

## **Sandford-on-Thames Parish Council**

### **Chair's Report 2018 – 2019**

It feels as if the business of the Parish Council (PC) in 2018/19 has been dominated by the very major planning issues that will affect the whole region for many years to come, including the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, the South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC) Local Plan and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, all of which threaten unprecedented levels of new development, including the removal of significant portions of the Green Belt for new housing, including Grenoble Road. The Parish Council has commented robustly on all these plans, and is a member of the Expressway Action Group and the No Expressway Alliance.

Other significant issues have included: the seemingly endless roadworks on Henley Road for gas and water mains works; the installation of a new sewage storage tank in the field adjacent to Fox Furlong; and the new footpath between Sainsbury and Heyford Hill Lane. All of these have caused considerable levels of disturbance and inconvenience, in the case of the footpath made a permanent change to the local area. The PC has engaged with the relevant authorities to try to minimise impacts where possible and push for adequate repairs (eg to Henley Rd) and compensation.

Grass cutting proved contentious, with some tensions between making the parish green spaces environmentally friendly (for example by letting the grass grow longer and planting wild flowers) and keeping them neat and tidy, all within a limited budget. The PC has listened to the views of parishioners, and put in place a new schedule for 2019.

Inconsiderate and inappropriate parking and speeding remain a problem in the parish. This remains an area over which the PC has little influence, but we are investigating with OCC whether some white lining could be put in place near the junction of Heyford Hill Lane and Sandford Road.

Work continued throughout the year on the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the decision was taken in April to temporarily suspend it, due to the high levels of uncertainty over the major regional planning policies.

There were two contentious planning applications in the year. The first was for a new house adjacent to 105 Henley Road, which was rejected by SODC. The second was for the replacement of a single dwelling with 8 one-bed flats at Cabora Bassa in Church Road. This, sadly, was approved in February despite numerous objections from the PC, District Councillor and many local residents. The PC is making a formal complaint to SODC concerning its handling of the application, although it will not affect the decision.

To finish on a positive note, we were pleased to welcome Charlie Wilson to the PC in November. On Armistice Day in November, the Parish planted a tree of remembrance on the grass area at the top of Church Rd at a joint ceremony with the Church, followed by the ringing of the Church bell and coffee and cake. In the New Year we heard that our application for a grant for a defibrillator had been successful, and are in conversation with the Talking Shop on location, training etc. We were also delighted that the PC's nomination of Abi Johnson for an Oxfordshire High Sheriff's Award for her outstanding leadership of the Talking Shop was successful. Finally, I would like to thank Julie Anderson, our Parish Clerk, for all her hard work over the course of the year.

Hilda Bailey

Chair

Sandford-on-Thames Parish Council

13 May 2019