

ELLISFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT FOR 2019/20 and 2020/21

Appendix 1: Chairman's Report

Your Councillors

Members of Ellisfield Parish Council during 2019/20 and 2020/21 were:

Caroline Cazenove Vice Chairman	Brocas, The Green
Tim Guinness Chairman	Widmoor Farm, College Lane
Gavin Park-Weir	Homestead, Green Lane
Vicky Reed	Upper Common Cottage, Green Lane Retired July 2019
Andy Swanston	Oak Hill, Green Lane Joined October 2018
Rose Taplin	3 Hill Farm Cottages, Green Lane Retired December 2019
Gordon Dunse	The Thatched Cottage, The Green Co-Opted October 2019,
Richard Haas	The walled Garden, College Lane Co-Opted December 2019

Your joint Clerks

Peter Raine Sylvia Raine	Church Cottage, Church Lane
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Councillor changes

In July 2019, Vicky Reed retired and in October Gordon Dunse kindly accepted your Council's invitation to join the parish council. Gordon, as most people will be aware, set up the very successful Village Hall weekly Wednesday Tea Coffee and Cake event in 2018. In December 2019 Rose Taplin retired and Richard Haas kindly accepted your Council's invitation to join the parish council in her place. Both Vicky and Rose did stalwart work for the Parish Council and their contribution over multiple years was much appreciated.

Council elections

There were no elections in 2020 or 2021.

This report covers 2 years as the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2020 was cancelled due to COVID 19 and Lockdown. Over this period

We met fifteen times:

in 2019/20 face to face meetings in May, July, September, October, December, and January and a virtual meeting on Zoom in March.

in 2020/21 virtual meetings in May, June, July, October, November, December, January, and March.

Newsletters were sent out in August 2019 and June 2020.

Individual councillors are tasked with keeping a watching brief on specific areas of interest. During most of the past two year these have been:

Caroline Cazenove	Burial Ground, Hill Farm Pond, Neighbourhood Watch, Welcome Packs
Tim Guinness	Website, Planning, Affordable Housing, Solar Farm, EVG (joint),
Gavin Park-Weir	Broadband (joint), Veolia, Herriard Biopower(Joint)
Andy Swanston	Highways, Broadband (joint), EVG (joint), SIDs /Traffic Calming
Gordon Dunse	Memorial Hall, Environment, Footpaths/Rights of Way, Allotments; Property (joint)
Richard Haas	Finance, Veolia, Herriard Biopower(Joint), Property (Joint)

Report on 2019/20 and 2020/21 - Main Areas of Focus

Lockdown

It's a great relief to be writing this with the end of lockdown in sight. Last year will be a year to remember. The effect on your parish council and this community was probably greatest in the first few months. The EPC had to adjust to holding remote parish council meetings on Zoom and we were unable to hold any sort of annual parish meeting last year. In the initial weeks, your council and Peter and Sylvia Raine, our Clerks, worked with the community to provide groups of houses with the support of a contact person to arrange help if needed. We were extremely grateful to those people who offered to help in this way and who have shopped or talked on the phone to

those on their own or isolating.

My perception is that over time we have all adjusted to it quite well. There are certainly features that many of us will remember: the regular exercise routines on Lower Common organised by Jacqui Matthews, the VE Day cakes and front of house tea parties (socially distanced of course) and conversations with those met on daily walks, takeaways from The Fox, the quietness of the skies and the A339 and the beauty of the countryside in which we are privileged to live.

Broadband

During 2019, the Broadband project to bring fibre to the premises to the south of Ellisfield slowly took shape. In the middle of the year, useful work was done cutting down trees that threatened the fibre by the pole route on Green Lane .. The fibre connections started being laid in the Autumn and by January 2020, superfast broadband was up and running in the south of the village. And then some excellent news was received that Hampshire County Council on reviewing the funding that they had for rolling out fibre to the premises had now decided that they could pay for the whole of the Ellisfield south project rather than the half funding they had originally put up. This was very good news and in May, Andy Swanston was able to report that all the money had been returned to donors.

