

CHAIR ADDRESS – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28th APRIL 2025

Introductions

Firstly, I am going to thank all my fellow councillors for all their hard work and commitment they make as volunteers to ensure the residents of Wroughton have a village they can be proud of.

We all have the interests of the village at the forefront and despite the challenges faced we consider that we are moving forward to achieve that.

Led by Emma, all the office, grounds team, library and Community centre staff, also deserve a huge pat on the back for their efforts in dealing with all the issues and general day to day tasks in achieving the progress we have made to make Wroughton a great place to live, and also providing the facilities to use..

LIBRARY

Following on from the success of the library, we have recently started the Friendship Café on Monday afternoons when the library is closed. This is proving to be very popular and the numbers attending are gradually increasing.

Thanks go to the team of volunteers that make this possible, and to the councillors that attend also offering their help.

There are regularly 25 to 30 attending, not everyone comes every week, which means the total number of different residents attending is about 45, which as this has only been going a short while is very encouraging.

We have had the offer from The Lonsdale store at Alexandra Park who are willing to help sponsor the café with biscuits etc.

WICHELSTOWE

We are still meeting regularly with the JV team to keep up to date with how the build out is going in Wichelstowe.

The Wichelstowe Sports Hub is a very exciting project, a consultation has been completed and we are working with the JV, and expect to see a planning application being submitted in the summer.

ECC

As I explained last year we have taken on the running of the ECC and Library, and plans are in hand to improve the offering of this building and its facilities. Part of these improvements at the first stage is the entrance , which will mean extra security for the staff whilst still providing increased hours for public access to the toilets.

Due to a staff resignation, there will now be a review of the Centre Management staff moving forward .

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Again as reported last year, our Neighbourhood plan is due for review, but SBC have still not published their Local plan, so we need to have sight of that so our plan works alongside theirs for our review to be successful.

I understand that SBC plan to publish theirs in the Summer.

FLOODING

Flooding in Wroughton. We are hosting a meeting in May that has been initiated by Cllr Chris Watts, Swindon Borough Council Cabinet member for the Environment and Transport. This is to discuss the flooding issues.

Initially this meeting is with SBC, The Environment agency, Thames Water, WWT, and a working party of WPC staff, Councillors and a few invited residents that have been severely affected by the flooding. The plan is provisional so when there is further information this will be published.

ROAD SAFETY

Also in May we are holding a public meeting about road safety, particularly in Marlborough Road, Brimble Hill and Priors Hill. Details of this meeting are in the Spring Newsletter you should have all received.

Friday 23rd May 7–8,30pm

GROUNDS TEAM

The Grounds team have now been working out of Unit 1 of the Wroughton Business Park for over a year now, and we have also taken over the old SBC garage/workshop at St Andrews Close as an extra storage/work space.

We have also recruited an extra grounds team member to make a team of 7. This is partly to help with the additional workload, but also to cover the

Grounds team Manager who is reducing his hours on a staggered retirement plan.

In the office, we have also recruited a Part Time Finance assistant to enable Emma to have more time for her overall management duties.

COMMUNITY EVENT

During the School Summer holidays, we will be arranging a councillor and community Litter pick, obviously – everyone is welcome to take part. Date to be confirmed and published on the usual platforms.

SWINDON LOCAL FORUM

Emma and myself regularly join the meetings of the Swindon Local Council Forum, which brings all the Parishes together to share information and negotiations with SBC.

We are both are also on the Transfer of Services committee to assist the Forum with the future services SBC will be offloading to the Parishes. This has been a lengthy process with little progress so far, but we know that it will crop up at various levels to each parish during this year or next.

ELECTIONS

We have elections coming up next May to be in line with the SBC elections. This does mean that our tenure as councillors is only three years this time instead of four, but we decided to keep in line with Swindon as we are then able to share the costs of the election instead of having to bear the full cost ourselves to stay at four years.

We are pleased that we have recently also managed to co-opt Cllr Leo Ramsey and Cllr Will McGregor as they both live in Wichelstowe, so we now have representation from that growing community.

I'll now hand over to Emma for the Financial report, then Cllr Bryan Keetch, Chair of Planning and Highways, Cllr Diane Archer, Chair of Community Assets and Open Spaces then our Ward Councillors, Cllr Gayle Cook and Matty Courtliff.

There will also be an opportunity for questions at the end.