

Report on the Parish Council's business for 2020/21

The year 2020 to 2021 has been a unique year. No one has escaped the fallout from this Covid pandemic and for some, this has been a terrible year. Indeed, we need to express our greatest sympathies to any residents who have fallen ill, been bereaved or lost their livelihood. We must hope that the forthcoming year will be much easier for everyone. Yet, not everything has been gloomy. Those of us who had our vaccines at Christs Hospital School will have been impressed by the scientists' success in rolling out vaccines so speedily, the sheer efficiency of the whole inoculation process and the dedication of the nurses, doctors and volunteers who helped to make us safe. I think we should record our thanks to all these people but also to care-workers, essential workers and those who looked out for others and helped them get through this most difficult of years.

Throughout the year, councillors have continued to serve our residents. They too are volunteers and I would like to thank them all for studying planning applications, and reading a lot of material, some of it pretty dry and complicated. I would particularly like to thank Tom, who has enabled us to hold our meetings via Zoom and kept our finances straight. Thanks also go to Norman, my vice chair for his support, and who has worked behind the scenes with many admin tasks and enquiries. I would guess that they have spent many hours per week on parish business.

I would therefore like to say a big thank to all councillors for their work and support. It has been crucial to the Parish Council's successes this year.

Our District Councillor, Toni Bradnum has attended virtually every Parish meeting during the past year and provided us with useful information from HDC.

Our County Councillor is also assiduous in attending our Parish meetings and following up issues with various County Council staff. We are very grateful Nigel.

Next, I must also mention our tree wardens Jill Chaytor and Paddy and Penny Bullen. They usually visit and look at every application for surgery to trees, or to fell them. I am very grateful to them.

Finally, our thanks must go to our brilliant clerk, Sarah. Although Sarah only works three days per week for us, she has got through an amazing amount of work. Importantly, she makes sure that everything we do is done properly and correctly. In appreciation, on the councillors' behalf, I shall be giving her a small gift.

As you might be realising by now, this Parish Council is just one big team of volunteers. Only our clerk is paid, to keep us in good order!

Circumstances change and like all organisations, things move on. During the year, we were joined by new Councillors Denise Harber, John Bromley and Roger Cato.

Planning continues to be a major and increasing part of the Parish Council's work. During the last year, the Council has dealt with 92 Planning Applications and 4 Planning Appeals. That amounts to approximately two per week which is a lot, given that some applications can be very long and complicated. However, the Parish Council always examines each application or appeal very carefully and objectively even though Parish Councils have a tiny role when it comes to planning applications.

The Parish Council has also worked with Cowfold, West Grinstead and Shipley Parish Councils to challenge the inclusion of Buck Barn in HDC's Local Plan. Buck Barn has become especially worrying since the developer recently revealed that he now wants to extend the site to include a fifty-acre Industrial Estate and a new access road system off the A24, just south of the Southwater south roundabout. Clearly, this could have a big impact on Copsale and all the country lanes that pass through our hamlets on the way to Copsale.

In addition to all this work on Planning, the Parish Council has also commented on the Government's radical White Papers on "Planning for the Future" and on Permitted Development Rights. Whilst this makes for a lot of reading and writing, it keeps the Parish up to date with the way Planning is likely to change in the future.

The Neighbourhood Plan So far, thanks to the Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish has not faced large-scale developments like Broadbridge Heath, Ashington and Billingshurst. In its Neighbourhood Plan, Nuthurst went for small developments within the Built-up Area Boundary of Mannings Heath and adjoining other homes in the hamlets. Of the nine sites in our Neighbourhood

Plan, three have already been developed at Nuthurst Street, Monks Gate and opposite the Dun Horse. Although the Parish wants small starter homes or ones for down-sizers, it faces developers who simply want to put in large, more prestigious houses, simply because they yield higher profits. The Parish tries to resist this happening for two reasons. Firstly, when the Parish worked on its Neighbourhood Plan, a large majority of residents voted in favour of small houses. Secondly, we already have a considerable stock of existing large houses in the Parish.

The present Neighbourhood Plan provides for approximately 50 new houses. Parishes are still waiting to hear from HDC whether their housing numbers are to increase, or not.

The Parish Plan This is an inventory of all the projects that the Parish Council wishes to work on. During the past year, the Parish Council has been considering improvements to the children's playground on the village green and leisure facilities for older children. It is also committed to trying to improve the safety of people wanting to cross the A281 to visit the garage shop. And, it has already, after very lengthy negotiations with WSCC Highways, managed to obtain permission to install a low fence on the triangle by the Dun Horse to stop cars parking forward onto the A281 and blocking vision.

The Parish Survey, "Have Your Say" All residents have been asked to complete a ten-minute survey either on-line, or using a paper copy. The survey closed on 23 April. The purpose of the survey was so that the Parish Council could see what things are important to our residents. So far, we have had good feedback from residents about the survey being easy to use. When Action in Rural Sussex has analysed residents' comments, the Parish Council will decide what projects to take forward in its next Parish Plan.

In addition to all the work I've already mentioned, I must add that the Council has also needed to maintain its own Parish assets. These include: the children's playground, some of the street lights, noticeboards, benches, bus shelters and fingerposts. Additionally, this year, the Parish has taken over the ownership and maintenance of the three Heartbeat AED defibrillators from the Heartbeat team. These are sited at Copsale Hall, the Black Horse, Nuthurst and the White Horse, Maplehurst where instructions for their use can also be found.

Support to Local Groups The Parish Council receives its monies from a local tax called the precept. It is levied on all households in the Parish. Therefore, when

the Parish Council spends monies or gives out grants, it is answerable to both residents and the auditor. Last year the Parish democratically decided to support the following groups:

Those who maintain St Andrew's churchyard; the Cricket Club in return for cutting the grass on the village green and the Link magazine who publish a Parish Council article each month.

The Environment We all want our Parish to look pleasant so we can enjoy living here. That's one of the reasons why we put so much time into planning. We particularly try to prevent any barn, stable or shed in a field from becoming a dwelling house and why we try to ensure that every tree that is felled is replaced with another. We have sown more wildflower seeds in the green space at Church Road, Mannings Heath to encourage insects. We must also thank Andrew Ross for donating the new trees that are planted there and the local residents who have watered the trees during the dry spell. We want to preserve our landscape. Perhaps that's one thing that the year 2020/21 has taught us: to get outside and take pleasure in the views and wildlife which is so good for our physical health and mental health too.

The year to come surely has to be better than this year of Covid. After our Survey, we will certainly have some exciting projects to get on with so we need everyone, both councillors and residents to feel enthused and positive. Thank you for listening patiently to this review of the year and I hope you've heard something that may interest you.

Parish Council Finance

I will now ask Tom, the Chair of our Finance Committee, to report on the Parish Council's finances. He will cover the audited accounts for the year 2019/2020, the forecast for the year 2020 to 2021 and the budget for the year 2021/2022 and the proposed grants for the year 2021 to 2022.

Thank Tom and Sarah for all their work in keeping our finances in good order.

Questions on Parish matters from Electors

There have been no written questions submitted, so I will now close the meeting. If anyone raises an unseen question say "please put that question in writing to the Clerk and we will come back to you as soon as possible"

Thank everyone for attending. The next Annual Parish meeting will be held in 2022 at a date to be arranged.