

## **Liss Parish Council Annual Report 2019**

### **Chairman's Report**

It has been another successful year for the Parish Council but not without difficulties. Each year the Council commits itself to delivering an Action Plan and we stand to be judged by that. The plan for 2018/19 is attached to this report (Annex A), alongside a new Action Plan for the coming year (Annex B).

#### **The Liss Pavilion**

I have outlined earlier the work on building the Liss Pavilion. Next month it will be completed. It has been a significant achievement, and planning, building and paying for it has required a huge effort by the Council, particularly the members of the Pavilion Development Committee. Of course, the question is, has it been worth it? Soon, everyone can take a look and judge for themselves, but what encourages me most is the number of enquiries and firm bookings we are already receiving for use of the building.

#### **Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan**

Development proposals in Liss now have to be determined in the light of the Liss Neighbourhood Development Plan which the Parish Council prepared and was approved through a referendum at the end of 2017. The Planning Committee of the Parish Council has an important role in commenting to the planning authority on the implications of planning applications in Liss, and particularly to ensure that the Neighbourhood Development Plan is taken into account.

One of the largest planning proposals in Liss for many years is the current proposal by Cala Homes for 80 houses at Andlers Ash Road. The neighbourhood development plan decided on the location and much of the proposal reflects the plan, but the Parish Council also has significant concerns about other aspects which do not conform to the plan and is raising objection. On many smaller developments the Parish Council finds itself frequently pushing for better design, adequate parking, and resisting development in the wrong places.

We are also working with the South Downs National Park Authority on setting up a proper monitoring system for the plan to ensure that over time it delivers what we want.

#### **Improving facilities in the Village**

The Council has been able to obtain money from developer contributions (£106,000) and is working with Hampshire County Council on proposals for courtesy crossings on Station Road, and various measures to help with traffic calming. We hope to implement these proposals later in 2019.

The Council has also developed proposals for improving the play equipment and leisure facilities at West Liss playing field. We have applied to the South Downs National Park Authority for money from the Community Infrastructure Levy which developers now have to

pay on housing developments. If we are successful we will consult the community on our detailed proposals, including an exhibition.

We have also applied for money from the Community Infrastructure Levy to pay for new toilets in the Village Hall which badly need updating.

Problems with the drainage of the Newman Collard playing fields continue. We are working with Southern Water to find a solution. The situation is complex since there are a number of drains on the site owned by both the Newman Collard Trust as well as Southern Water all of which were installed some years ago. There is the possibility of new pipe work being required, for which we could apply for developer contributions from S.106 money of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Money from the Community Infrastructure Levy, which is a relatively new way of getting developers to pay for infrastructure and community facilities, could soon become important to the village. Most of the levy in this area goes to the South Downs National Park Authority and we are asking for some of it for highways proposals and the Village Hall toilets. However, 25% of the levy from developments within Liss will come directly to the Parish Council. We are therefore looking at developments in Liss, such as the Cala Homes proposals in Andlers Ash Road, which will eventually produce CIL money of several hundred thousand pounds. We have given a public commitment to use a significant amount of that money to offset the costs of the loan on the Pavilion.

### **Cleaning and Grasscutting**

With the retirement of the Village Hall caretaker and cleaner, and our head groundsman moving to a new job elsewhere we took the opportunity to review how we provided these services to ensure we were getting value for money. The new arrangements, using outside contractors for cleaning of the hall and the major part of our grasscutting, have proved very successful, both in terms of costs, greater flexibility, and the quality of the work, and we are likely to contract out the cleaning for the Liss Pavilion.

### **The website**

We committed ourselves to updating our website. The work on that is almost finished and we are about to test the proposed new format with councillors and a selection of users, with the intention of launching the new website within the next few months. We are also making more use of social media and are pleased by the increased communication with the community.

### **Planting of a commemorative tree**

Fiftythree men from Liss died in the First World War, a significant contribution from what was then a small village. The Parish Council were pleased to join with others in commemorating the 100 years since the ending of the First World War by planting a tree donated by Hilliers in the Newman Collard gardens

## **Running the Council**

The business of the Council is conducted through committees and I particularly extend thanks to all committee chairmen, including Angela Wright for Finance, Sue Halstead for Planning, Keith Budden for Buildings, David Dodds for Grounds, Howard Linsley for Highways and Liane McDonald for our Review Advisory Committee. I also chair the Pavilion Development Committee. During the year we were pleased to be joined by Nick Wilson who brings a wealth of experience to the Council.

We have also been lucky with the considerable support given by the East Hants District Councillors representing Liss: Keith Budden, who is also one of our Parish Councillors, Laetitia Pienaar and Mike Kendall. Our County Councillor is Russell Oppenheimer who has proved assiduous in working for Liss and supporting the Parish Council.

In 2nd May elections will be held for the whole of the Parish Council. We are expecting a number of our most experienced councillors to stand down at that time, after many years of service, and they will be greatly missed by the Council and the Village. It is, however, an opportunity for others to come forward and make a contribution, and anyone interested can find out more about the council from myself or the Parish Clerk. The Notice of Election will be published on 22 March and nomination papers can be obtained from the electoral services team at East Hants District Council, including on line. It is an easy process but papers must be submitted by 3 April.

At the same time elections are being held for the East Hants District Council. Due to boundary changes there will be only two district councillors for Liss instead of the three that currently cover Liss and some of the adjoining area. This, however, is reverting to the position we previously had for many years and worked well for Liss.

