



LISS PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Chairman's Report

It has been another very busy year for the Parish Council. Each year the Council commits itself to delivering an Action Plan and we stand to be judged by that. The plan for 2019/20 is attached to this report (Annex A) with comments on progress made, alongside a new Action Plan for 20/21 (Annex B).

The Liss Pavilion

In May last year the Liss Pavilion was opened by Nigel Atkinson, the Lord Lieutenant for Hampshire. It provides a community hall, changing rooms for the West Liss recreation ground, and facilities for the Liss Scouts and I am so proud of it. Most people seem to think that it looks good and is already proving a considerable addition to the village. It has been of huge benefit to the Scouts and we are finding a very healthy rate of bookings. There have been one or two teething problems and, in particular, we found that disabled pedestrian access was difficult, but we have now obtained money from developer contributions to pay for a flat path across the car park.

Investing in Liss

The Parish Council has the ambition to provide better facilities throughout the village, but we cannot expect to pay for all of these from our Council Tax precept so we are heavily reliant on finance from developer contributions, or grants from various bodies. Traditionally, money from developments in Liss have been provided by what are known as S106 payments from developers but more recently that system has been largely replaced by the Community Infrastructure Levy. This is money which is still paid by development but it can be used for a wider range of uses than S106 money and crucially 25% of the money levied on development is paid directly to the Parish Council.

This has allowed us to do a number of things. I have mentioned the improved pedestrian access to the Liss Pavilion, but we are also using S106 money to improve the provision of play equipment on the Riverside Walk, which we have completed this month. The deteriorating Lych gate between Old School Road and the Newman Collard Playing fields was replaced in January using S106 money. Also at the Newman Collard Playing fields we have been working to improve the drainage. Following a detailed CCTV survey we have been able to clear some of the blocked drains but it is a complex situation and there is more work to do.

We have been fortunate to have made a successful bid for Community Infrastructure Levy money held by the South Downs National Park Authority to pay for new toilets in the Village Hall and we hope to get work underway later this year. I should also note in passing that the Village Hall was out of action for some weeks after someone in June drove their car into it. Fortunately, we were fully insured. We have also put in a bid for Community Infrastructure Levy money with which to replace recreation and play equipment on the West Liss Recreation Ground which needs replacement. We wait to hear if we have been successful.

We are also committed to providing a small community park and play area on the green space along Mill Road. We had hoped to obtain a grant under the Government's new Pocket Park scheme but that was heavily over-subscribed and we were unsuccessful. However, having worked up a scheme and found that there was considerable support from neighbouring residents we are still pursuing the idea, looking for funding from remaining S.106 money and other grants.

The potential to use the Community Infrastructure Levy for supporting services and infrastructure in Liss is enormous, not just for infrastructure but also for supporting community and social initiatives. We have therefore recently set up a Projects Review Group to evaluate what is needed and look at how best to engage with the community on priorities and projects. We are, however, still committed to using money from the levy to offset the costs of the loan which paid for the Liss Pavilion if that makes financial sense.

Roads and Traffic

Traffic through the village is a continuing problem and the Parish Council has been promoting a number of measures to help manage it.

- We have obtained funding from Hampshire County Council to put alongside some S106 money to provide pedestrian courtesy crossings on Station Road, by the Liss Pavilion and the Business Centre.
- Forest Road in Liss Forest has problems both of speeding traffic and difficulties for pedestrians on the length of road with a low kerb. We are working with Hampshire and East Hampshire Councils, the South Downs National Park Authority and the Liss Residents Association to find solutions.
- We are supporting a Speed Watch team in Liss Forest which should start operating very shortly

Our ambition is also to deliver traffic and environmental improvements in the village centre, but this needs a lot of work and extensive consultation before we have a deliverable scheme.

Planning and Development

In September 2019 the Cala Homes development for 78 houses on Andlers Ash Road was given planning permission by the South Downs National Park Authority. This is the most significant development in Liss for decades, and is the first development prepared under the Liss Neighbourhood Development Plan which the Parish Council prepared after extensive

consultation with the community. The Council had worked closely with the National Park Authority and Cala Homes to get the best possible development for Liss. Work is underway and I wait to see a very muddy expanse turned into something rather special. Associated with it is the provision of a SANG, or Suitable Alternative Green Space. The detail of this is still being worked on, but it will provide additional space for informal recreation alongside the Riverside Walk.

