

LISS PARISH
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2017

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 15th March 2017 when 9 members of the Parish Council and 20 parishioners attended.

Mr Keith Budden, Chairman of the Parish Council, presided.

Also in attendance 1 member of the press & Parish Clerk R Bowery.

Apologies were received from Councillors Jerrard & Linsley.

GOOD VILLAGER AWARD

The Chairman had great pleasure in presenting the Good Villager Award to Mrs Sandra Berriman who had been a volunteer at Liss Heart Trust for many years & also worked as a volunteer at the Community Association & the WRVS luncheon club.

Presentations were made to Mr John Neilan & Mr Bob Perry in acknowledgement of their long term involvement with the Liss Conservation Rangers in the maintenance of the Riverside Railway Walk.

A presentation was made to Mrs Judy Medhurst in thanks for the valuable horticultural work in the centre of the village.

The Chairman passed the good wishes of LPC to our tree warden Jeff Davis, last year's recipient of the Good Villager Award, wishing him a speedy recovery from his recent illness.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 16th March 2016 had been circulated. Proposed by Mr Rees and seconded by Mr Pay, they were agreed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING – Mr Rees asked why the accessible toilet proposed to be installed in the village hall in 2016 had not been done. The Clerk replied that the cost had been in excess of expectation & District Council funding options had not materialised; however, the job was in the budget for 17/18, revised tenders had been received & a meeting with EHDC's community officer was scheduled for 27th March. A grant application to EHDC would follow that.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is the last time for at least the next few years that I have the opportunity to address you as Chairman of Liss Parish Council. Our standing orders say that every four years the Chairman must stand down and allow another councillor to take their place, so as a result following an election at our May meeting, one of my esteemed colleagues will take my place.

It has been an absolute honour and pleasure to stand as Chairman of your Parish Council. I have thoroughly enjoyed my term of office and have been proud to represent Liss and Liss Forest and I would like to thank everyone who has supported me over the last four years.

Review of the year

It has been another extremely busy year for the Parish Council, the principal items being the Neighbourhood Plan and the Liss Pavilion project, both of which you will hear updates on later this evening.

You may remember that this time last year there was much talk of devolution and the formation of a South Hampshire combined authority. A small event called 'Brexit' has knocked devolution down the political priority list, and as a result, Hampshire

devolution is now very unlikely to happen for at least another two years, and I would suspect until after the next General Election in 2020.

This year has seen a number of changes for the Parish Council. We were all very sad that Elwyn Thomas passed away in June 2016 and his contribution to the buildings committee, the Liss Pavilion Committee and indeed the Parish Council as a whole is sorely missed. On a personal level, I lost a close friend and confidante.

We have seen changes at District Council level too. Following her brave battle against her illness, we were very sorry to hear that Judy Onslow, who had served as District Councillor for Liss Forest for many years, had passed away. Judy's passing left a very large gap to fill, and I was honoured to be asked to stand as a candidate in the election for her replacement and of course delighted when I was duly elected in July of last year. I have found a steep learning curve in finding the ways the District Council works internally, but I hope I am beginning to make my presence felt and doing a good job of standing up for the hopes and concerns of Liss Forest residents (as well as the other areas in my ward).

Not long after our annual meeting last year, we had the beacon lighting for the Queen's Birthday at Liss Junior School. I would like to say thankyou to the school staff for their co-operation in setting up the event, and of course thankyou to the many village residents who turned out to watch the beacon lighting (and Liss Band for providing excellent entertainment).

The Remembrance Day parade was very well attended as we have become used to in Liss, and it was particularly good this year to see Liss Athletic and in particular their junior teams, play an active part in proceedings.

This year has seen the closure of the Temple Inn in Liss Forest. We had a very well attended parish council meeting here last month and the Parish Council has undertaken the initial steps needed to get the Temple Inn registered as an asset of community value.

Residents in Liss Forest have now established a 'Save the Temple Inn' committee and I am working with them to not only drive forward the registration as a community asset but to also work on plans for the future of the Temple Inn, which, fingers crossed, will see it retained as a community venue in Liss Forest for a good number of years to come.

Neighbourhood plan

Vice-Admiral Sir John Dunt, KCB has continued to do a great job in guiding the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and the whole team have once again put in a tremendous number of hours of work on the plan.

