

Annual Parish Meeting - Chairman's speech 2024

With a general election looming, all parties are talking about a time for change.

Wisham is no exception and 2024 looks to be the year of change in the village.

The Parish council is no exception. I'd like to thank Lucy Miller, Chloe Adams and Emma Pike for their contributions to the council. One long standing member of the council is retiring this year and a special thanks should go to Steve Weller who has worked tirelessly for Winsham for many years.

We've welcomed new councillors Fiona Vickers, Gerry Earl and Nathan Mode since the last APM.

We will miss the support of our longstanding clerk, Rose Richards who retired today and welcome our new clerk Kim Larsson.

Several organisations have new people helping to run and steer them.

The Social club has a new volunteer led structure and this year's street fair has been organised by a largely new group of volunteers.

The art club and Horticultural society are forging forward with new initiatives and the Jubilee Hall committee is restructuring as we speak.

But with change can come a little friction and we should all be looking to support the new volunteers as much as possible.

So what are the big ticket items that the council has overseen this year?

The Parish Council have been supportive of the Winsham Recreational Trust which has developed to become a financially viable community club.

The PC agreed to amend the constitution to allow volunteer members to be elected as trustee's and move to a more self-determining model.

With the help of donations from the local community the War memorial was refurbished to mark the 100 years since it was erected.

The lower rec had a new fence on it's boundary with the Western way houses.

We've installed new rubbish and dog waste bins and recovered a missing road sign.

Due to the increasingly inclement weather, we are having to spend more money on tree work, either to prevent or remedy storm damage.

We always have to assess local planning applications but are now having to follow up on enforcement notices where planning is being flouted or misinterpreted. Due to our constant reminders to highways, the new pavement in Western way was installed, though we are still awaiting planning progress on the nature reserve and car park.

Due to the cost of living crisis we are seeing more applications to the Parish Council for grants as previous sources of funding are becoming scarce.

Change is afoot for Winsham as Somerset County council are on the verge of bankruptcy.

This means that some services that were previously provided by the County will have to be provided by the Parish Council, volunteers or not at all. You will have noted that the Parish

precept rose by nearly 10% this year but that increase will not be anywhere near the cost of providing the potentially missing services.

The cost of living crisis – we all know that everything seems to have increased exponentially over the last couple of years. The council plans, for example to update the children's playground, will now cost substantially more than anticipated and, if we are to plug the county services gap, then the coming year(s) could see our reserves diminishing and our ambitions curtailed.

However, we will continue to work to secure Winsham's future and look forward to your support and assistance in this undertaking.