

## **Chairman's Report – Fremington Parish Council**

As we all know this has been an extremely difficult year and it's still not over yet. Life has been very different recently, and for some it has been challenging. What has been great though is the reaction of the local community with lots of people stepping forward to help the less able – it has been truly marvellous to witness and just shows what a great community we live in.

All the council meetings have been held on Zoom which has been a truly interesting experience and a learning curve for us all. We have been lucky at times to be joined by some of our parishioners and we hope it has been an interesting experience.

Over the course of the year, we have lost four councillors through various different personal reasons, we say goodbye and thank you to Elizabeth Stevenson, Brian Hockin, Kelvin Groves and Ian Capon. We now say welcome to Helen Walker, Louise Goodger and Tim Steer. We have a co-option due to replace the last of the four councillors on 8<sup>th</sup> March and will be welcoming another new councillor then.

Kate Graddock, the Deputy Executive Officer, left us in January for a new role, we wish her the best for the future. In January, our new Maintenance and Amenities Operative Nigel Trounson started and is already making a huge difference in the parish. If you know of areas of concern, please do let us know and we can send Nigel to check things out.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March, our new Administration and Projects Manager will be joining the council. We hope that she will enjoy her time with us.

This year we were lucky enough to be able to update the play equipment at Babbages Play Area using the £23,816 of Section 106 money. We are very grateful to have the opportunity to do this and hope to identify similar funding for Ellerslie Play Area to be updated and for further updates to the Babbages Play Area. The Community Building, Storage Building and Football Pitch at Riverside Park and Water's Edge has also been transferred to us, we will be leasing them to the Scout Group and Football Club and we hope that they will be able to use them soon.

Additionally, we have also made progress with the Neighbourhood Plan; we hope to have a draft sent out in the near future.

In September of 2020, the old Council Offices at 12 Higher Road were sold. The Beechfield Centre held a multitude of different classes and activities throughout the past year, we look forward to being able to open the hall once restriction have been lifted.

With the departures and new arrivals to the council hopefully as the year progresses, we can all move forward. At the moment we are still waiting to hear if we carry on with virtual meetings from May onwards. Some of the councillors are keen for this to continue as some have been shielding.

There will be elections for the Devon County Council and the Police & Crime Commissioner where the voting will take place in the usual locations. However, if you feel uncomfortable with making a personal vote then perhaps you might want to have

a postal or proxy vote. Contact the Election Office at North Devon District Council to arrange this.

The Prime Minister has given us a roadmap out of the current lockdown. So hopefully it will all go to plan and we can all get back to some sort of normality. I am certainly looking forward to meeting with friends for coffee.

Sue Kingdom, Chairman to the Parish Council