The plan has now been submitted to the South Downs National Park and has just begun the process of being examined by an Independent Examiner, before being presented to the village for a referendum later this year. I won't say any more on the Neighbourhood Plan as Roger Hargreaves will be making a short presentation on the plan, to bring everyone up to date, later this evening.

I would like to say thankyou to Sir John Dunt, Roger Hargreaves, Sue Halstead and Angela Wright and a number of local residents, including Phil Deacon, Stephen Mannerings, Roger Mullenger, Michael Oakley, Charmian Porton, Dan Steer and Adam Tither for their outstanding work on the plan.

Liss Pavilion Project

The Pavilion committee, chaired by Brian Mayo, has continued to work hard to find a solution for the Liss Pavilion. Andy Smith will be giving a presentation about the Pavilion project a little later this evening. I would personally like to once again pay tribute to all members of the Pavilion committee for the effort and man hours they have put into the project this year.

Village Hall

The provision of a new disabled toilet facility here in the Village Hall has taken longer than we originally hoped, however we remain hopeful that the new facility will be open later this year.

Our District Councillors have kindly contributed grants to enable the replacement of the stage curtains here in the village hall. The current curtains have served us well for many years but it is time to replace them.

The Village Hall featured in the national press at the end of the last year when The Times sent a reporter and photographer to sample the excellent work of the Thursday Lunch Club.

East Hampshire Rail Partnership

We have continued to play an active part in the East Hampshire Rail Partnership, a joint operation between South West Trains, Network Rail, South Downs National Park, EHDC and HCC to improve the environment and use of the railway stations at Liphook, Liss, Petersfield and Rowland's Castle.

The new ticket machine on the up platform is now fully operational. We also have two new features at the railway station. Inside the booking office there is a model of the Longmoor Military Railway, kindly provided by Tim Pay and his colleagues from the Liss Model Railway Group.

The other new feature is an information board near the entrance to the station, provided by the South Downs National Park and giving useful information on the local area to walkers and other visitors arriving by train.

An ambitious project is planned for the coming year, of replacing the rather drab grey vinyls inside the booking office with a selection of murals. One of the murals will be provided by a local artist, while the others will be provided by the young people at the Crossover Centre. The project has been enthusiastically welcomed by Georgie and the team of volunteers at the Crossover Centre and having seen the output of the brainstorming session they held with the young people a few weeks ago, I'm really looking forward to seeing their colourful murals in place. The project is two fold in its outcome: brightening the environment for people using the station and at the same time giving the young people a 'sense of ownership' in their local community.

Flood Action Group

Our District Councillor, Mike Kendall has done a great job leading the flood action group and we now have a firm group of volunteers to monitor levels of the River Rother and other flooding matters.

The Flood Action Group has commissioned consultants to investigate options to see what can be done to minimise the possibility of a repeat of the flooding problems the village experienced in the winter of 2013/14.

Allotments

It is good to see a very high level usage of allotments this year, and we have only a few vacant plots. We repeated the annual allotment holders meeting which was well received.

Xmas Fair

The Christmas fare was again very successful & congratulations go to the group of village traders who led the organisation. Planning is already underway for the next event in December of this year.

Liss Parish Council

As I mentioned at the beginning of my report, we were very sad to lose Elywn Thomas in June last year. During the course of the year we also saw Andy Gilbertson & Yvonne Heaton leave the Parish Council. On a positive note, we have been very pleased to welcome Lianne McDonald to the council, and she has already made a valuable contribution to council activity. We do have a current vacancy for a parish councillor, so if you are interested in joining us, and would like to learn more of what the role has

to offer, please either speak with any of us later this evening or pop into the Parish Office (which is just behind this hall, accessed by the path to the right).

We rely on good relationships with East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park and Hampshire County Council. I would like to give special thanks for the work and co-operation received from our County Councillor, Vaughan Clarke, who has been an excellent County Councillor for our area for a number of years but has decided to retire at the elections in May to free up time for other interests. We look forward to working with his successor in due course. I would also like to thank our District Councillors, Mike Kendall and Laetitia Piennar. In July, I became the District Councillor for Liss Forest, together with Greatham and Hawkley, and I hope have proved to be a useful conduit between the Parish Council and the District Council. My thanks go to all our Parish Councillors for their work on behalf of the village and I would especially like to thank my committee chairmen, Sue Halstead for the continued good work she does on planning and her work with the Neighbourhood Plan, Angela Wright for ensuring we stay on track financially and her work on staff matters, Brian Mayo for taking the reins on the Buildings Committee following in the footsteps of Elwyn Thomas, Andy Smith for procedures, Howard Linsley for his work on the Highways committee and David Dodds for the great work he has done on the grounds committee.

