

HAWKLEY PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2020

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Annual Parish Meeting is a standing meeting which provides an annual opportunity for your councillors to report on their activities over the last year. The Parish extends from near Bradshott on the other side of the Selbourne Road, from Grange Farm in Empshott, down to Snailing Lane then through to Oakshott.

Coronavirus

The Parish Council (HPC) is working closely with the Hawkley Area Support Group and has helped establish processes to support residents self-isolating because of the current crisis. HPC has set aside funds to help facilitate HASG's activities which are reported through its periodic Newsletter and are not repeated here. If however you need help or support in these difficult times, please don't hesitate to contact the Steering Group: HawkleyAreaSG@outlook.com

Turning now to HPC, we have accomplished a great deal in addition our routine responsibilities.

Planning

Planning applications relating to the parish are dealt with by the Planning Committee; the vast majority of applications require site visits and the Planning Committee then normally meets to decide on our response. They dealt with 19 applications, convening 7 separate planning committee meetings in addition to those applications dealt with in the normal Parish Council meetings.

This is not a trivial undertaking so many thanks to Planning Chairman [Geoff Brighton](#) and committee members [Susan Sinclair](#) and [Jo Humphrey](#).

Traffic

[The Traffic Working Party, tirelessly led by Jo Humphrey, deserves our thanks for assiduously pursuing](#) all avenues and ultimately settling on the practical and implementable proposals which were completed in the second half of last year. The heritage style village signs at Upper and Lower Green have been well received and the road markings and signage on Pockocks Lane have been completed.

The whole project cost a little over £5,000 but was largely funded by a combination of grants from our District & County Councillors – for which many thanks to [Keith Budden](#) and [Russell Oppenheimer](#) - and from S106 levies made by SDNP on new building projects in the national park.

The Watersplash in near Empshott Green became quite slippery with algae last winter - a number of people were injured there. Local residents built a temporary weir to protect wildlife. Thanks to HCC which promptly resurfaced the ford; some new signage is needed before the ford re-established.

Rural security & crime

The increasing level of break-ins to barns and vehicles has heightened residents' concerns. Intruders have broken into at least two houses while the occupants slept. At least one resident has suffered four incidents in the last 18 months. We have lobbied our MP, the County and District Councils and the Police Commissioner (who won a 5% increase in this year's budget for an increase in headcount). They all say that, while they can encourage and advise, it is the Hampshire Constabulary itself that sets policing priorities.

We then invited the Police Inspector responsible for rural crime to talk at this Meeting and are extremely disappointed that they chose to cancel at short notice – well before this crisis made cancellation inevitable.

However, it is clear that the majority of the crime we hear about is not being reported to the police – if it's not reported it doesn't get into the statistics used to set policing priorities. If you are victim of a crime it's in everyone's interest for you to report it.

Upper Green Tree

The sickly horse chestnut tree was replaced by a Zelkova Serrata last summer and has been kept watered by [Jeremy Philp](#) and [Peter Humphrey](#) and is now coming into leaf this year. [Dominic Palmer](#) has now refurbished the bench and it will be replaced in due course.

Children' Playground

We have annual RoSPA inspections and carry out resulting remedial work as required. This year, we replaced all of the swings, weeded the surface and laid five cubic metres of new wood chip on the surface. The total cost was about £1,025, substantially funded by a £958 of Community Infrastructure Levies collected by SDNP on new developments in our parish. The labour for this, together with regular strimming of the grass surround, is provided by a rota of parents of children who use the play area. Thanks to [Simon Dixon](#) who managed the work and oversees the rota.

Village Notice boards

We replaced the Lower Green noticeboard last year. The Upper Green board has also now been replaced at a cost of £940 which was funded by SDNP from its S106 levies.

Broadband

High speed broadband is now available to the vast majority of those residents with 01730 827xxx numbers as a result of a broadband expansion project largely funded by HCC. However, this solution did not extend to those with 01420 538xxx numbers.

