



WEST HOATHLY PARISH COUNCIL

representing Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly

The Parish Office North Lane West Hoathly West Sussex RH19 4QG

Tel: 01342 811301 email: clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk

Annual Report of the Parish Council for year 2020/2021

Parish Council Update

The Parish Council represents the interests of the communities of Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly. It does this in the following ways:

It:

- Looks after the assets that the Council owns;
- Changes/improves things by undertaking projects; and
- Lobbies and makes representations to other authorities and organisations on matters of concern to residents.

In the last year, your Parish Council has looked after the parish owned assets:

- Finche Field and the Allotments;
- North Lane Rec, Pavilion, Playground and Toilets;
- Sharpthorne "Old" Playground;
- Grit Bins, Dog Bins and Traditional White Finger Signposts.
- Bluebell Woods

In the last year, your Parish Council has undertaken the following projects:

Pavilion

Following approval of the planning application, work has continued with the Pavilion replacement project. The working group meet regularly to discuss progress and make recommendations to the Parish Council for items that need approval.

A soil sample survey has recently taken place to establish the requirements for the foundations and an updated tree report has been requested.

Some smaller grants have been identified but work is still ongoing to find suitable larger grants that will support the project.

Bluebell Woods

Bluebell Woods is now a parish owned asset after the completion of the transfer agreement in 2020. A working group has been formed that includes parish councillors and Bluebell Lane residents. Bluebell Woods, similarly, to the Pavilion working group, meet regularly and make recommendations to the Parish Council for items that need approval. Work has begun to clear the site of the large amount of debris, as well as

addressing the drainage issues. It is expected to be a long-term project but once complete, a great asset to our community.

Community Orchard

Following a local resident's successful proposal, Finche Field now houses 40 apple, pear, and plum trees. These trees have been purchased by donations from members of the local community and a generous grant. It is hoped that the orchard will be enjoyed by the community for many years to come.

Parish Council Website

The Parish Council has successfully transferred to a new website www.westhoathly.gov.uk where all meeting information can be found, as well as local news and key information.

As part of the new website, we are able to offer a local Directory and "What's on" calendar as part of the Community Page.

Local businesses, organisations and individuals are welcome to advertise on these pages free of charge.

Portable SID

West Hoathly Parish Council now has use of two portable Speed Indicator Devices. These devices are shared on a rota basis with neighbouring parishes and are in the parish for six weeks at a time, four times a year.

These devices will help with the continued effort to address the speeding issues on the C319.

Planning

- In its representative role the Parish Council has:
 - Commented upon 71 Planning Applications. Of the 71 applications 10 were for work on trees in a Conservation Area, 59 for building alterations or extensions and 2 for new residential dwellings.

The Parish Council objected to both the new residential dwellings at Long Meadow, Station Road and Marjac, Sharpthorne. The developments are against the Neighbourhood plan and the need for smaller dwellings suited to the needs of an aging population, first time buyers and young families.

The Parish Council asked District Councilors to call-in both applications but unfortunately, they were denied on the basis that the alterations to the application at Long Meadow were within permitted development and that whilst the particular preference for 2 or 3 bedroom houses as per the Neighbourhood Plan was noted, the policy does not prohibit 4 bedroom houses. On this basis it was considered that there was not a robust planning reason to refuse planning permission.

Chairman's Annual Report

As an unusual year comes to an end I reflect that I have not yet chaired a meeting in person and have only attended meetings via Zoom, Teams etc.. Leanne Andrews, our new Clerk, was appointed after a Zoom interview and has not yet attended any meetings except by video link. I look forward to the resumption of real meetings in the Village Hall once it is safe to do so both under the regulations and in comfort and safety for members of the public and our Council members.

The three major projects at the Rec, at Bluebell Wood and the Village Hall are progressing well, Bluebell Wood in particular and I would like to pay especial thanks to Claire Hilton for leading the Working Group so effectively.

The Parish Council pays ongoing attention to issues with the C319 and does everything within its powers to liaise with the relevant authorities. At the Parish Assembly we have both the Highways Authority and the Sussex police in attendance to provide updates and to take comments and questions. The Parish Council is also monitoring and in regular contact with Philpotts Quarry and Ibstock brickworks. I expect developments to occur with the brickworks during the coming year as Ibstock make plans for the expected change of use at the site following closure during 2020.

The Parish Council continues to maintain and where necessary build up reserves for expected future spending on Bluebell Wood, the Pavillion on the Rec, a new Neighbourhood Plan and if contested, the next Parish Council election in 2023. Despite these demands the Parish Council managed to keep the increase in the precept to the lowest level for some years.

