

Datchet Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting to be held on Thursday 29th April 2021

To be held remotely via Zoom

Chairman's introduction and Report

1. Good evening and welcome to all
2. This meeting usually held every year towards the end of the civic year, so that residents to come along and hear what improvements the council have made in and around the village during the last year, and any future plans.
3. We will also welcome questions or comments from any of you here in relation to what you hear this evening.
4. This meeting was not held last year because at start of 1st pandemic and we had not worked out how to manage remote meetings. As with many other businesses and organisations, this has been a very challenging and steep learning curve for us. Whereas some council members are fairly 'savvy' and happy using computers, others do not have access to any relevant hardware, or to the know-how to make it work.
5. Setting up of remote meetings – As you can see – we have, more or less, got to grips with this, although not without occasional 'hitches.' Sometimes there are issues with limited broadband and individuals not having adequate systems at home, but we are now hoping to find some means of improving this.
6. At this time, I really have to offer enormous thanks to our Clerk Katy, who currently has to work from home, and to Judith our Finance Assistant who is able to go into the office and deal with phone messages and any emails. Their support through these difficult times has been immense.
7. The most recent challenge we are facing at the moment – is that the emergency legislation put through Parliament last year to allow Local Council meetings to take place remotely will run out on 6th May, which is why this meeting and our next Council meeting have had to be re-arranged to take place before 7TH May because any further council meetings held remotely will not be legal. This decision has had an effect for all local authorities in the country. The LGA has gone to the High Court this week to see if this could be changed, and we found out only this afternoon that this will not happen.

I'm not sure what will happen next - we will just have to wait and see.

The ways in which all Local Councils are run is determined by a number of laws passed through Parliament over many years, and so making any changes is neither easy nor speedy.

8. So from 7th May onwards members will be obliged to physically turn up for meetings at the appointed time and place, as is written on the summons to the meeting all council members receive before the meeting
9. Carrying on with council activities has been complicated by effects of the pandemic – as a council we have been doing what we can to continue with jobs on our programme, but we have been thwarted by either lack of materials due to breakdown in supply chains, or workmen who have to self-isolate.

You will now hear reports from our lead members about their particular areas of work for the council, and there will be an opportunity after each one for questions or comments.

Linda O'Flynn, Chairman

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