The Planning Committee of the Council continues to comment to the Planning Authority on all planning applications in Liss, particularly to ensure that decisions reflect the Liss Neighbourhood Plan. The Council finds itself frequently pushing for better design, adequate parking, and resisting development in the wrong places.

Community Engagement

The Parish Council is committed to encouraging effective local community engagement, and to developing relationships between the Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups. Meetings of the Parish Council and its Committees are open to the public and press. Our Annual Parish Meeting enables residents to question and review the work of elected members.

Parish Councillors serve as trustees on a variety of local bodies and work with others: supporting the Flood Action Group, and the creation of a Liss Speedwatch Group, co-ordinating aspects of the Christmas Fair, assisting with the recruitment of a new Village Agent, and supporting the setting up of a Liss Men's Shed. Each year we also give funding support to a variety of local initiatives, and we have recently created an email network of local groups to inform them of funding and other opportunities;

In October last year we launched a new website for the Parish Council, at www.lissparishcouncil.gov.uk. This provides better and clearer information about the work of the Parish Council and hopefully enhances our profile within the village. It is supported by our engagement on Twitter and Facebook and most recently Instagram, which are steadily building up more followers.

Changes to Councillors

In May last year elections for the Parish Council were held and five councillors stood down: Kate O'Malley, Frances McNamara, Angela Wright, Brian Mayo, and Sue Halstead. All are missed but we are particularly grateful to Angela Wright a member since 2010 and Brian Mayo since 2004 who made enormous contributions, most recently with Angela working on environmental issues for the Neighbourhood Plan keeping our finances on track and Brian project managing the Liss Pavilion Project. But most of all our thanks go to Sue Halstead, who had been a parish councillor since 1983, chairman of the council, chairman of various committees, not least our Planning Committee

Now we have new members who have joined the council. Ian James, Clayre Williams, Sheila Baldwin, Maggie Knibbs. All live in the village and are committed to improving village life.

We have Keith Budden as vice-chairperson and chairperson of our Planning Committee, Andy Smith as chairperson of our Highways committee, David Dodds chairperson of the Facilities Committee which has replaced the former grounds and buildings committees, Liane McDonald chairperson of the Review Committee and Howard Linsley chairperson of the Finance Committee.

District and County Councillors

In May, elections for East Hants District Council were also held. Because of a boundary change to electoral areas Liss is now represented by just two district councillors, as it had been for many years previously. Elected were Keith Budden, who is also our vice-chairman and Russell Openheimer, who is also our County Councillor with Hampshire County Council. I am so grateful for their commitment to Liss and the Parish Council and I look forward to continuing our work with them in the future.

Running the Council

The work of the Parish Council is totally dependent on our Parish Clerk and the support within the Parish office. We have had a number of changes in the office, with Liz Ford joining as our Responsible Finance Officer and recently Lizzy Keeling joining as the Assistant Clerk to replace Frances Cook who moved to work for a Parish Council closer to her home.

The office has been under enormous strain over the past year, with the changes in personal, work on the Pavilion and other projects, and in bringing our financial systems up to date. I cannot express too highly how much we owe to Sarah Smith, our Clerk, who has worked far too long and hard to ensure that the work of the Council has kept going, always with a view to getting better at what we do and achieving the quality award of the Local Government Award Scheme. I am so grateful to Liz Ford for throwing herself into the financial work and to Lizzy Keeling for the enthusiasm which she has brought to the job.

We have also gained Julie Ryan as the caretaker for the Pavilion, alongside Miriam Baines, the caretaker for the Village Hall, and the two of them provide an excellent service. So too does Michael Jarman, who will be familiar to many as he litter picks around the village. Finally, I will make a particular mention of Paul Knibbs who is now our sole groundsman, and whose willingness to take on any task and make things happen ensures our grounds are in capable hands.

Thank you.