At a County level there was some disruption to the popular and successful joint venture service company that looked after the combined interests of Town and Parish Councils in West Sussex, East Sussex and Surrey. The structure was dissolved at the start of 2021 and I have been elected Chairman of the West Sussex Association. I am pleased to say that ongoing advice, legal and training services have continued to be available in a similar fashion and at a reduced cost. Going forward I will be liaising with both East Sussex and Surrey Associations to re-establish a joint venture structure to benefit from the obvious economies of scale and the increased lobby power of a combined association at national level.

I would like to say a special thank you to Helen Schofield, the Parish Clerk for more than twelve years, who retired at Christmas. To welcome Leanne Andrews to the post which she has been shadowing as Assistant Clerk since last summer until taking over from Helen after Christmas. To say thank you to all my fellow Council members who have worked so hard during a trying year. Also to our local part time and casual employees who make such a difference to the appearance of our internal and external assets and whose contribution behind the scenes is so important but would only be noticed if it was absent.

Douglas Denham St Pinnock, Chairman

Financial Matters

Parish Council

- Income

During the financial year, the Parish Council received £81,089.

Of this

- £72,953 came from the precept.
- Other sources of income were allotment rent, football fees for use of North Lane Rec, grants and a small amount for local commercial advertising on the Hoathly Hub.

- Expenditure

The Council made payments of £70,360 covering salaries and other administrative costs, maintenance of parish assets and projects.

54% of the Parish Council's expenditure was spent on General Admin activities, 46% was spent on managing Parish owned assets.

Of the General Admin expenditure:

- 69% is salary related including pensions (37% of total expenditure)
- 4% is insurance, audit fees etc
- 7% is grants and donations.

The total grant budget is currently £3,550. Most grants are small or given for a specific purpose. The largest grants are those made to St Margaret's PCC and Highbrook PCC in both cases for the maintenance of the churchyards and a donation to the Highbrook Village Hall Management Committee. The Parish Council also provides a grant to the Ashdown Forest Conservators.

Trustees of West Hoathly Village Hall

The Village Hall is the responsibility of the Parish Council as sole trustees. Its Management Committee is made up of 4 – 5 Councillors plus representatives from the various users, but unfortunately at the present time we do not have any representatives from any of the users though these would be very welcome to join us.

We meet three times a year, but the day-to-day running of the hall is undertaken by Leanne Andrews, our Clerk,

In the past year, the committee has made some improvements to the flat kitchen and lobby, including some work to help boost the energy efficiency. These essential works ensure the flat can continue be rented.

During this time, it was noted that there was a small leak around the chimney, this resulted in some emergency repair work to rectify the problem.

Following the positive Parish consultation, the Parish Council will shortly be applying for a loan of £20,000 from the Public Works Loan Board.

The money will be used to create a purpose-built archive store in the Village Hall so that the Local History Archive is available for all.

The work will involve upgrading the old chair and table store in the Village Hall to make it suitable to house the Local History Archive. In order to accommodate the archive store, it will be necessary to replace the existing staircase to the flat.

The Trustees of West Hoathly Village Hall agree their own budget.

- Income

During the period April 2020 to March 2021, the Trustees received £18,214.

Of this

- £4,950 came from the rental of the flat above the Hall.
- The remainder came from hiring of the Hall and a grant.

- Expenditure

The Trustees made payments of £17,112.

During the past year, the hall has seen a significant reduction in hire due to Covid restrictions.

In normal circumstance the hall benefits from regular hiring from groups like the West Hoathly Pre-School, Sharpthorne and West Hoathly WI groups, Karate, Table Tennis and Pilates groups along with the Parent Toddler group, Brownies and Rainbows.

We are steadily starting to see these groups return, in line with government guideline.

Regular Annual events include the Local History Archive Exhibition and the British Legion Annual Flower and Produce show. It is also possible, subject to availability to hire tables, chairs and crockery for events at home.

Focus for the year 2020/2021

In addition to ongoing tasks, the Parish Council plans to;

- Continue with the project to replace the Pavilion on North Lane Rec
- Make improvements to footpath WH1
- Continue with the project to make Bluebell Woods a safe area for all to use.
- Work with the Village Hall Management Committee to secure loan funding for the improvement works to the Village Hall and the Local History Archive.
- Manage the trees and woodland on Council owned land with particular regard to the problems arising from Ash Die-back Disease.

The Parish Council will continue to make representations to other authorities and organisations about matters of concern to residents and will press for improvements wherever possible.