

# Scruton Parish Council Annual Report 2019-20

**By Mike Widmer (Chairman)**

In these extremely trying times, the first thing that I must say is that I hope all of our parishioners are safe and well and that everybody stays that way. Let us all hope that at this time next year, Scruton has another reason to call itself a 'Thankful Village'.

After four years of serving on the Council, two of them as deputy chair, this was my first year as Chairman and, if I had to use just one word to describe the nature of the year it would be 'CHANGE'. Whilst reviewing the standing orders last Autumn I came across the minutes from an SPC meeting held in 2006. Three of the Councillors present at that meeting were still serving the Council in the spring of 2019, a full thirteen years later! Before the May elections, two of those Councillors plus one other, all relinquished their posts and decided not to stand for future service.

So around fifty years of combined experience was lost overnight and a new team had to be formed. In such situations it obviously takes time to get to know each other and to gain an appreciation of how each individual works. A 'bedding in' period was inevitable. I am very pleased to say that this period was a relatively short one and that the Council was working together as a close-knit team pretty quickly. I would like to thank all the current Councillors for enabling this to happen and also for their input over the year. Of course, the same sentiments apply to our Clerk, Chris Barron.

Whilst on the subject of thanks, may I just say how much the Council appreciates the efforts of all the Parishioners who have helped to look after the more vulnerable amongst us, and have helped with shopping and medical supplies and a hundred other things including clearing the brash off the village green. So well done and thank you all.

Businesswise, it has been a fairly low key and routine year, with no major threats arising. All of the necessary contracts were quickly put in place, including the grass cutting contract which has been slightly extended from last year, although Covid 19 has affected the actual provision of that service.

On the plus side, the construction of two new bungalows in the village led to a 'community levy' of £1,353 being received by the Council. There are strict guidelines as to how this money can be spent and the Council will be looking closely at this in the near future. In the meantime, the money will be 'ring fenced' from the normal funding and once it is clear what it can and cannot be spent on Parishioners will be briefed on this and then be asked (via Network Scruton) for suggestions on how to use it.

Finally, most of you will be aware that this report is always issued in April and not June. I made the decision to defer it because I did not think it proper to issue it at a time when almost a thousand people were dying each day. I did not think the affairs of Scruton Parish Council would feature very prominently in the minds of many back then. Things have improved now but we are still not out of it. So please, take care and stay safe.