Dick Bowery continues to provide excellent service as our clerk, ably assisted by Sarah Smith. They have now been joined by Frances Cook as our administration assistant, who has helped free up some time for Sarah Smith to take on more of the clerk's role from Dick as he prepares for his eventual retirement. They all continue to be a tremendous asset to the Council. So thank you Dick, Sarah and Frances for all of the work you do, and for keeping us working effectively and moving the village forward. Luke and the grounds staff continue to do a great job on our open spaces and I thank them for the effort they put in all weathers.

Tim, as always, continues to do a great job as caretaker of this hall and the pavilion and I would like to also like to thank Michael for the excellent job he does as our litter picker keeping the village looking clean and tidy.

I hope you will join with me now in showing your appreciation of the work of the councillors and council staff in the traditional way.

The Boundary Commission are conducting a review of the East Hampshire District Council ward boundaries this year. They are currently conducting the initial stage of their review which will establish whether they feel we have the correct total number of councillors at East Hampshire District Council. Once that figure is settled they will then move on to look at the individual ward boundaries, although they have told us that where possible they will look to observe parish boundaries and try to use these as ward boundaries where possible.

The review has been brought about a) because we have not had a review of the boundaries for over ten years and b) because recent developments in Medstead and Four Marks, and the forthcoming major developments in Whitehill/Bordon have skewed the figures so that there is currently a large disparity between the number of residents in each ward. The review will try to estimate likely populations by 2023 when coming to its proposed ward boundaries.

There will be two opportunities for the public to comment on the proposals once they are published, firstly from 9th May 2017 until 17th July 2017 to comment on the draft proposals and then again from 17th October 2017 until 11th December 2017 to comment on the final proposals.

Once both rounds of consultation are complete, their proposals will go before Parliament to be embedded into law, and will take practical effect from the next round of EHDC elections in May 2019.

Finally, East Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils nominated our own

Sue Halstead as their nomination this year for a place at a Buckingham Palace garden party. I am very pleased to be able to let you know that this nomination was successful, Sue will be attending one of the Queen's Garden Parties, and indeed I hear she is already shopping for a new hat! Congratulations Sue, it is good to see the thousands of hours you have put into the working of local government here in Liss being properly recognised.

The Chairman then invited Mr Hubber of Liss Tennis Club to address the meeting. Mr Hubber gave a presentation detailing the activities of the tennis club that included juniors, use of the court by the Crossover Youth Centre & Liss Junior School. He added that for seniors there were bring a friend events planned. The installation of flood lights had enabled longer playing hours.

Cllr Halstead then made a plea for more volunteers to help maintain the various flower beds around the village & also to resurrect the Liss in Bloom event. She added that a meeting to progress these matters would be held shortly.

UPDATE ON THE LISS PAVILION DEVELOPMENT

Cllr Smith gave a powerpoint presentation detailing the progress made by the Liss Pavilion Development Committee. He stressed that nothing relating to design or layout was set in stone at this point.

Mr Burgess said that the original cost estimate in 2013 was in the region of £350k & at that time a precept premium had been set to raise £79k. Now it was the apparent intention to borrow £350k that would be repaid through the precept over a long period. He asked what had gone wrong with the project & was there a cost beyond which LPC would not proceed.

Cllr Smith replied that at various consultations with the public they had indicated that they were content to bear the cost of the loan in order to get a much needed facility.

Cllr Mayo explained the reasons for the failure of the first two schemes & said that SDNP had caused an escalation of costs by requiring the building & design to be iconic at an entrance to the National Park. In addition some funding schemes had been closed & potential donors lost.

With this revised scheme it was planned to have a pre-application meeting with SDNP to ensure that the revised design would be acceptable.

Cllr Smith said that LPC had abandoned high cost schemes but will get an indicative costing of the revised scheme & then make a decision.

Cllr Mayo added that LPC would only build what it could afford.

