

Ditton Parish Council



CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2021

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2020/21

2020/21 was a very challenging year for us all because of Covid. We have all been affected in some way but our thoughts go out to those that have lost loved ones.

Because of restrictions we were unable to hold the annual parish meeting last year so I will try to cover items for 19/20 and 20/21.

This last year has been particularly challenging for staff and managing the Community Centre and Kilnbarn Bar, for staff coping with working from home at times, dealing with furlough of staff, constantly reviewing the latest guidance and opening/closing accordingly.

At the start of lockdown last March we had a fantastic group of volunteers that assisted our local residents that were shielding, with the collection of prescriptions and shopping. We also received some very generous donations that enabled the volunteers to give out food parcels to those in need. A big thank you to all involved and we hope that we can hold an event when restrictions are lifted to say thank you properly to all the volunteers that helped with the covid relief and also to others that volunteer in the village litter picking etc. Usually we would acknowledge those that have made outstanding contributions to our village at this meeting, but again because of restrictions still in place, we cannot do so tonight.

One achievement that we have been able to acknowledge is that of Cllr Tony Mulcuck who will complete 50 years of service to Ditton Parish Council on 26th May 2021. Thank you again Tony for all your hard work and dedication over the years.

Thank you to committee Chairs for giving an over view of what has been going on in their departments despite the restrictions we have been under.

Other items to report on:

Planning:

As you have heard from the Chairman of the Planning Committee, we have been very disappointed with the decisions to allow the development of the Lidl site and the approval for up to 300 homes at Ditton Edge. Despite lockdown, reviewing and commenting on planning has remained a busy function for the council

Parish Rate:

For both 2020/21 and 2021/22 we have managed to keep the parish rate at an increase of just 0.3% despite rising costs. We have achieved this by using council reserves for maintenance projects and emergency repairs.

We have been fortunate to receive Government Grants to support the community centre whilst it was closed and not receiving any income and we have not had to pay business rates in 2020/21 or 2021/22.

Parish Council Membership:

We were pleased to welcome two new members last year – Chris Rook last February and Adam Laidouci in September. We still have two vacancies and anyone interested in joining us should contact the Clerk for more information.

Staff:

A big thank you to the staff that continued to work throughout the pandemic. They have done an amazing job keeping everything going under very difficult circumstances. In the first lockdown, we had to furlough bar staff and some caretaking staff and a member of admin staff. In the second lockdown we had to furlough the grounds staff and a further member of admin staff. I am pleased to say most staff are back apart from the bookings clerk, as bookings remain low currently but we are hopeful they will recover. Sadly we had to say goodbye to two longstanding

members of bar staff – Julie Shephard and Judith Grimes. Because of only being able to open The Kilnbarn Bar on reduced hours we had to change the terms of their roles. Unfortunately, the new roles were not compatible and Julie and Judith opted to take redundancy- we wish them well for the future.

Events:

We held our usual seasonal dances at the end of 2019 but unfortunately they were the last big functions we were able to do. The dances along with many other planned events for 2020 were cancelled. We hope to hold dances this Christmas but of course we will wait to see if government guidance allows.

Twinning:

All Twinning events were sadly cancelled too for 2020 – this was a real shame as lots was planned as it was the 25th Anniversary of Ditton being twinned with Rang du Fliers. Sadly, no events can currently be planned for this year but we hope exchange events will resume as soon as they are able to.

Thank you again to all who volunteer to help others in the village, to our wonderful KCC Community Warden Sue, who does so much and to our PCSO Amy. Thank you to our borough Councillors David Cooper and Rob Cannon and congratulations and welcome to our new KCC Member, Cllr Andrew Kennedy – we look forward to working with you.

And finally thank you to my fellow councillors for your support during this very difficult year.