

ELLISFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2013/14

Section 1: Chairman's Report

Your Councillors

Members of Ellisfield Parish Council are:

Caroline Cazenove	Brocas, The Green
Tim Guinness Chairman	Widmoor Farm, College Lane
Gavin Park-Weir	Homestead, Green Lane
David Richards	September, College Lane
Rose Taplin	3 Hill Farm Cottages, Green Lane
Julian Wright Vice Chairman	Ivy Cottage, Bell Lane

We met eight times. In April, May, July, September, October, November, February and March. We published one newsletter.

There were no changes to the council membership.

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

Caroline Cazenove	Burial Ground, Hill Farm Pond, Neighbourhood Watch
Tim Guinness	Website, Planning, Affordable Housing, Welcome Packs, Solar Farm
Gavin Park-Weir	Land & Property, Veolia
David Richards	Highways, BDAPTC, Environment
Rose Taplin	Memorial Hall, Allotments, Environment
Julian Wright	Broadband, Planning, Footpaths/Rights of Way, Barfoots Anaerobic Digester

The allocation of Veolia; Barfoots and the Solar Farm to specific councillors reflected the increasing time commitment required to interface with these businesses in our near our Parish. It should be added we have taken the view that it is in Ellisfield's interest for your council to engage positively with these businesses to the extent possible. All of them state they want positive relations with the communities whose landscape they are affecting and we want to maximise the chance of them doing that to balance the inevitable stream of comments we have to make to them to ensure their presence is in part enhancing or as little damaging as possible.

Report on 2013/14 - Main Areas of Focus

Planning

Barfoots Anaerobic Digester Plant: We have lived in 2013 with the building of this plant. As mentioned above Julian Wright is our point man and has been in regular contact with them during this period. We have taken the decision to engage constructively with Barfoots (developer and operator) and the Herriard Estate (landowner) to try and minimise the impact especially on our landscape. We have emphasised our desire that the landscape and highway "improvements" (a politically correct word for "alterations to facilitate an increase in capacity/traffic") be done as sensitively as possible. We have succeeded, we believe in minimising intrusion of industrial fencing signage or gateways; urban street furniture and road architecture (kerb stones, pavements; lighting).

In particular the main gateways are out of sight and the kerbstones at the lorry passing points are level with grass verges. In addition EVA have provided invaluable assistance in reviewing and securing changes to the landscape plan.

One benefit of our policy of engagement is that Barfoots have indicated they will grant the parish £1,000 pa for projects. We are intending to use the first of these to assist in the funding of new kissing gates for the zig-zag path and a new notice board at the Bell Lane / College Lane junction.

Solar Farm: Your council continues to liaise with landowner and operators to ensure all planning conditions are met. This involved changes to fencing installed and noise reduction measures in 2012 and in 2013 we have been monitoring the noise.

Telecoms mast (screen planting): The planting of 10 Holly and 10 Hazel protected by spiral rabbit guards a year ago is we hope going to start to have an impact in 2014..

Veolia site: Your council and Gavin Park Weir in particular has continued to liaise with Veolia in respect of a number of issues including litter; the screening on A339 and Lorries lining up outside the site and blocking Bushywarren Lane.

Manor Farm, Farleigh Wallop, Solar Farm: Councillors have been to see the site (near the Farleigh AD plant). It is large (Nearly four times the size of Bushywarren Lane solar farm. However noise and visual impact are much less due to proximity to the M3. We have a number of concerns, including that all assurances that are given that the site will not become a brown field site for housing in 25 years are cast iron.

TAG Farnborough: We were not initially consulted under the planning process but the Lasham Gliding Club drew our attention to the “airspace grab” that was in process. TAG Farnborough were seeking more airspace than Gatwick. This could have knock on effects for not only the Gliding Club but also private flying all over the South of England. Your Council commented on the proposals taking the view both that Lasham is a national asset and worth supporting and that private aviation has a place and its needs need to be taken into account and therefore that the “airspace grab” was inappropriately excessive.

