

Annual Meeting with the Parish May 2018 – Chairman’s Report

I would like to begin by thanking fellow Parish Councillors for all the hard work they have done during the past year and Angela, as clerk, for all her support and advice. Thanks also go to residents who come along and take part in Public Participation, as ever you do like to keep us on our toes and take part in lively debate, an important aspect ensuring that key issues affecting the Parish are tackled.

Over the year the Parish Council has engaged on several important issues that affect Steventon namely:

Network Rail

This time last year Network Rail made an application to the Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) for consent to demolish Steventon Railway Bridge and replace it with a new one. We have, by obtaining Network Rail reports via Freedom of Information requests had Network Rail's reports independently reviewed by a very experienced railway expert. The conclusion was that there are alternatives to demolishing the bridge. A recent Network Rail risk assessment report on Stocks Lane crossing stated that by using Class 800 bi-mode Intercity Express Trains there is no need for train speed restrictions coming through Steventon. Historic England objected to the bridge being demolished on the 19th March but put in a no objection following receiving clarifications to some raised issues on the 18th April. The application goes to the VWHDC planning committee on the 9th May with the recommendation to **grant consent** to demolish Steventon Railway bridge. The Parish Council will object at the planning meeting. Network Rail are still working to a road closure timescale of 10 months.

New Development

Steventon did have some good news on housing development with the Inspectors rejection of the appeal by Pye Homes to build 20 houses on land off Brewer Close. However, we still have the application by Bellway Homes to build 52 houses off Abingdon Road. The Parish Council has objected to this development. The VWHDC target decision date is 18th May.

Neighbourhood Plan

The past year has been frustrating in producing the Neighbourhood plan with our designated VWHDC officer leaving and difficulties in recruiting a replacement. However, despite the frustrations we have produced a Character Assessment of Steventon and now have received clear advice and guidance from the VWHDC to enable us to produce a draft Neighbourhood Plan for consultation. We are aiming to have a referendum in the Autumn. I would like to express my thanks to Jon Spiller and Robert Green for moving this forward.

Hanney Road

In November last year after continued communications with Oxfordshire Highways and Mike Fox-Davies our Oxfordshire County Councillor we were informed that an Highways Inspector was to inspect Hanney road. I have received the following "The Hannay road has been identified as needing work (which we all knew). It will either be structural patching or mini patching (or a combination of both). Both of which are better than either the 'sweep and fill' or the dragon patcher.

The works are currently being priced and will then be prioritised for this financial year. I would hope that the Hannay road is near the top of the list".

Some patching has been done at the junction of Hanney road and the High Street however, in reality most of the village needs attention. We will continue to push for remedial work to be done on our roads but you can help by reporting potholes to Oxfordshire Highways by contacting Oxfordshire Highways at fixmystreet.

Parking

We continue to have irresponsible parking outside the shops on High Street with vehicles parking over the pavement and not allowing pedestrian access. If you witness this please take a photograph of the vehicle and number plate and send it to gary.kirby@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.

Oxfordshire Highways are to install a parking sign outside the shops. They claim that this has helped in other similar cases.

Reservoir

The consultation period on Thames Water draft Water Resources Plan 2019 has now passed. The Parish Council has submitted a feedback form stating that over 70% of Steventon are opposed to construction of a reservoir in our locality. It has become clear that in fact the reservoir will effectively be a holding tank to supply water to neighbouring water companies and not to London.

Dr Chris Wilding

Chair, Steventon Parish Council