



## **ROCKBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Chairman's Review.**

First of all I would like to Thank Cllr Forsbrey for his part in the 2023-2024 Parish Council. As we are aware he was forced to resign his position to look after his personal welfare.

Since he resigned a notice was sent out to the Parish from New Forest Electoral Services announcing there was a casual position for a councilor to replace him. NFDC Electoral services received signatures from more than the 10 residents required to call for an Election. This has now been published and we have 2 candidates that have expressed their wish to join the current Parish Council and I wish them both the very best in their campaign.

This would be a good opportunity for me to remind all Councilors that we are bound by Statutory law and must abide by the Laws of The Parish Councils Act 1957 and later the addition of the Local Government Act 1972. These are available to view on the Government website.

It would also be prudent to inform Councilors of the reminder that the Information Commissioner has distributed to Local Authorities reminding that private communication is subject to FOI laws if it relates to work of public bodies, which Rockbourne P.C. is.

The Covid pandemic introduced new ways of working when we were forced into lockdown. In order to carry on business as a Council, the Government brought in emergency legislation to allow meetings to take place online, Zoom being the preferred platform for Rockbourne P.C. This has somewhat blurred the boundaries with communications taking place through a number of channels including through services such as WhatsApp with personal devices being used to communicate.

Whilst this sort of informality has seeped into every remote workplace. In the Public Sector it comes into conflict with FOI laws.

We are duty bound to process all data in accordance with the ICO Policy and as such this does mean that information exchanged through private channels can be included in any search done in response to a FOI request.

Councilors are also advised that deleting or concealing information they have including on any personal device, once the FOI request has been received is a criminal offence.

It will be great to welcome the newly appointed candidate at our March meeting and I wish them both the very best in their campaign. Good luck at the Election on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.