

NITON AND WHITWELL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ELECTORS 2018/19

The Parish Council started the year by evaluating and restating its local priorities to demonstrate clarity of purpose and sense of direction. It placed an emphasis on managing the physical assets of the Parish with the aim of providing more benefit to residents and visitors. During the past year the Parish Council has been able to deliver a number improvements to well-loved public amenities from Ashknowle Lane and Niton Recreational Ground to Castlehaven Village Green.

Last year also saw major infrastructure upgrades in Whitwell of both the water main and resurfacing of the High Street. Both projects would inevitably cause inconvenience and the Parish Council was very pleased to have played a key role in liaising with Southern Water and Island Roads. Disruption to residents and businesses was minimised and both works were completed successfully. We are grateful to both organisations and look forward to further cooperation in future.

The Parish Council has maintained its support of organisations which in turn provide important and valued local services, from initiatives aimed at our younger parishioners to transport and public toilets. 2018 commemorated the centenary of the end of the Great War and it was fitting that the Parish Council was able to initiate a process to refurbish the Whitwell War Memorial as well as provide poppy wreaths to be placed in both Niton and Whitwell.

However, not everything has been so positive. The Undercliff Drive remains closed to vehicular traffic despite continued lobbying of the Isle of Wight Council; and the draft Island Plan served to underline local concerns over planning and development. The minimal impact that the Parish Council is able to have in influencing local planning decisions continues to be a disappointment. The character and quality of our villages should be protected and inappropriate development resisted. Both of these matters will continue to be a priority for the Parish Council.

The following provides a summary of activity undertaken over the past 12 months:

ASHKNOWLE LANE BRIDLEWAY

Following consultation with residents and user groups, work to upgrade Ashknowle Lane bridleway from Ventnor Road to Whitwell Cemetery went ahead in October. Vehicular access to the Cemetery was greatly improved and the Parish Council's review of the works concluded that the use and nature of the Lane as an historic and rural track had been preserved. The Parish Council is indebted to Dr Bruce Denness and Mr Chris Judd for their expertise and supervision, which were given free of charge. The final project costs were less than 50% of budget.

WHITWELL WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorials Trust awarded a grant of £500 towards the steam cleaning of Whitwell War Memorial. Work has now been carried out by WightStream Hydrocleaning Group and the appearance of the Memorial greatly improved, with the inscription and names clearly legible. The Parish Council is now considering further work to improve the definition of the lettering.

NITON RECREATION GROUND

Essential maintenance of play equipment has been carried out through the year including new safety matting along the length of the zipwire and renewal of the fence along the top of the bank above the hard standing. Plans to design and build a new skateboard park are in the early stages. The Parish Council has asked the Isle of Wight Council to extend its proposed Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to include the Recreation Ground. By public request, the Parish Council is organising the first ever NitWhit Soap Box Derby at the Recreation Ground on Sunday 1st September 2019.

CASTLEHAVEN

The Parish Council remains committed to fulfilling its statutory duty as custodian of Castlehaven Village Green, thereby preserving the full public amenity. It is indebted to the Niton Harbour Club for grass cutting on the Village Green and to Island 2000 Trust for the restoration work over the past year, including the beautiful new raised flower bed. Work will continue with the aim of creating a safe and functional public space that provides a natural habitat which is sympathetic to its environment.

An appeal against the Isle of Wight Council's decision to refuse the application for a Modification Order for NT46, for the deletion of the designated footpath along the seawall at Castlehaven was made by the applicants in March 2018; the appeal has yet to be decided by the Planning Inspectorate.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

During the year, grants have been awarded to South Wight Area Youth Partnership (SWAY) (£5,000), Niton Christmas Day and Lantern Parade (£300), Niton and Whitwell Parish Churches towards the grounds maintenance of Niton Churchyard and Ashknowle Cemetery (£1,092 and £408 respectively) and Niton Parish Church (£500 for repair of the Market Cross). Grants are awarded in recognition of the benefit to the community afforded by each asset or service. NHS Defibrillator and CPR training courses were run both in Whitwell (November) and in Niton (March).

PUBLIC TOILETS

The Parish Council is indebted to local volunteers, who clean the toilets daily, to Norris Stores, which supplies cleaning materials free of charge and to Councillor John Stotesbury, who continues to solve minor maintenance problems. Progress on the promised transfer of the freehold from the Isle of Wight Council is still awaited.