In the late summer of 2020, a survey was done of houses in the north of the village to assess the state of interest in applying for a grant from HCC's top up fund to upgrade the fibre to the cabinet to enable fibre to the premises in the north as well as the south. Julian Wright, an ex-parish councillor who lives in Bell Lane, played a significant role in organising this. The interest solicited by the survey was sufficient to prompt Openreach to produce a provisional cost estimate for implementing superfast broadband for the north of the village. Their initial figure was £110,000 and this meant that at least 34 properties would be needed to sign up for it or 44 to indicate an interest for this to happen and be fully financed by government grants. Gordon Dunse agreed to help Julian Wright progress obtaining enough interest and by the end of the year, it was achieved. By the recent March meeting, Gordon Dunse was able to report that enough interest had been validated and Openreach is now moving the full fibre broadband project for north Ellisfield into delivery, hopefully this will happen by the end of 2021 or by March 2022 at the latest.

Flooding resilience

Your parish council continues to remain focused on ensuring that the infrastructure for slowing down and channelling the flash floods that occasionally occur (once every few years) after a period of persistent rain is improved and well maintained.

Work done over the last two years included organising a residents' volunteer working party to clear vegetation

on the far side of the junction between Green Lane and the Axford Road. This then enabled the HCC highways department to excavate and improve the flood pits on the south side of the Axford Road. Meanwhile further up in the village, around Lower Common, Steve Brabbin continued to do excellent work keeping the ditch along Green Lane that feeds flood water into the Flood Pits behind Lower Common in good condition. Steve also did good work maintaining the ditches that flow into the Flood Pits on the east of Furzen Lane. Steve Brabbin's role as lengthsman is invaluable. In addition to the excellent job he does in maintaining the grips and clearing out the catchpits, he is great at patrolling the village when there is heavy rain to ensure that the rainwater flowing off the fields is managed as best possible.

Lastly, discussions are ongoing about some possibilities for capturing flood water flowing down Alley Lane and diverting it into the chalk pit there and also possibly doing similar work half way down Furzen Lane where water flows from the field into it.

Traffic Calming

In mid-2019, Andy Swanston started working on a project to bring together the various strands of thinking about how traffic calming could be achieved in the south of Ellisfield in particular. A speed survey measuring traffic speeds along Axford Road had been undertaken in 2018. Ideas for implementing chicane type entrances had been looked at. After further discussions with Hampshire Highways, they advised that the most practical and immediate solution would be to instal Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs). The project was costed and a group of volunteers who would move the locations fairly regularly was put together and an order was placed in March 2020 and by July the project was up and running. Steven Gould, who lives on the Axford Road, has kindly accepted the responsibility for organising the volunteer group and we are very grateful to him for taking on that role.

Burial Ground

The burial grounds saw two burials and two interments of ashes over the last 24 months.

A significant project over the last two years has been the incorporation of the extra land kindly donated by Marcus and Lucinda Rule to extend the burial ground. Planning permission had to be obtained for the change of use of the piece of the paddock that has been donated, then arrangements made to move the existing fence boundary which involved building a new fence and planting a beech hedge in front of it. Funding support for some of this was obtained from the Golden Bottle Trust, a charity set up by members of the Hoare banking family, some of whose family are buried in the churchyard. The main outstanding item is to lay a path over the electric cables that run just by the old fence.

