



Annual Report, 2020.

The year started well with our usual run up to Christmas activities and plans for 2020. However the advent of Covid sent this all into disarray, and our work in 2020 has been of a very different order. One of the blessings of being a town networked organisation, and with services across the age range, is that we can be flexible and responsive to the needs of the community on a constant basis. Thanks to an amazing Committee and our 100+ volunteers, we have been able to do just this since lockdown, and to mobilise our forces quickly.

We could not do this without the help of other external organisations particularly Winslow Town Council and the NHS through the Patient Support Service. Working with them has enabled us to turn a very bleak future for 2020 into a successful one, within the confines of the pandemic. Our mantra has been to work in as normal way as we can, but with high regard for Covid safety, so risk assessments of all our services that are still running, as well as new ones, have been developed and guidelines from these are given to customers too, so they can see how safe our service is.

Prior to Covid, our activities generally continued as before, with the first showings of a winter film in January, as well as the completion of the 2nd edition of the Really Useful Guide. We worked collaboratively again with Winslow Town Council, to include in this a new street map too. The Parkinsons Group has gone from strength to strength, with exciting plans to include specialist Keep Fit with Parkinsons for the future also.

Unfortunately many of our special events did not happen, eg our annual Thankyou Event, 6th anniversary of our Gentle Walks, as well as our AGM. I felt very humbled that just prior to lockdown, I heard that I had been awarded the British Empire Medal, a large part of which was connected with my work for the Big Society, However as always this would have been impossible without the help of my wonderful Committee as well as the volunteers and the community of Winslow at large. My thanks to those who led on this and thought I was worthy of it.

Financially we have been blessed with a large legacy from a customer who has died, as well as a grant from Winslow War Memorial Fund towards the wheel chair car scheme, and a grant from the Covid fund also, as well as smaller donations from a variety of local people. This means we still are in a healthy financial position, and ready to resume activity once Covid is brought under control. My thanks to Zoe who does such a splendid job as Treasurer, and also keeps me on the straight and narrow!

We were so sad this year to lose Fiona Holmes, after a long battle with cancer. She had been a coordinator of our Car Scheme as well as a driver, and was loved by all who knew her for her kindness and gentleness and constant smile, even when life was hard for her. It is wonderful that Phil her husband has taken on being a driver on our car scheme, so her name will live on now through him.

Since lock down, we made a proactive decision to set up systems urgently to help those affected by the pandemic. This involved working with the NHS and Lloyds pharmacy to set up 5 day a week volunteers to deliver medicines from both dispensaries. We made 7000 deliveries in the 6 month period. We also, under the guidance of Sue Keane set up a weekly phone contact service for 120 people, to check that they were OK. Christine Moore set up a shopping service which serviced over 40 people with a weekly shop. My thanks particularly to them and the new volunteers who came on line as a result of being furloughed etc to help us. It was wonderful seeing volunteers so happy with being able to help others.

During the pandemic we have also been able to help the North Bucks Hospital Car Scheme out, as they were unable to provide car drivers. Diana Slevin worked with them to ensure that those from Winslow and the surrounding villages were able to get to hospital and clinic appointments, both near and as far away as Oxford. Again, a few new drivers helped make this possible when those who were over 70 were not able to help us. We are so grateful for the unflinching generosity of their time that these drivers have given us, and continue to do so, to ensure people get to their health appointments as needed.

More recently we have again teamed up with Norden House, and to a lesser extent Whitchurch and Wing surgeries to provide volunteers for flu clinics, to ensure people come in and out safely distanced., The practices have been so grateful for the happy volunteers who have made this service run so slickly. Thanks to Christine Dodds for her usual organisational expertise in setting these rotas up. It was good to work with Winslow Lions on this too.

We have also developed an Accompaniment Model during Covid , which we have tested a few times now . A volunteer is matched with a customer who requires help to get out, eg to rebuild confidence, to get their muscles working again etc, With a risk assessment, DBS check and common sense , following an initial assessment by us, several people have had their confidence renewed and are able to start to manage independently again. We have also as a result of this service identified clutter issues which we have worked with Winslow Rotary to help sort. Our thanks to both Lions and Rotary for their help.

We led a town meeting on the effects and lessons learned from other organisations as a result of the lock down period, which has provided useful help for any future outbreak , especially including the development of the Winslow Coronavirus Support FB page. We are now working with the person who developed this to ensure information is communicated as needed, as well as via our Website and own FB page.

We have used the time of lock down to tidy up our housekeeping processes, eg start to look at some Health and Safety guidelines, purchased our own Public Liability scheme , as well as our own Zoom licence, so we can have more meetings for longer. We have also written a new volunteer application form which will enable us to keep volunteer data safely under our GDPR systems.

Some of our activities are back up and running, both Memories sessions, Gentle Walks, Cards and Games and Friendship lunches are scheduled for a trial November, and Parkinson's group will hopefully start shortly. Our telephone befriending service, exercise classes on Zoom as well as the Community Car Scheme have also continued. Conscious of the needs of families, Cathy Tracy is also looking at how we can safely support them through a type of Drop-in again. The wheelchair car is being used for one disabled person to get to work, whilst it is not being used for our own activities.

So all in all the year has not been unproductive. Whatever the future holds for us regarding the pandemic, I feel sure that Winslow Big Society Group will continue to provide a service for its community, going wherever the need is greatest.

Vron Corben