Cllr Roger Hargreaves
Chairman, Liss Parish Council
March 2020

Finance Report

The precept for 2019/20 was £212,900. Contributions were made to the Village Hall, West Liss Recreation Ground and Pavilion and the parish allotments. These are all registered charities, which are accounted for separately in accordance with financial regulations. Estimated expenditure for the year is anticipated as being largely in line with budget.

Budgeted expenditure for 2020/21 is as follows:

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	% change
Budget:				
Staff cost	107.1	97.3	102.3	5.1%
Insurance	10.0	7.2	7.2	0.0%
General administration	13.4	15.6	16.8	7.6%
Grounds maintenance	19.4	27.2	23.3	-14.2%
Village Hall running cost	7.6	12.4	11.4	-8.4%
Liss Pavilion running costs	5.0	13.1	14.9	14.0%
Grants to local associations	12.8	13.0	15.8	21.7%
Liss pavilion loan servicing	20.5	27.5	27.5	-0.1%
Capital projects and provisions	20.5	19.7	14.2	-27.9%
	216.3	233.0	233.4	
Funded by:				
Precept	202.7	212.9	218.2	2.5%
Interest and other receipts	0.6	1.5	0.2	-86.7%
Rental incomes	14.8	21.8	17.1	-21.7%
Transfer to/from reserves	(1.8)	(3.2)	(2.1)	-35.8%
	216.3	233.0	233.4	

Staff costs for 2020/2021 have been budgeted to increase by 5.1% in accordance with current legislation.

The new pavilion commenced operations in May 2019 and is expected to have 14% higher running costs in its first full year of operations in 2020/2021.

Liss Parish Council is expected to make grant payments of £15.8k to local organisations and associations - an increase of £2.8k or 21.7% from the previous year.

The Council has set a precept of £218,200 for 2021/2021 and the charge per band D dwelling will therefore be £84.42 compared with £81.75 in 2019/2020. This is an increase of £2.67 or 3.3%.

The audit of all 2018/19 accounts was carried out in April 2019 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 20th May 2019. PFK Littlejohn Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor signed the final clearance of the accounts without any changes or comments in September 2019.

Cllr C Williams, Chair of LPC Finance Committee

Clerk's Report on Councillor Attendance – Year 2019/20

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, the Parish Council has met 10 times.

Cllrs Linsley and McDonald attended all 10 meetings.

Cllrs Hargreaves and Budden attended 9 meetings.

Cllr Wilson attended 8 meetings.

Cllrs Dodds and Smith attended 7 meetings.

Cllr James attended 8 out of a possible 9 meetings following the elections in May 2019.

Cllr Edwards attended 4 out of a possible 9 meetings following the elections in May 2019.

Cllr Williams attended 5 out of a possible 5 meetings following co-option in September.

Cllrs Baldwin and Knibbs attended 4 out of a possible 5 meetings following co-option in September.

Mr Mayo, Mrs Halstead, Mrs O Malley and Mrs Wright attended 1 out of a possible 1 meeting prior to the elections in May, and Mr MacNamara attended 0 out of a possible 1 meeting prior to the elections in May.

Sarah Smith
Parish Clerk

Liss Parish Council Action Plan for 2019/2020

Outcomes as at March 2020 in red

During the Council year 2019/20 Liss Parish Council will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain the open spaces for which the council is responsible, including the three recreation grounds, and facilities such as the Village Hall, to the required standard;
- Comment on all planning applications which fall within or impact on the Parish,
- Represent the views and promote the interests of the parishioners of Liss, particularly in relation to East Hants District Council, the South Downs National Park and Hampshire County Council,
- Communicate with parishioners of Liss by maintaining an up-to-date website, (www.lissparishcouncil.gov.uk), providing a Twitter feed (@LissCouncil), Facebook page, representation at village events and regular publication of Village Voice newsletters,
- Listen, investigate and respond to issues identified by the parishioners of Liss and, if appropriate, to signpost to the correct person/ organisation for resolution/ further progression,
- Encourage and work with the Liss Forest Residents Association,
- Deliver speedy and transparent decisions through 11 meetings of the Council per year, supported by appropriate committees,
- Maintain good financial practices, ensuring transparency and value for money.

