOs Max Cleary and Conor Hill, by Ben Taylor, MD of BARC; Simon Bowder who recently assumed responsibility for the ownership of the airfield and Western Air Services from Henry Pelham; and Kate Christie who as many of you know is Chair of the Memorial Hall Trustees. Unfortunately, Ian Hickman, Executive Headteacher at Skylark Federation (the combination of Kimpton, Thruxton and Fyfield CofE Primary School and Appleshaw St Peters CofE Primary School) is unable to attend as he has a meeting in London that he must attend.

I said that this is an annual event but you may be aware this is the first such get-together since 2019 when my predecessor Charles Milner-Williams gave this report. I recall him saying at the time that it was the 15th or 16th such report to residents he gave and it would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to thank Charles, in absentia, for all that he and Margaret gave to the village over so many years. Finding people to take on the multifarious roles he undertook was no mean task, but I'm pleased to say that – as so often – the people of Thruxton stepped up and agreed to give their time – we are immensely grateful to you all.

Naming individuals who contribute to making Thruxton such a welcoming and thriving community is invidious, primarily because I would almost inevitably miss someone out! However, I can't let the opportunity pass to single out one individual who has done more than many over the last 2 years or so to support our community through the challenges of the pandemic – of course, I'm referring to Rick Smart. His unfailing energy and unique ability to raise money through raffles, quizzes, alcoholic gatherings and the like is truly remarkable and I would like to formally record the community's gratitude for all his work.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Parish Council for their time and dedication. We have had a few changes in the 2 years since I became Chair and I would like to thank Roger Oliver and John Darling for the service they gave to the Council and the community – in Roger's case over many years and he continues to support various events with his love of both cooking and the environment. I would also like to thank our long-serving Vice Chair John Davis for his continued support, experience and wisdom as well as Councillors Jo Durant, Janet Graham, Tricia Harris, Leo McDevitt and the recently appointed Richard Munday. None of us could do our job without the unfailingly professional and truly wonderful Clerk, Heather Bournier, who has steered us through the pitfalls and traps of executing our democratic responsibilities with great care and devotion to the people of Thruxton – a massive thank you. Thanks too to TVBC Cllr Phil Lashbrook and Hampshire County Cllr Chris Donnelly for their support of Thruxton and the Parish Council.

Some of the key areas that the Parish Council – your Parish Council – is or has been engaged with include:

- Planning applications – probably the most visible of our responsibilities and Cllr John Davis will shortly give a summary of our work in this area. John works with Cllr Tricia Harris to develop the Parish Council’s response to individual applications and I would like to thank both of them for their work in this area.
- Improvement of the water services – we sit on a body called the Pan-Parish Forum to work with Southern Water to improve the services they provide. Working with 8 other parishes in the immediate vicinity, with Borough and County Councillors and with our MP and the Environment Agency, we have negotiated with Southern Water the scope of a pathfinder agreement – one of 6 they are undertaking – to invest in the improvement of sewage drainage and treatment and improving the water quality of Pilhill Brook through decreasing the use of tankering and over-pumping. I’m pleased to report that our newest member of the Parish Council, Cllr Richard Munday, has agreed to take on the broader remit of environment and flooding and I look forward to working with him on this important aspect of our responsibilities.
- Speeding – we plan to utilise community benefit funds from the new solar farm in Amport (assuming it goes ahead) to install speed warning devices in the village. Under Cllr Jo Durant’s leadership, we have identified and agreed with Hampshire Highways several sites to be used for speed warning signs – the plan is to install these later this year. Our budget for this work is £8,000 so it’s not cheap but we believe is a proper and worthwhile use of public money to reduce the risk of accident and worse on our roads. Unfortunately, we can’t use the technology on Thruxton Down Road because it’s a national speed limit area but we are exploring alternative solutions to lessen the risks to life and limb in that part of the Parish.
- Children’s Play Area – working closely with the Three Villages Sports Field Trust, the Parish Council own, insure and maintain the play equipment on the sports field. This has been enlarged over the last 2 years due to the incredible fund-raising efforts of Rick Smart and his loyal friends and we now have an enviable facility for the children of Thruxton and surrounding villages. Cllr Leo McDevitt carries out a monthly safety check of the equipment, for which we are extremely grateful.
- Finally, the Parish Council is responsible for the village green and Cllr. Janet Graham leads our work in this area, expertly guiding us on the upkeep of Mandy’s Garden, the tables and chairs, waste bins, etc. Again, thanks are due to her for all her work in this regard and recently for undertaking the tidying up of the Stanbury Road side of the green – although Keith Edwards and Ray Welch did the hard graft!

Probably the most significant challenges that we face for the future centre around planning issues. We are committed to listening to the voice of the Thruxton community and ensuring we do all we can to represent your opinions and views on all proposals but it’s also incredibly helpful – and powerful – when individuals take the time to make direct contact with TVBC Planning, as we have seen with the Stanbury Close application. As Citizen Smith once said, “Power to the People”!!

I could go on but we’d be here until midnight!! I would just like to say how much Kate and I appreciate being welcomed into the village almost 5 years ago and to say what an honour and privilege it is to lead the Parish Council in such a thriving and pleasant corner of Hampshire. Thank you.