[Nick Walker](#) has been working hard to initiate a project using other grant based funding using the Gigabit Rural Voucher Scheme that will not cover the cost; there is a £40,000 shortfall. Nick is working with [John Fisher](#) and [Peter Morton](#) to find a way to plug that hole.

Mobile Phones

EE now has planning consent to erect a mobile phone mast in the western hedgerow at the top of Hawkley Hill. The mobile mast is primarily to support the emergency services but will also provide coverage for EE, and probably O₂ mobile networks. We have asked for an implementation date but the Coronavirus has put the project on hold.

Telephone Kiosks

BT are keen to eliminate public telephone boxes wherever they can in order to reduce their maintenance burden and periodically have sought to close ours at Upper and Lower Green. The Upper Green box is listed and so can't be removed. We have successfully argued that the phone service be

retained since it fulfils an important public service in an area where there is no mobile coverage. However, there are less than 10 calls made from it each year.

We have not been successful at Lower Green. The phone has been removed but HPC has adopted the box and will maintain it using labour supplied by a working party of Lower Green residents. We are hopeful that the now redundant adjacent telegraph pole will be removed.

Maintenance of Greens, Roads, verges and footpaths

We oversee the maintenance of the greens, ponds and byways around the Parish.

Last winter, it became clear that some of the older trees on Lower Green had become diseased and needed urgent attention which [Alasdair Marr](#) kindly carried out promptly and at short notice –and for which many thanks. Substantially all of the cost was covered by a £1,000 grant from our District Councillor, [Charles Louission](#).

We routinely ensure that the parish roads, verges, ditches, ponds and drains are kept clear and tidy. When work is needed, we encourage HCC to take action or, if not, we deal with it ourselves.

We arrange for the Greens to be cut. Thanks to [Charlie Knowles](#) and [Dominic Palmer](#) keeping them in shape. However, while HCC will trim dangerous ‘sightlines’ on request, it has substantially reduced the maintenance of the verges more generally as a result of budget pressure. We do not know what they plan for this financial year.

For the last couple of years we have paid a contractor to cut the verges in November and they then remain reasonably tidy until towards the end of May; HPC believes it money well spent. We have made provision in this year’s budget for a second cut if HCC have not done so by early August.

We participate in the Lengthsman Scheme funded by HCC in which gives us one man-day’s labour each quarter to do minor maintenance tasks: e.g. to cut back hedges and overgrowth, pick litter and maintain road signs, ditches footpaths and stiles. We recently used some of this labour to erect a handrail up the bank into the field above Mabbots.

Every year, the path on the Hangers Way behind Homefield Cottages becomes a quagmire and so last autumn we installed some drainage at the critical point and laid scalpings to keep it dry underfoot. This has been reasonably successful and the scalpings were extended this year. There remains a couple patches which would benefit from future attention.

Donations and Grants

We do have the capacity to make small grants and donations to activities with a local impact. Again this year we supported Butser-Homestart, East Hampshire Citizens Advice Bureau and the Rosemary Foundation with a new contributions to Hampshire Air Ambulance.

GDPR

We have established ‘official’ email addresses for councillors to use on HPC business with central cloud based storage of all mails sent and received. This required the purchase of a new computer for our Clerk. We also began building created our own HPC mailing directory for use on parish business. This is now largely complete.

Finances

Our annual precept was increased to £13,000 last year (collected through your Council Taxes) reflecting increasing maintenance burden. Even so, our total expenditure in FY19-20, at £19,617 was over twice our average annual expenditure over the previous four years but the overspend has been funded by £6,100 of grants leaving our reserves intact with £12, 415 carried forward to next year.

All that remains is for me to thank the members of the Parish Council generally for their commitment to the task. You might think that the limited number of meetings would mean that little effort is required but, if the job is to be done properly, you'd be surprised how much time they have to put in. So many thanks.

Lastly, heartfelt thanks to our Parish Clerk, [Sue Harwood](#).

David Caukill

Chair

Hawkley Parish Council