All actions carried out satisfactorily except time pressures prevented us bringing out Village Voice in Autumn 2019

Key projects for 2019/20 include:

- Promoting and managing the use of the new Liss Pavilion, Pavilion proving popular and also very successful for the scouts, although with less use of the changing rooms
- Working with the SDNPA to set up arrangements for the implementation and monitoring of the Liss Neighbourhood Plan, Waiting for the South Downs National Park Authority to confirm how much monitoring they will be undertaking
- Providing additional courtesy crossings, village gates and additional road signs using S106 funding under the Highways Community Funded Initiative, Courtesy crossings about to be implemented, work on other issues underway.
- Providing new toilets in the Village Hall, subject to the availability of funding, Funding achieved, work should begin later in 2020
- Improving leisure facilities at West Liss Recreation Ground, subject to the availability of funding, Scheme developed and bid for funding submitted
- Promoting greater engagement of the council with other community groups and organisations in the village in line with the Community Engagement policy, New

website set up, with greater use of social media. Liss Speedwatch, Mens' Shed, Village Agent recruitment and the Christmas Fair supported and a local groups email network created

- Identifying key priorities for the use of CIL funds, **Key projects underway and a new Project Review Group set up to identify and consult on priorities**
- Contributing to the Flood Action Group Emergency Plan and Flood Prevention Strategy; particularly through the promotion of community resilience, **Currently discussing with the Flood Action group support for the Flood Prevention Strategy**
- Working towards attaining the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme, **Work underway to meet the requirements of the Award**
- Completing the upgrade of the Liss Parish Council website, **New site launched October 2019**
- Promoting training and induction and ongoing support for new councillors, **Training and induction offered to all new councillors**
- Training and induction of new members of staff, **Training and induction undertaken**
- Completing the transition to a more effective and transparent accounting system for the Council. **Delayed due to staff changes, but preliminary work on a new system underway.**

During the Council year 2020/21 Liss Parish Council will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain the open spaces for which the council is responsible, including the three recreation grounds, and facilities such as the Village Hall and Liss Pavilion, to the required standard;
- Comment on all planning applications which fall within or impact on the Parish;
- Represent the views and promote the interests of the parish of Liss, particularly in relation to East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park and Hampshire County Council;
- Communicate with parishioners of Liss by maintaining an up-to-date website, (www.lissparishcouncil.gov.uk), maintaining a social media presence, including a Twitter feed (@LissCouncil) and Facebook page, representation at village events and regular publication of Village Voice newsletters;
- Listen, investigate and respond to issues identified by the parish of Liss and, if appropriate, to signpost to the correct person/ organisation for resolution/ further progression;
- Working with key local groups for the benefit of residents, including the Liss Forest Residents Association and the Flood Action Group;
- Deliver speedy and transparent decisions through full meetings of the Council, supported by appropriate committees;
- Maintain good financial practices, ensuring transparency and value for money;
- Working to identify and secure sources of funding to advance LPC priorities;
- Promoting training and induction and ongoing support for members of staff and new councillors.

Key projects for 2020/2021 include:

- Covid-19: helping the village recover and learn from the experience of Covid-19, in consultation with the community, using our services and funding and through support to and from other organisations, such as the district and county councils and local voluntary groups;
- Liss Neighbourhood Plan: working with the SDNPA to set up arrangements for the implementation and monitoring;
- Identifying priorities for the use of CIL funds allocated directly to Liss Parish Council, with work to be led by the new Project Review Group and to include community consultation;
- Highways priorities: delivering the additional courtesy crossings in West Liss and identifying opportunities to tackle speeding throughout Liss;
- Facilities priorities: providing new toilets in the Village Hall, improving leisure facilities at West Liss Recreation Ground and delivery of a Community Garden on land between Woodbourne Close and The Oval, subject to the availability of funding;
- Community engagement: promoting greater engagement of the council with other community groups and organisations in the village in line with the Community Engagement Policy;
- Governance: making further progress towards attaining the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme;
- Financial framework: completing the transition to a more effective and transparent accounting system for the Council.