

Little Gaddesden Parish Council – 18th May 2020

Annual Meeting of the Electorate 2019-20

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR - YEAR 2019-2020

The year 2019 -2020 has been an eventful year.

The year started with the first formal contested elections in living memory, where eight prospective Councilors stood for seven positions. After a nail biting campaign of skullduggery, intrigue and the ballot box, the magnificent seven Councilors who are zooming today were elected. We welcomed two new Councilor - Sarah Lawson and Susan Pritchard and the return of the experienced Jim Townsend. This shifted the gender balance in favour of the fairer sex and probably reflexing the balance in the community. Councilor Lawson has dramatically improved our communication and Councilor Pritchard has the sensitive role of the Charities Group.

I have highlighted several projects:

We have a new Parish Council website, so please sign up as it is very useful tool to communicate with the village.

The flooding issues at Ringshall, although not perfect, seem to have improved. The cleaning of the drains has moved from annual to biannual. Consequently, the water seems to drain away after a relatively short period of time. This is an ongoing issue, which will require more attention in the coming year, but it is better.

We have had a long running project updating signage along Hudnall lane as part of the safer routes to school initiative. This has been mainly completed and we hope for further developments during this coming year.

I think the safety of the equipment in the play areas (that we can't now use) is much better as a result of Alastair taking on the role as master inspector of equipment and getting a certificate after completing his training.

Lyn Hyde has put in a huge amount of work this year. She has spear headed the Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA), she as organized the village tree survey, she has recently started the Greener Gaddesden initiative and runs the planning group. Each of these requires a lot of work.

- The CACA is in first draft being reviewed my Dacorum, after receiving input from so many people in the village. It has been a fantastic effort to get the document to this stage.

- The village tree survey involves assessing each tree in the village on Parish land to ascertain if it safe and take action if required. The next batch of work is starting shortly.
- The Greener Gaddesden initiative has really just started with a goal to make village life more sustainable in light of climate change. It has already resulted in a controversial change in a major village policy...the cutting regime on the Green... with a view to protect the bees. We are in early days yet, but we are waiting we bait breath as to the feed back.

Moving onto planning. You could say that it has been an eventful year. The tone was set early in the year with the purchase of the field in Ringshall next to the blue roofed cottage and the subsequent sub-division and auction as “potential building plots”. The Parish Council was involved in some antagonistic enforcement issues when a developer created an entrance onto the highway and put some hardcore on the field. The situation was reversed with the help of Dacorum and the appearance of some mysterious logs.

Then we come to the most controversial planning issue of the year was the sale of the 33 acres of land of Church Road by the Mead Trust. Again, the land was subdivided and sold at auction. It has been wonderful to see the passion of the village on this subject. A lot of work has been put in by members of the community in particularly I would like to thank Stuart Stanley, Arwel Owen and George Goddard. As a group, we have made any development of this land almost impossible. It is in The Conservation Area, an ANOB, has TPO's, has an Article 4 registered and according to Historic England, interferes with the setting of the Grade 1 listed Church. We still don't know the status of the land and it will be a while before it is resolved. It has been a great team effort.

And finally, our favourite District Councilor, Terry Douris, was appointed Mayor of Dacorum for the year, which requires him wearing much regalia at official functions. The great news is that this position has been extended by an additional year because of recent events. He was involved in the official event of opening the Villages new training equipment and basketball court, which has proved to be a great success, and we look forwards to inviting him back for creams teas, hopefully in the near future.

Thank you.