

Soberton Parish Council, 2021/22 Annual Report – presented at the Annual Parish Meeting of 14th March 2022.

Introduction:

Soberton Parish Council (SPC) is non-partisan, the lowest level of local government, meeting monthly, with all meetings being open to the public (with a standing agenda item to hear members of the public).

Geographically Soberton Parish stretches from the southern end of Church Road Newtown to Brockbridge, the northern end of Station Road, Soberton. The Western boundary is the River Meon and to the East the Parish includes Hoe Gate and Wallops Wood. The Parish is made up the three main centres of Soberton, Soberton Heath and Newtown and includes a series of settlements, Hoe Gate, Kingsmeade, One Hundred Acres, Grenville and Brockbridge. The Northern and Western area of the Parish is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and the South-Western corner includes part of The Forest of Bere. Generally, the Parish is rural and its development is linear, that is that it follows the roads and lanes.

This report seeks to outline the work and activities of SPC during this past year and look forward to the forthcoming 12 months.

In line with Parish Councils throughout the nation Soberton Parish Council has re-organised its committee structure last year to improve efficiency and focus the work of its members. This reorganisation has been successful. We now have two main sub-committees; the first dealing with 'Policy' chaired by Councillor Neil Findlay and the second dealing with 'Action' chaired by councillor Bob Stranks. The policy committee deals with planning (applications, enforcement, strategy and the emerging PDS) and considers strategic documents requiring the PC's input or comments. The action committee looks after live projects and maintains Parish amenities such as the Recreation Ground etc. These committees will meet four times per year with four full council meetings (the dates of these meetings are all published on the council website). The full Parish Council meeting will hear reports from the sub-committees, agree budgets, precept etc. and debate strategic matters.

Since her appointment in September 2019 Mrs. Jenny Clarke, as Parish Clerk and Proper Officer of the Parish Council has appointed an internal auditor and made audit submissions to the Government office to establish approval of its working practices for the year 2020/2021. Jenny resigned as Parish Clerk in early March and the PC has appointed Liz Manship as a locum who will hold the role as Parish Clerk and Proper Officer until such time a new clerk is appointed.

Currently the parish council's members are Councillor Kevin Lamport, Councillor Sam Marland, Councillor Bob Stranks, Councillor David Salmon, Councillor Rachel Cole, Councillor David Cleeve, Councillor Neil Findley, Councillor Arabella Turner, Councillor Jane Masterman Vice Chair and John Hyland Chair. On the 5th May 2022 there is to be an election for parish councillors for the forthcoming five years. Email the parish clerk clerk@soberton.org for details or speak to any of the current councillors.

Parish Council Activities 2021/22

Open Spaces:

There are many areas of open space with public access in the Parish, these being: the Recreation Ground, its Pavilion and Children's Play Area on Heath Road. There are a number of areas of Common Land such as the Village Pond on Chapel Road, Hoe Gate Common, the seasonal wetland

area adjacent to Ingoldfield Lane and the Chalkpit on Chalk Hill Soberton. These are maintained either via a grounds maintenance contract (the Rec and the Children's Play area) which is reviewed regularly or with the help of the SOBERNEWTs conservation group. Other areas of open space such as the Meon Valley Trail (HCC), Church Green Soberton (St.Peter's PCC) Forest of Bere (Forestry Commission) and many kilometres of bridleways and footpaths which cross the Parish are maintained by their owners with whom the Parish Council is in contact.

Last year I reported that the football pitch at the Recreation Ground has become un-playable due to badgers digging up the grass. We have constructed a temporary fence around the field of play which has been successful and the pitch restoration is well underway. This work is ongoing and we hope to hand the pitch back to Soberton United and a new children's football coaching team for next season. The Parish Council is looking to create a 'multi use games area' which will create a hard-surfaced area similar to that at the Meon Hall for games such as netball, basketball, tennis and five a side soccer when funds allow (grant applications will be made as we will need outside funding to progress this idea). Drainage work, digging of ditches etc. around the Recreation Ground and Children's Play Area has been completed.