Upper Swallick Concept Proposal

A new planning proposal to develop a sizeable number of houses on the farmland between Cliddesden and Ellisfield surfaced in early Autumn 2020. Because it would be built in the very attractive open countryside between Cliddesden village school and the bottom of White Hill and also because it would be a breach of a countryside protection principle that housing development to the south of the M3 would not happen, the council has received a considerable volume of communications opposed to the project. Gordon Dunse agreed to be the parish council's point man on a working party to put forward reasoned arguments against the proposals. An informal working party called STaNHd which is short for Stand Up For The North Hampshire Downs has been working on making sure that a good case is made to the planning authorities at the right time against the proposal. They have been energetically communicating the downside of the proposal and the scale of the objections inter alia putting together a petition signed by over 5,000 signatures against the scheme. The situation is complicated by the fact that Basingstoke's Local Plan is in some disarray and there is no clear strategy for the allocation of land for building houses. A good outcome for this situation would be if the area which is proposed to be built on was designated as "special" and therefore not suitable. A traffic analysis is in progress and the case for more suitable brown field sites in Basingstoke as well as sites on Manydown are being worked on. I am very grateful for Gordon Dunse's hard work in supporting the community's opposition to this proposal.

Planning Applications & Consultations

Over the last 2 years there were seven planning applications in the village involving dwellings that came up for comment by your council.

Blencathra
Montrose Cottage
Fairviews
1 Widmoor Cottages
Lyndale
Land N of Oakdene
The Old Manor

plus 5 commercial applications from three businesses (Veolia, Herriard Bio Power, and Moto (at the M3 junction 6) plus one involving the burial ground.

Routine Areas of Focus and Other Items

Highways & other rights of way

Regular contact continued between Peter Raine and Hampshire Highways about potholes and road signs

Maintenance of Land and Property

Volunteers continue to mow the Burial Ground, Lower

Common, and Gravel Pits for the Parish Council and their quotes of £1,650 for 2019/20 and £1,450 for 2020/21 were gratefully accepted.

As always, many thanks go to all those who volunteer for the mowing schedule and other ad-hoc activities such as Hill Farm Pond maintenance and autumn clear-ups. And similarly great thanks to Graham Simpson for leading and running the group. The mowing schedule can be seen on Paul Turner's village website.

Affordable Housing

A vacancy that came up in 2018/19 at Farriers Field was pleasingly filled by Sean Freeman an individual with a local connection.

Liaison local businesses – Herriard Anaerobic Digester Plant; JLEN Solar Farm; Veolia site:

Herriard Bio-Power and JLEN (Solar Farm) continue to support the community with grants. (see under property). Periodic liaison meetings are still held where issues such as pot holes, litter, solar inverter noise, Veolia smells, and traffic to and from the sites, are discussed.

An application from Herriard Bio-Power to develop the site fully in line with their initial capacity permission but to adjust some of the permissions has recently come up. We have had good discussions with the new team there. (Barfoots have sold to a relatively new start up – R K E Biogroup). Our conclusion having reviewed impacts on noise, light, smell, traffic was that the requested changes were not on balance detrimental to the community. Indeed one positive is that the lagoons will now be covered. We expect that permission will be granted for this in the next few months.

Meanwhile JLEN have appointed a new operations and maintenance firm - Green Nation - for the Solar Farm and we are engaging with them constructively. The ongoing issue of inverter noise continues to be one we monitor as best we can and urge mitigation when necessary.

Hill Farm Pond

The pond continues to flourish and be enjoyed by wildlife and humans alike. Peter Raine has been working doggedly over the last 2 years to enable us to register it at the Land Registry in the parish's name. We believe the time of this being successful is now quite nigh!

Phone Box

The phone box has been brightened up with a coat of post office red paint. This continues as a mini library/book/DVD exchange and April Caroll now keeps that in good order.

Environment

No matters of significance in the year.

Parish Council Website

Charlie Hellewell continues to do a great job as a backup resource to help Peter and Sylvia with this.

One non standard issue that had to be addressed during the period was making necessary improvements to the site to ensure it met new accessibility regulations. With a valuable steer from Herriard PC a local expert was identified who quickly helped us do what was necessary.

