

# Soberton Parish Council

2018/19 Annual Report – presented at the Annual General Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019

## Introduction

The Parish Council is non-partisan, the lowest tier of local government, meeting monthly at either Rookesbury Hall, Newtown, or Soberton Village Hall. These meetings are open to the public and we have a standing agenda item to hear members of the public.

Soberton Parish stretches from the southern end of Church Road, Newtown, to Brockbridge, the northern part of Station Road, Soberton. Its western boundary is the River Meon, and to the east the Parish includes Hoe Gate and Wallops Wood. The Parish has two main centres, Soberton and Newtown, and includes a series of smaller settlements, those being Soberton Heath, Hoe Gate, Kingsmead and Brockbridge. Over 60% of the northern and western part of the Parish is within the South Downs National Park and the south western corner includes a part of the Forest of Bere. Soberton Parish is rural, made up from linear development (i.e. development that follows the roads and lanes set in countryside).

This report seeks to outline the work and activities of Soberton Parish Council during this past year and look forward to the forthcoming twelve months.

1. **Open Spaces** : The Recreation Ground and Children’s Play Area (Heath Road), the Bank (High Street) and the Chalk Pit (Chalk Hill, Soberton).

These are maintained via a grounds maintenance contract that is reviewed regularly. Andy Andrews keeps a close eye on the Children’s Play Area and considers maintenance, repairs and replacement of equipment on a regular basis. This is an ongoing commitment and the Parish Council budgets for this work annually. Barry Henderson is responsible for managing the contractors who maintain the Recreation Ground and clean the Pavilion. Unfortunately in this past month the football pitch has become unplayable due to badgers digging in the grass. We are currently seeking solutions to deal with this matter. We are looking at a new project following the removal of the skateboard ramp. The ramp has served us well for 15 years. It is now both outdated and very rusty. We are currently seeking grants to create a ‘multi use games area’ that will create a hard surfaced area for games such as netball, basketball, tennis and 5 a side soccer similar to that at the Meon Hall.

2. **War Memorials** : the Cross in the High Street, Soberton, and the Lytch Gate at Holy Trinity Church, Newtown.

These are maintained from our budgets. The Lytch Gate is subject to a grant application for its reconstruction.

3. **Roads, Footpaths and Transport**

David Salmon (Roads), Tony Collins (Footpaths) and Bob Stranks (Transport) are the points of contact, they will raise any matters of concern with the appropriate responsible authority ie HCC,WCC,HIWWT etc. As an example of this work David Salmon, Rachel Hicks and Tony Collins

recently met with Newtown School and HCC to assist in possible ways of increasing the safety of Church Road at the beginning and end of the school day.

#### 4. **Planning**

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process and is consulted by the Planning Authority on all planning applications. As previously noted, part of the Parish is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Applications made for sites within the SDNP are determined by the South Downs National Park Authority. Applications made in the remainder of the Parish are determined by Winchester City Council (WCC). WCC administer all the applications and the planning enforcement team. There are a number of live planning enforcement actions ongoing at the moment.

Village Design Statement (VDS) 2019 is a review and update of the earlier 2010 version of the VDS. Vicki Weston has issued the final draft which will be uploaded to the website by the end of March. The proposal is to seek approval from WCC/SDNPA during this summer as a Planning Guidance document for the Parish of Soberton.

#### 5. **Flood Action Group**

The Parish Council set up a flood action group last year. Its prime role is to identify areas of the parish that flood (where flooding may cause damage to property). Bob Stranks and Rachel Hicks will, where possible, bring pressure on landowners, the highway authority and others to maintain ditches and drains. Blocked culverts and ditches can directly affect a number of people and we need to come together to allow water to flow downhill. A number of authorities have various powers to take direct action but we are seeking to encourage landowners where difficulties are reported to deal with their culverts, ditches and drains.

#### 6. **St. Clair's Meadow**

Jane Masterman is the Parish Council's link and coordinates with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and reports to our Parish Council Meetings.

#### 7. **Finance**

The 2017/18 Parish Precept was £31,523. This has not increased for 5 years and this year we have increased the precept by 3.5% to £32,627. This represents £4.37 per month for a band 'D' property.

Summary of what monies are spent on:

£18,500 Running Costs (Open Spaces, Pavilion, Notice Boards and other maintenance)  
£ 6,000 Grants provided (Churchyard maintenance, War Memorials, Signs, Benches etc)  
£ 5,000 Operation Costs (Staff costs, hall rental, printing, elections etc)  
£ 3,500 Contingence (approximately 10%)

John Hyland

Chairman Soberton Parish Council  
March 2019