Affordable Housing

I repeat what I said last year. The current transition to a new planning environment and new Basingstoke & Deane local plan/core strategy has allowed no progress as yet on developing cross subsidy schemes to allow building more affordable housing in Ellisfield at an acceptable scale.

I attended an annual conference on rural affordable housing where some potentially useful contacts were made including with the CEO of Hastoe. She assured me they would like to revisit what they could do in Ellisfield. (Hastoe operate the affordable housing in Herriard). I also subsequently met with their senior manager in charge of the South East.

We also commented on the Local Plan to try and improve its wording relative to rural affordable housing development. Our proposals were rejected. However the important thing to note is that cross subsidy IS now contemplated for rural schemes and there is great flexibility for any scheme that the Parish Council support. We similarly commented on the Community Infrastructure Levy

The reality however is this remains on ice until the approval of BDBC's new Core Strategy in April 2015 – 2 years late!!

On a positive note one problem of matching housing needs to size of affordable home has been solved by two families in Farriers Field swapping houses.

Planning Applications & Consultations

The Council was involved in commenting on twelve planning applications.

The Council responded to BDBC's consultation on their Pre-Submission Local Plan 2011 to 2029

Neighbourhood Plan

The tentative conclusion we have reached is that we are too small to develop one of these.

Routine Areas of Focus and Other Items

Highways & other rights of way

As always there has been regular contact between David Richards and Hampshire Highways about potholes, grips, gullies, ditches, silt-traps and grit bins.

Burial Ground

Sadly there were two burials during the year.

Maintenance of Land and Property

Ellisfield Volunteers continue to mow the Burial Ground; Lower Common; and Gravel Pits for the Parish Council and their quote of £1,450 for 2014/15 which was £150 less than in 2013/4 was 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. The mowing schedule can be seen on the village website and there are one or two slots remaining to be filled.

Hill Farm Pond

The pond is looking ever more established and is enjoyed by wildlife and humans alike.

Phone Box

During the course of last year Florence de Jersey Lowney worked on a project for her Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award to maintain and improve where possible this mini library/book/DVD exchange.

Environment

No matters of significance in the year.

Village Website

Paul Turner has taken over the day-to-day operation of the village website. You may remember in 2012 we were informed in April that BDBC were intending to cease supporting our and other parishes' sites. We asked Paul Turner to investigate our options and he came back with the design of a completely new and updated website which he now keeps constantly up to date, liaising with all village organisations. More recently it has been decided by your Council with his agreement that we should take back the maintenance of the Parish Council part of the web site and we are looking for a volunteer to help us. What should happen to the remainder of the site is still being discussed with Paul. He is adamant that it would be best if he ran it independently of the Parish Council or any other village organisation. We are uncomfortable with this but we would be interested in the views of residents. One merit of his proposal is that he will devote most energy if he is allowed to be a free spirit and there is something to be said for that.

Broadband

The issue of slow broadband speeds is one which your council continues to address. Cllr Julian Wright mainly and I (a little) have been engaging with HCC and other bodies on this. Ellisfield's speeds remain atrocious. The current situation is:

1. Hampshire County Council has signed a contract with BT for a programme that will roll out super-fast broadband to 90% of premises across the county by the end of 2015.
2. There are many rural premises in Hampshire within the final 10% that have broadband speeds less than the 2 mega-bit minimum standard. In these cases, which includes Ellisfield, HCC will offer point solutions to individual properties based on satellite, 4G

or other technologies but this is currently scheduled for the final part of the three-year roll-out .

3. Julian continues working quite closely with HCC and others to see what opportunities there may be for a comprehensive permanent solution, to super-fast standard, for Ellisfield and how this might be funded.

4. All this is taking time and there are clearly some in the village who would like to invest in an immediate solution, albeit potentially a stop-gap. Julian has become something of an expert in the alternatives.