ALLOTMENT ROAD CAR PARK

The Parish Council remains committed to acquiring the car park and has now agreed in principle to its acquisition with the garages in situ. The nuisance of "abandoned" vehicles continues and is being closely monitored by the Parish Council and Councillor Dave Stewart, Isle of Wight Council Ward Member.

ROADS, INCLUDING UNDERCLIFF DRIVE

The closure of Undercliff Drive continues to have a serious impact on the Parish roads, with the diversionary route through the villages following "C" class roads. The Parish Council remains resolutely committed to the re-opening of the Undercliff Drive and continues to work with Councillor Stewart to achieve this.

Following Southern Water's work to replace the water main in Whitwell High Street/Ventnor Road over the winter of 2017/18, the long-awaited and much-needed resurfacing of the road took place in June 2018. As stated above, Island Roads worked closely with the Parish Council to devise a traffic management plan with the least impact on all affected by the works, while maintaining a

safe working environment for the public and workforce. The new surface represents a major improvement.

PLANNING

The Parish Council considered 26 of 31 planning applications in the Parish. During the year, no planning applications were granted by the Isle of Wight Council against the recommendation of the Parish Council. The Parish Council held a Planning Committee meeting in February to consider the Draft Island Planning Strategy. A detailed response to the consultation was submitted to the Isle of Wight Council, together with a letter drawing attention to the Parish Council's primary concerns: both are published on the website.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Parish Council's website continues to be an invaluable tool in maintaining communication. Under the Transparency Code, all documents available to the public are posted on the website at www.nitonwhitwell.org.uk

Notices and agendas are also placed on the Village notice boards. A file is currently available in the Edward Edwards Library in Niton with information about the Parish Council including the annual report, minutes and agendas, and will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. Written reports are provided monthly for the 'Connections' magazine.

Our Isle of Wight Council Ward Member, Councillor Dave Stewart, continues to attend Parish Council meetings whenever possible.

The Parish Council worked hard to be fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) prior to its coming into effect on 25th May.

PARISH PLAN

The updated Parish Plan was published in September 2013 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Documentation (SPD) by the Isle of Wight Council in 2014. The content of the Plan is now a material consideration, where relevant, when determining planning applications within the Parish. Hard copies are available from the Edward Edwards Library in Niton; the adopted (updated) version may be accessed via the Parish Council website.

As the Parish Plan is now over 5 years old, the Parish Council is considering the best means by which to influence local planning policy for the benefit of the Parish going forward.

DOG FOULING

In June, the Parish Council agreed to engage the services of an Isle of Wight Council Environment Officer with the power to issue £75 on-the-spot fixed penalty notices where owners fail to pick up after their dog. The Officer patrols affected areas, acting on local intelligence.

SOUTHERN VECTIS NUMBER 6 BUS SERVICE AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

During the past year, Chale, Chillerton and Gatcombe and Niton and Whitwell Parish Councils jointly funded a winter Sunday service between Newport and Ventnor.

Parish excursions were run to Adgestone Vineyard in July and Busy Bee "Christmas World" in December. Sadly, Community Action Isle of Wight was obliged to part with the minibus used for many of the excursions, but the Parish Council is very pleased to be working with Island Minibus Services to continue the programme of outings.

The Parish Council reaffirmed its commitment to "Age Friendly" by signing up to its own Age Friendly Charter in May. The excursions programme is seen an important part of this undertaking.

PRECEPT

To maintain current services and approve projects for the coming year including community transport; youth outreach; Village and Parish maintenance; and further improvements to Castlehaven Village Green and Niton Recreation Ground, the Parish Council raised the precept to

£48,828 for 2019/20 from £44,663 in 2018/19. This represents an increase of 35p per month for Band D properties. Full details of the budget are available on the Parish Council's website.

MEETINGS

The Parish Council meets on the fourth Monday in the month (except August and December), with the venue alternating between the Edward Edwards Library in Niton and Whitwell Village Hall. If required, there is a Planning Committee meeting held on the second Monday in each month. The press and public are welcome to attend and there is a public question time before the formal business commences.



Cllr Tim Addison
Chairman of the Parish Council



Vickie Ford
Clerk to the Parish Council