UPDATE ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Hargreaves informed the meeting that since the last APM the consultation on the pre-submission draft of the Plan had been completed & showed significant support for the Plan. Some detailed amendments to the plan had been made as a result of the consultation, particularly enhancing the development briefs for the proposed housing sites. The final Plan had been submitted in November last year to the South Downs National Park Authority. The Authority is now taking the Plan through its statutory processes, and the Plan is currently being considered by an independent examiner.

When he has reported on the Plan the Park Authority will make any necessary changes to the Plan and then will hold a referendum in Liss probably in the summer of this year. If a public vote supports the Plan it will be formally adopted by the Park Authority and from then on will be used in deciding on planning applications in Liss.

The Chairman then asked Sir John Dunt, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, to say a few words.

Sir John explained that his task had been relatively easy due to the quality of all members who had served on the various working parties; he paid particular compliment to Roger Hargreaves who had worked endless hours & had provided vast experience; in short he had been awesome. He felt that Roger was worthy of special recognition.

The Chairman then made a special presentation to Cllr Hargreaves in recognition of all of his work on the Liss Neighbourhood Plan.

FINANCE REPORT

Cllr Wright, Chairman of the Finance Committee reviewed the financial report.

The precept for 2016/17 was £165050 and the Council Tax Support Grant was £11726 giving an income of £176776. Contributions were made to the Village Hall, West Liss Recreation Ground and pavilion and the parish allotments. These are all registered charities, which, because of financial regulations, have to be accounted for separately.

Estimated expenditure for the year is anticipated as being largely in line with budget.

Staff costs are increased due to the addition of an administration assistant to the staff complement & budgeted staff restructuring during 2017/18. Employers pension contributions paid to the HCC scheme are rising in excess of inflation with a total increase of 22.9% over the next three years. Included in the budget for 2017/18 is an amount of £5500 for costs of servicing a public works loan for construction costs of the new pavilion development. The unspent £9500 budgeted for new pavilion running costs in 2016/17 will be kept in reserve to finance the pavilion running costs as & when it is completed. Also included in the budget is an amount of £24000 for the cost of creating an accessible toilet in the village hall; this is partly offset by a budgeted grant of £10000 from the District Council.

The Council has set a precept of £182775 for 2017/18 and expects to receive the same Council Tax support grant of £11726. The charge per band D dwelling will therefore be £72.81 compared to £66.28 in 2016/17 an increase of £6.53 or 9.85%.

A broad analysis of total budgeted costs and revenue, including the Charities accounts is as follows:

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Increase/-decrease	
	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>%</u>
Staff costs	92.9	97.5	107.6	10.1	10.36
Insurance	7.3	7.3	8.7	1.4	19.18
General administration	9.8	10.2	10.5	0.3	2.94
Grounds maintenance	15.9	15.4	16.8	1.4	9.09
Village hall costs	9.2	8.5	8.1	-0.4	-4.71
New pavilion running costs	0.0	9.5	0.0	-9.5	-100.00
Grants to local associations	13.9	14.4	12.8	-1.6	-11.11
Neighbourhood Plan costs	5.0	2.0	0.0	-2.0	-100.00
New pavilion loan servicing	0.0	0.0	5.5	5.5	
Capital projects & provisions	23.2	25.6	47.7	22.1	86.33
	<u>177.2</u>	<u>190.4</u>	<u>217.7</u>	<u>27.3</u>	<u>14.34</u>
Funded by:					
Interest & other receipts	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.00
Rental incomes	13.7	13.8	14.5	0.7	5.07
Grant Funding	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0	
From to reserves	-2.9	-0.7	-1.9	-1.2	171.43
	<u>11.5</u>	<u>13.7</u>	<u>23.2</u>	<u>9.5</u>	<u>69.34</u>
Precept	154.0	165.0	182.8	17.8	10.79
Council Tax support grant	11.7	11.7	11.7	0.0	0.00
	<u>177.2</u>	<u>190.4</u>	<u>217.7</u>	<u>27.3</u>	<u>14.34</u>
No. of band D dwellings	2478.28	2490.03	2510.13		

number of other counties, or other public services, such as the police and fire service, or by selling their services on a commercial basis.