The Fox Inn

Lucy Tufts is now in her seventh year at The Fox and has had to navigate a turbulent period since March last year involving the impact of Covid19 Lockdowns. She has kept going with take away meals and some helpful government grants. As things now begin to return to normal I urge you to give her your support. The Fox is a lovely village pub and we don't want to lose it.

Welcome Packs

The delivery of Welcome packs was taken over by Caroline Cazenove from Vicky Reed. Over the whole period we have seen more change in the village than normal.

Recipients of Welcome packs included :

Sean Freeman	Farriers Field
Chris Cole	The Conifers
Donald and Alesha Lewis	6 Cannon Close
John and Jane Holmes	Fir Tree Cottage
Douglas and Phillipa Winton	Kandahar
Colin and Hayley Hall	The Acorns
Martine Bell	Copper Beeches
Rupert and Emily Sowter-Bell	do
Andy and Emma Bennis	Woodpeckers
Steve and Julia Foster	Lyndale
Paul and Jocelyn Hayden	Fordham House
Dave and Helen Shave-Wall	September House

All those who left Ellisfield are of course missed but I feel I must mention some very long standing residents notably Ted and Barbara Dowson, John and Jane Evans, David and Judith Richards, Dick and Celia Lunn, Roger Graham, and Rose Grey (sadly deceased) all of whom played no small part in village organisations and activities over many years.

Police and Neighbourhood Watch

We continue to be very grateful to Jane Hannah for acting as the Ellisfield Neighbourhood Watch coordinator.

Litter Picking and other environmental concerns

Our thanks go to our litter pickers .- Seren Hamer, Tom Frankham, Alex Hellewell, and Jonathan Krauklis-Gould who performed this very necessary task. .

Memorial Hall

Rose Taplin handed over the role of Trustee and attendee at Memorial Hall meetings as the parish council representative to Gordon Dunse.

And as already mentioned Gordon has made a tremendous contribution to the Hall by getting a Wednesday Tea, Coffee, and Cake morning session going every Wednesday (assisted nobly by Debbie Scholey and the Raines) .

Allotments

Gordon Dunse also took over from Vicky Reed the responsibility for the Ellisfield Allotments and supporting Ellisfield Allotment Growers Association meetings. The number of vacant plots has fluctuated but is now reduced to none!

Rose Grey who with her husband Sid rented the Lower Allotments, a relatively abandoned coppice woodland area, sadly died in 2020 and the area has now been re let to Adam and Tracy Gilvear who intend to revive the coppicing activity. In the process the area will be re-fenced. This is potentially a very positive development.

Finance

2019/20 and 2020/21 Accounts

The last two years' accounts versus the previous year accompany this

2021/22 Budget and Precept

The budget for the coming year versus last year actual also accompany this

As you will see, the amount decided on as a precept was £5,521 in both years – again no increase on previous years and the council again decided to dip into our parish funds if expenditure exceeded this and our other revenue.

It should be repeated that the precept we are levying is lower than it might be because of the great contribution by the Ellisfield Volunteers to keeping our public spaces tidy at well below contractor's rates.

Conclusion

I would like to thank my colleagues (Caroline Cazenove, Gordon Dunse, Richard Haas, Gavin Park-Weir and Andy Swanston) who all contribute to our common goal of looking after the interests of the village.

I am extremely grateful to Peter and Sylvia Raine for rising so well to the challenge of acting as Joint Clerks.

It has been a privilege being Chairman during 2019/20 and 2020/21

As some of you will know this 2021 Annual Parish Meeting is my last. I have been on the Parish Council for 18 years of which I have been Chairman for 16 years and the time has come for me to step down and make way for the next generation. I have the satisfaction of feeling that I am leaving your affairs in very capable hands. After discussing with each of the Parish Councillors who might best succeed me, I am proposing that Richard Haas take my place as Chairman a candidate that the rest of your parish council are unanimously supportive of.

I wish him every success.

Tim Guinness
Chairman