The Fox Inn

We were very pleased to welcome Sue and Graham Dove at The Fox Inn on 1st July 2013. Do give them your support in their endeavours to breathe new life into our lovely village pub – we don't want to lose it

Welcome Packs

During 2012/13 six 'Welcome Pack' were given to new residents; Alison and Graham Dodson and daughter Fiona, renting Kandahar; Paul Brown and April Carole, 1 Widmoor Cottages; Jeanette and Dirk Bacon, Oak View; Glenn and Rachel Shaw Hill Farm Cottages; Simon and Meryn Watts, renting Falconers; Tim Thomas and Maggie Roberts 1 Cannon Close.

Police and Neighbourhood Watch

PC Reid regularly attends Parish Council meetings and thankfully reports low crime figures for our village whilst warning against complacency, particularly regarding distraction burglaries. Hannah Houstin-Lacey continues to keep us all informed through the Neighbourhood Watch network of suspicious or illegal activity in our area with the perennial message to please continue to report any suspicious vehicles, people or incidents.

Hannah Houstin-Lacey would like to stand down by the end of the year as volunteer Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for Ellisfield. Anyone interested in taking over this role should contact Cllr Caroline Cazenove for more information.

PC Reid continues to encourage all residents, who may not have done so already, to sign up to their local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators e-mail list. A quick and very easy way to receive current information; easy for the co-ordinators too, who can quickly keep you up-to-date with news, from PC Reid, about the crime in your area or police requests for information regarding witness appeals etc. If you haven't already done so, please do consider providing your e-mail address to Hannah - laconsult@btinternet.com

Litter Picking and other environmental concerns

Litter picking. Our thanks go to Ellie Rudd and Scott Claessens who performed this very necessary task.

Memorial Hall

Rose Taplin continues to attend Memorial Hall meetings as the parish council representative. The Memorial Hall Committee has been reconstituted. Prompted partly by the sad illness of Hilary Ferranti –

Chairman for many years the year has seen Ray Reed take on that role. Jane Evans and Christine Turner stand down after many years of devoted service as bookings secretary (25 years) and treasurer (16 years) respectively. Their places have been taken by Susie Deane as new Treasurer and Tony Matthews as Bookings Clerk. The rest of the committee comprises Joanne Thomas (Secretary) and nominated representatives of the following village organisations: Horticultural Society (Meg Freeman) Ladies Club (Tracey Gilvear).

Lastly there are the three "ex-officio" committee members: Rector Rev Stephen Mourant and Churchwardens, Bernard Cazenove and Peter Chilton.

Finance

2013/14 Accounts

Last year's draft accounts are in Section 2 of this Report.

2014/15 Budget and Precept

The budget for the coming year is in Section 3 of this Report. Once the budget had been discussed and agreed at the November 2013 meeting, the council then had to decide on the actual precept.

As you will see, the amount decided on was £5,521 – no increase on last year and the council 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.

Objectives for 2014/15

This year your council decided to set itself some objectives. These are:

- Broadband: secure a private quotation from BT for fast broadband for Ellisfield and a fair hearing for Ellisfield at the next Hampshire County Council procurement stage
- Veolia: to finally get a resolution to litter & lorry issues
- Manor Farm Solar: influence and shape constructively the detailed implementation of this scheme using experience gained with the Bushywarren Lane solar farm

Conclusion

I would like to thank my colleagues (Caroline Cazenove, Gavin Park-Weir, David Richards, Rose Taplin, and Julian Wright) who all contribute to our common goal of looking after the interests of the village.

Jacqui Matthews, whose calmness, professionalism and enthusiasm has been invaluable since her appointment as Parish Clerk in August 2004, has also to be especially thanked; as must be Ted Dowson for

giving of his time in completing the Internal Audit of the 2012/13 Accounts and who has kindly agreed to carry out this role again for 2013/14.

It has been a privilege being Chairman for the past year.

Tim Guinness Chairman