The greatest part of any councillor's email or phone calls are to do with the roads, usually to do with potholes, and my emails are no different from any other councillor in the UK. Country areas usually have many more complaints because a lot of country roads are just ancient tracks that have been tarmaced over with no real base. Everyone thinks that their area is the worst in the UK, and has to pay out the highest compensation to the public. In actual fact, except for the Isle of Wight, Hampshire has the lowest pothole count and the lowest compensation rate, at £17.50, of any county in the South of England.

The cost of energy is a worry for any major user and some 5 years ago, the County Council set itself the target of lowering its energy requirement by 40% by 2025. It is good to report that the current rate is some 38% below the initial usage. A lot of this saving was caused by installing new streetlights throughout the County and these alone save some £1m of energy a year.

Superfast Broadband continues to be a concern, especially in rural areas. In the last few months more connection boxes have been erected in parts of the Division, but there are still areas of great concern to reach the eventual target of 99.9%. Experiments are continuing with different methods to reach the really remote areas.

Unemployment in the area continues to be low in this Division of the County Council recording figure of between 0.2% and 1.2%, which is very much below the average for the UK.

After 8 years as your County Councillor I am stepping down to hand on the baton to a younger candidate. It has been an interesting time, and I should like to thank all members of the Parish Council for the time and interest that they have been prepared to give to make life better in your Parish. They deserve your support at all times.

I wish you all well for the future.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

District Councillor Mr Kendall made the following report:

- (1) Finance & Council Tax - Last year EHDC reduced its share of council tax by 2% for the 2016/17 financial year.

This year, for 2017/18, its share has been reduced by 2.6%, and next year the council is intending to reduce its share further to the levels at Band D to the level charged in 2006/7. This has been reported as a unique trend amongst district and borough councils in the U.K.

In order to achieve its ultimate aim of reducing its council tax level to zero the council is pursuing an aggressive investment policy to increase its commercial property portfolio and therefore the returns made on the money invested. It is also engaged in an ambitious policy of selling its services to other councils, again in order to increase its tax levy on the public.

Just for the record and so no-one misunderstands this report, the total council tax bill for taxpayers in East Hampshire is going up, with the total bill for Band D properties increasing by 4.2% to £1566.32 (from £1503.17). Those precepting on the collection authority have all increased their precepts; in the case of county councils and unitaries across the country the addition powers given by central Government are largely aimed at allowing additional resources to be invested in Adult Social Care.

- (2) Devolution

Last year a considerable debate was under way about how best to secure the devolution of greater powers and resources from central Government, and proponents of either Combined Authorities or a Unitary solution were locked in a significant debate.

Since then the item has receded from view, perhaps permanently. Ostensibly this was because the IoW councillors failed to agree on whether they were 'in' a combined authority bid with PCC and SCC, or not. Whatever the reason, informal comments suggest this is off any Whitehall agenda because of the priority being given to Brexit. For those who read the recent article in national broadsheets by George Osborne and Michael Bloomberg, the former Mayor of New York, this agenda may still be alive somewhere in Westminster.

(3) Flood Action in Liss

I feel entitled to raise this under a report as a district councillor because I, Laetitia Pienaar and you, Mr Chairman, all contributed EHDC funds from our Community Grant budgets, towards the commissioning of a review of strategic options for preventing or reducing the risk of flooding in the village, in the future. I was particularly pleased that Liss PC matched those contributions to enable the study to begin. We hope to have a first draft report by the end of this week or next, from which point I hope a constructive dialogue with the EA can then begin. I'm very grateful to the PC for its help, Mr Chairman.

District Councillor Mrs Pienaar reported on organisations that had benefitted from her devolved grant fund, and the devolved grant fund held by District Councillor Kendall from which together they had granted £9k to various Liss projects. She also reported on the upcoming Boundary Commission review & the reasons for it. There would be two periods of public consultation, the first starting in July.

The Chairman reported that from his District Council devolved grant fund he had granted £720 to Liss Forest Residents Association to enable them to make improvements to Liss Forest Recreation Ground.

PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS

Mr Burgess asked if there was a financial implication to LPC on the registration of the Temple Inn as an asset of community value. The Chairman replied that there was not.

Mr Burgess asked if the skatebowl project was now dead. Cllr Smith replied that LPC had approved a motion that the pavilion project would be its priority & that the skatebowl would not be progressed until that had been achieved & only when a suitable site had been identified. Financial reserves held for the skatebowl had been reassigned to the pavilion.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked residents for attending & the meeting was closed at 21.47hrs.