War Memorials:

There are two war memorials in the parish, these being; the Lych Gate at Holy Trinity Church Newtown which has been set on a new foundation with the tiles and guttering replaced. The war memorial on the High Street, Soberton where the surrounding paving will be reviewed this coming year.

The Parish Lengthsman Scheme:

This is a grant funded scheme from HCC where funds are provided for parishes to contract out general tidying and maintenance items throughout the Parish. David Salmon runs the scheme for Soberton Parish plus the schemes for several other Parishes for which we are all very grateful. The Lengthsmen do make a real impact around our villages and we are grateful for David for all his hard work to make best use of the contractors time.

Planning:

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process and is consulted by the Planning Authority on all planning applications, the Parish Council's Planning Group (as part of the policy committee) reviews all applications and discusses these regularly with all Councillors. As previously noted part of the Parish is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP), applications made for sites within the National Park are determined by the SDNP Authority. Applications made in the remainder of the Parish are determined by Winchester City Council (WCC). That said WCC administer all the applications and the planning enforcement team. There are a number of live planning enforcement actions on going which are too detailed to cover in this report. Further information may be sought from the Clerk.

Relevant planning activities (other than applications) are a review of a series of Policy documents, including Winchester City Council's Local Plan Review which nearing its final stages of production. I would urge you to read our District Councillors report which is on the website.

The Soberton Parish Design Statement (PDS)

The PDS is in production and a questionnaire which began the review process was included in the April/May 2021 parish magazine; this provided a useful guide as to peoples' thoughts about their surroundings. The PDS is a vital document to assist us guide the type and quality of development or redevelopment in the Parish into the future. A working group is currently drawing together the base data under a number of headings which will summarise the existing character of various parts of the Parish. This exercise will provide the baseline evidence which can be evolved into guidelines for all of us and those who wish to develop in the Parish. The PDS is intended to be a landscape led document and as its production moves forward, we will have further detailed meetings with WCC and SDNP who, when it is completed, will adopt the PDS as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). If you would like to become involved in this process or wish to know more, please email pds2022@soberton.org

Traffic Management

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) which has been in operation in Church Road will be moving to Heath Road, Liberty Road, High Street, Station Road and the B2150 at Brockbridge in a programme agreed by HCC Highways. This sign is merely a reminder, it records speed data which will be reviewed on a regular basis.

HCC Highways have reviewed road signage across the Parish and will be making a number of changes, repairs etc. over the summer months.

Drainage (surface water and foul water):

We are a rural Parish and we are all responsible for our surface water and foul water drainage. The latter is dealt with by either small treatment plants, septic tanks or cess pits, all require constant maintenance and it is illegal not to do so. Surface water drainage differs across the Parish; on the chalk generally soakaways allow clean run-off to percolate into the aquifer. It is the land owner's responsibility to permit water to flow across their land via a ditch, culverted pipe or winter borne swale. The Parish Council, working closely with HCC flood water management team, has successfully assisted many residents in addressing long standing issues; this is an ongoing initiative.

The Parish Council's Logo

Following the ideas competition won by Katie Rogers, Jo Dawson progressed the form and layout to a detailed brief prior to the logo being finalised. The logo portrays the Parish through its memorable and distinctive landscapes, i.e. the South Downs, the River Meon and the Forest of Bere using the round top of the finger signs as inspiration for its form. There is a black and white, and colour version and it will be used by the PC on all publications.

The Big Jubilee Lunch 5th June 2022 Soberton Recreation Ground, Heath Road

The Parish Council is very grateful to Councillor Sam Marland and Councillor Bob Stranks and their team of local residents on the working group for all the effort they are putting in to creating a memorable day. Full details about how to get involved are available elsewhere in this magazine.

Finance:

In 22/23 the Parish Council will receive a precept of £39,000, this represents about £4.70 a month for a band 'D' property (an increase of approximately 20p per house per month).

John Hyland, Chairman

22/03/14