

Minsterworth Parish Council - Chairman's Report May 2023

We have thankfully had a further 12 months of physical meetings in the Village Hall, and the days of COVID and Zoom now seem to be fading into the distant past. The use of the Village Hall AV system, where documents are displayed on the screen for all to see, is a definite improvement, especially for planning issues.

Life has not fully returned to pre COVID status however, in that the regular 6-45/7-00am queuing from the Highnam roundabout back into the village has thankfully not returned, so presumably many people are still working from home. The Severn Trent roadworks have at last been completed, so the annoyance of long queues at the traffic lights has decreased – although we do seem to still have odd days when traffic lights appear.

Safety on the A48 remains an issue however, and huge amounts of time and effort have been expended by the Parish Council in trying to get something done. We were pleased with the response to our road safety meeting in May 2022 that many of you attended, and the summarised results were put to Highways. We have requested a consistent (and reduced) speed limit through the village, more central reservations and safe crossing points, especially near to bus stops, better speed limit markings, a new speed check camera, and new verge gates to highlight to drivers that they are entering our village. We remain frustrated and disappointed at the rate of progress over these issues however, and so far only gates at the west end of the village have been installed. The Minsterworth sign at the east end of the village has to be moved, and until the new position of the sign has been finalised, we are unable to install the new entry gates. However I am sure they'll look good when they are installed, and we have already have a number of people say that the gates have made them slow down.

New houses continue to be built, although many of these are developments that received planning permission several years ago. There has thankfully been a slow down in the number of planning applications for larger developments, although the one application for 40 houses did raise concerns with some residents. This was one of the few applications where every household was leafleted in advance about the proposals, and where we had a 'pre-application' meeting and discussion, allowing the Parish Council and residents to consider the project in more detail. Our difficulty with the majority of planning applications is that we are allowed only 2 – 3 weeks to return our comments to Tewkesbury Borough Council, which means that our decision has to be made at the very next Parish Council meeting.

We are aware that we need to try harder to involve village residents, and in so doing allow the opportunity for residents to pass an opinion. The WhatsApp group set up during COVID has been superb for this, so everyone now knows when the next Parish Council meeting is going to take place and the items on the agenda, and anyone can access the minutes of previous meetings on line. We have also recently re-introduced a summary of Parish Council meetings in the Villager, and are grateful to Jo for preparing this for us each month.

This year has seen another change of our Parish Council clerk, with Jo Badham taking over from Paul Bell. Jo is an established clerk for Highnam and **Tayton** Parish Councils, so knows

the format well. She has already instigated some revised measures that will hopefully make us more effective.

As in previous years I would once again like to thank the many village residents who tend to the grass verges outside of their houses, plant flowers and pick up litter when out walking. Our village does look nice, especially in spring and early summer. As with last year, we are going to employ a local contractor to trim the grass from the edges of the footpath along the A48, because if we wait for the Highways trim in August, the path gets hopelessly overgrown.

We have had some really nice village events over the past 12 months, which the Parish Council has helped support, celebrating both the Queen's Jubilee and the coronation of King Charles. It's good to see the village working together on these events, and even nicer when residents turn out to support. We have a lovely facility at the Village Hall, and it's good to see it being well used.

The playground at Minsterworth Park continues to be well used, so thanks to all who have done hedge trimming, tree planting, equipment repair and all the other things that are needed to maintain its use. If only we could get a longer lease we would apply for more play equipment, but although we have applied, this has not been granted. We intend to keep trying. It is also good to see the improvements in both the Village Hall and Harvey Centre, making our village more attractive. These things do not happen without effort, and we are grateful to those who give up their time planning, applying for grants and organising (or doing!) the work.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors, Tewkesbury Borough and County Councillors for their input into the running of the Parish Council. It is a huge commitment, and we hope that residents are satisfied with the work done. This year has seen the sad loss of County Councillor Phil Awford, who was a big supporter of our Village, and will certainly be missed. Elections for the new County Councillor will take place in early May.

Minsterworth has received its first instalment of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money, allowing us to spend on projects within the village. It is your village, so please do send us suggestions for any improvements by emailing clerk@minsterworthparishcouncil.org.uk, or if you prefer, just give me a call.

Roger Blowey

May 2023