

At the beginning of 2020 no-one could have foreseen what an enormous effect the global pandemic would have on all our lives, now and in the future. Here in Holford we are fortunate to be on the edge of these awful events and although the lockdown has been tedious and stressful at times most of us have outside space and good friends to rely on. Let's all hope that things will soon improve as the virus threat recedes. We have learned to rely on technology to keep in touch and work from home. Who knew the ins and outs of Zoom, Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp would be so useful? Today we are holding our first 'virtual' Parish Council meeting.

After 18 months as Chairman I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the councillors for their amazing enthusiasm and support. I am grateful to all but especially to both David Talling for his invaluable advice and to the Clerk Hema Stanley for steering me through the processes required to be effective in the role. Special thanks also go to Mike and Kate for organising shopping deliveries on behalf of the Parish Council for those who are in isolation at home. Thanks also to the volunteers who make the deliveries. A service much appreciated by local residents. A grant towards the expenses of the scheme has been confirmed.

As you are no doubt aware the average councillor is not in the first flush of youth and not all are in robust good health but we can look back on the first 12 months of the new assembly of councillors and see that some things have been achieved. There are new bollards around the bowling green, less potholes around the car park and the Dog Pound is now officially owned by the residents of Holford Parish. Dialogue continues with the Hunt after issues were reported last year. Most importantly Holford Village Hall, with support from funds from the Parish Precept, is refurbished and will hopefully be open again soon.

There have been a number of local planning visits and the majority were supported by the Council, however two applications, Strawberry Field and The Silk Mill development, which were opposed by the majority of residents, were refused. We wait to see if these will go to appeal.

Some things that we had hoped to complete have had to be put on hold due to the furloughing of staff across the county. The planning application to renovate the children's play area, the National Trust stabilising the hedge bank near the Church, consideration of designating some of the roads in Holford as 'Quiet Lanes', the Speed Watch program and other issues are not forgotten and will be returned to when staff are back at work. The election of a councillor to the JAC has also been postponed. The bus service is also suspended until further notice. The local re-cycling centres have been closed but this is currently under review and there are plans to re-open some this week.

Sadly there has been an increase in theft in the area and we are being warned of unscrupulous people attempting to exploit anxiety over Covid-19 by fraud.

We are extremely lucky to live in such a beautiful, peaceful place. Here's hoping that you get the chance to get out and enjoy the bird song, read that book or find time just to sit and think about life's real pleasures and what really matters.

Best wishes and Keep Safe
Emma Cavendish