

Chairman's Report

Barrington Parish Council (1 Apr 2020 – 31 Mar 2021)

The adjectives 'unusual', 'challenging', 'difficult' will soon, if they have not already, become over-exercised in their description of the past 18 months. Even in these two small communities, of only 110 dwellings, we have witnessed an unprecedented and most encouraging level of community support, spirit and activity. With the credit due to your elected Councillors and indeed the support from the District and County Councils, it is my responsibility to present a summary of the scale and range of our actions, which we continue to hope have supported, enhanced or benefited your residence in the Barringtons.

COVID 19 Against all odds and without tempting fate, I am relieved to confirm that the villages have not witnessed the more devastating impact of the virus. While a few residents have contracted COVID 19, it is to their credit and disciplined isolation that we did not see it spread within the community. Mindful from the outset of our duty of care, I am grateful to my fellow councillors for supporting and activating the weekly telephone call around the community during the first 3 months of serious lockdown; we were I hope able to reassure and indeed arrange active support to a number of residents. It was perhaps witnessing the weekly Thursday evening 'clap for the NHS' when every doorway in Little Barrington was filled with light and people, that certainly I recognised once again the strength of this community in times of need.

Traffic and Road Management It remains a true fact that there are probably three options when confronted with a problem: ignore it, complain about it, or do something about it. On that basis it has been truly encouraging and rewarding to manage the community's response to our call for help in a speed and traffic monitoring programme. We are one of three Parishes (from a Stow Police precinct total of 46) who have extended and maintained, after the initial training in 2019, a further routine of one week traffic monitoring per month for eight months, as COVID restrictions permitted. A total of about 88hrs recording traffic in most weather has resulted in about 440 drivers (driving at over 33mph) receiving a letter of caution from the Police. The data included HGVs in transit through the villages illegally. The average number of cars during rush hour has risen to 112, with 5% speeding; we are most grateful for your continued support in our determined effort to protect this community.

In parallel, we are grateful for the support of both CDC and GCC in responding to our requests for road repairs, enhanced road markings and indeed planning for further traffic management systems. We cannot resolve completely the impacts of growing urbanisation, population growth or indeed an increase in the number of road users, but we can ensure collectively that our minor road becomes an unattractive or at least carefully managed 'rat run'.

Defibrillators Great and Little Barrington's telephone boxes are now the safe storage site for defibrillators, funded primarily through District grants and generous fund- raising donations. Having personally been involved in the first deployment of one of them, may I encourage every member of the community to attend the First Aid and Defibrillator courses that we will be running again free of charge in Great Barrington as soon as current restrictions are eased.

Windrush River If proof of our democratic system was needed, it is most encouraging to report that the WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution) project has been successful. Playing our part in the appeal to government by nearly 15 communities in the Windrush Valley, we elevated the issue through local to eventually national attention. We expect the law, enforcing greater control on local water authorities and restricting the discharge of raw sewage, to be passed early next year. I am most grateful to Cllr James Baimbridge and indeed his family for the timely intervention on our behalf.

Without wishing to lower the tone further, it would be disingenuous not to caution you that this law will encompass all waste discharge, from aged cesspits to muck heaps. I fear that our community consideration of a centralised sewage treatment system, to mention but one option, may well be a theme of future meetings.

Burford Weight Restriction After many years lobbying, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) agreed and imposed a 7.5t Emergency Traffic Regulation Order in Burford in August 2020. Targeting the effective diversion of the transiting 400-600 HGVs per day, the County Council under-estimated the impact of this traffic flow on the neighbouring rural communities. While we have certainly seen an increase to an estimated average of 10-15 HGVs per day (April 2021 GCC Highways survey recorded 67/week) in the Barringtons, most of them breaching existing TROs, please spare a

thought for the tiny Oxfordshire communities of Swinbrook, Astell and Leafield who are seeing 70-130 HGVs passing through their villages daily. We are grateful for any report, most especially if supported by photographs, of HGVs passing through the villages; please be assured that Stow Police react promptly and very effectively.

The Barrington PC is represented on the steering group of WiVTAG (Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group) which has joined the forces of 17 PCs and TCs in the submission of an appeal to OCC:

WiVTAG challenges and seeks to constructively support both OCC and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to recognise the serious regional impact of this experimental weight limit. We urge OCC to revoke the Burford 7.5t Restriction and strengthen the application of relevant policies and strategies in their Local Transport Plan

Two copies of our Interim Report (submitted 19 Apr 21) are available, and we will be submitting the formal appeal at the new OCC Cabinet meeting on 29 Jul 21.

Emergency Plan I extend my thanks to Cllr Anthea Watson who has updated and re-published the Parish Council Emergency Plan. A time-consuming task that ensures that we have the key data so that, in the event of an emergency or the unavailability of emergency services, we can initially at least manage a situation. My thanks to all those in the community who have volunteered to support the plan.

Security and Community Watch Cllr Sue Cleal has been energetic and focused in her responsibility for the security of the community, in close liaison with the Community/Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Combining this with the new village WhatsApp networks has enhanced our awareness and indeed ability to react, in one instance achieving the commendation from a police patrol vehicle that arrived in the village within 15 minutes of reports of suspicious behaviour. We encourage every member of the community to remain alert and if in any doubt, please report.


Planning Applications We have seen an increase in building planning, restoration or conversion applications. Please be in no doubt that these are studied and considered carefully, and we remain extremely conscious of our responsibility to maintain the historic character (and retain at least 'seams of history') of the houses in these villages. With national pressure on housing, we are increasingly sensitive to any applications that include the expansion or combining of properties, most especially when the plans risk the loss of affordable local housing or the more prevalent adjoining or conversion of small properties.

Village Tidy-Up and Fly Tipping Despite lockdown restrictions, we are grateful for the small army (groups of 2-3 volunteers) who managed a comprehensive litter picking of our area in March. The situation seems to be deteriorating every year and we have no choice but to address it or report it.

Concurrently, I am grateful to Cllr Sue Cleal whose liaison with the various Councils has led to the removal of fly-tipping within days of its first sighting. May I encourage everyone to continue to report these incidents, most especially if you witness the actual crime !

Events - 2020/21 has not been an active social year. We plan to re-activate the calendars of the two villages with the WVFS Fete (24 Jul); Strim, Stream & Soup; Village Tidy-Up (Autumn & Spring) and the Advent Drinks Party. The Councillors responsible for these events will be most grateful for your support.

Finally, I add my thoughts, prayers and respect to the families and friends of those we have lost in our community this year. Elizabeth Jukes, Lawrence Walthew, Mary Theobald. It is the memory of their contributions, their lives in these two villages and a commitment to honour the heritage and history of which they were a part, that is my, and may I presume my fellow Parish Councillors' motivation for our continued effort.



Jan H de Haldevang
Chairman Barrington Parish Council