The work of the Parish Council is totally dependent on our Parish Clerk and the support within the Parish office. Sarah Smith took over as sole Parish Clerk at the beginning of 2018, on the retirement of our long standing clerk, Dick Bowery. At the same time we appointed a Finance Officer. Unfortunately, due to illness, she was not able to fully take on the role and had to stand down later in the year. This imposed a huge strain on the office and slowed down work on some of our projects. In particular, we have not been able to make progress on our commitment to update our accounting system.

We have been able to get by through the efforts of Sarah Smith, and the support of Frances Cook as the Assistant Clerk and I cannot express too highly how much we owe to them for keeping things going. Of course, those of you who have been in the Parish Office will know they had some help. Like a bad penny somehow Dick Bowery has continued to turn up, and fill in the gaps on our financial work, and I am so grateful for his contribution. We have now been able to appoint an experienced finance officer, Elizabeth Ford, who starts at the beginning of April. I look forward to the next year with some optimism.

Cllr Roger Hargreaves  
Chairman, Liss Parish Council

## Finance Report

The precept for 2018/19 was £202690. 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. A decision to outsource grass cutting was implemented during the year. Estimated expenditure for the year is anticipated as being largely in line with budget.

Looking ahead, staff costs for 2019/20 are reduced by 9.15% largely due to operating with one less groundsman; this saving is partly offset by the outsourcing of the grass cutting which gives a 7.8% rise to grounds maintenance costs.

Included in the budget for 2019/20 is an amount of £27478 for costs of servicing a public works loan for construction costs of the Liss Pavilion at West Liss recreation ground. An amount of £3000 has been included in the general administration budget, on the advice of EHDC, to meet possible election costs. The new Liss Pavilion is expected to commence operations from the beginning of May.

The Council has set a precept of £212900 for 2019/20 and the charge per band D dwelling will therefore be £81.75 compared to £79.80 in 2018/19 an increase of £1.95 or 2.443%.

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

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Increase/- decrease	
	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>£000's</u>	<u>%</u>
Staff costs	107.6	107.1	97.3	-9.8	-9.15
Insurance	8.7	10.0	7.2	-2.8	-28.00
General administration	10.5	13.4	15.6	2.2	16.42
Grounds maintenance	16.8	19.4	27.2	7.8	40.21
Village hall running costs	8.1	7.6	12.4	4.8	63.16
New Liss Pavilion running costs	0.0	5.0	13.1	8.1	162.00
Grants to local associations	12.8	12.8	13.0	0.2	1.56
Liss pavilion loan servicing	5.5	20.5	27.5	7.0	34.15
Capital projects & provisions	47.7	20.5	19.7	-0.8	-3.90

	217.7	216.3	233.0	16.7	7.72
Funded by:					
Interest & other receipts	0.6	0.6	1.5	0.9	150.00
Rental incomes	14.5	14.8	21.8	7.0	47.30
Grant Funding	10.0	0.0	0.0		
From/to reserves	-1.9	-1.8	-3.2	-1.4	77.78
	23.2	13.6	20.1	6.5	47.79
Precept	182.8	202.7	212.9	10.2	5.03
Council Tax support grant	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	217.7	216.3	233.0	16.7	7.72
No. of band D dwellings	2510.13	2540.00	2604.18	64.18	2.53
Band D tax	£72.81	£79.80	£81.75	£1.95	2.44

The audit of all 2017/18 accounts was carried out in April 2018 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 21st May; PFK Littlejohn Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor signed the final clearance of the accounts, without any changes or comments on 25th September 2018.

Cllr A Wright

Chairman of LPC Finance Committee

## **Clerk's Report on Councillor Attendance – Year 2018/19**

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, the Parish Council has met 14 times.

Mrs Halstead and Mrs MacDonald attended all 14 meetings.

Mr Dodds, Mr Hargreaves, Mr Linsley and Mrs Wright attended 13 meetings.

Mr Budden and Mr Mayo attended 10 meetings.

Mr Smith attended 9 meetings.

Mr MacNamara and Mrs O'Malley attended 8 meetings.

Mr Jerrard attended 7 meetings.

Mr Wilson attended 7 of a possible 9 meetings following his co-option in June.

Sarah Smith  
Parish Clerk

**Liss Parish Council  
Action Plan for 2018/2019**

During the Council year 2018/19 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, and/or impact on the Parish of Liss;
- 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](http://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 timely 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.

Key projects for 2018/19 include:

- Completion of the Pavilion project including securing agreements with users, public approval for an application to the Public Works Loans Board, selection and signing of contracts with contractors, and construction;
- Setting up arrangements for the implementation and monitoring of the Liss Neighbourhood Plan;
- Improvement of highway safety, including additional courtesy crossings, village gates and additional road signs using identified funding streams under the Highways Community Funded Initiative;
- Identifying and promoting key priorities with the aim of securing CIL funds from SDNPA Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- Commencing a project to improve leisure facilities at West Liss Recreation Ground;
- Working towards attainment of the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme;
- Upgrading the Liss Parish Council website;
- Managing staff changes through good succession planning;
- Completing the transition to the SAGE accounting system;
- Implementation of the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation.

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- 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](http://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,
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Key projects for 2019/20 include:

- Promoting and managing the use of the new Liss Pavilion,
- Working with the SDNPA to set up arrangements for the implementation and monitoring of the Liss Neighbourhood Plan,
- Providing additional courtesy crossings, village gates and additional road signs using S106 funding under the Highways Community Funded Initiative,
- Providing new toilets in the Village Hall, subject to the availability of funding,
- Improving leisure facilities at West Liss Recreation Ground, subject to the availability of funding,
- Promoting greater engagement of the council with other community groups and organisations in the village in line with the Community Engagement policy,
- Identifying key priorities for the use of CIL funds,
- Contributing to the Flood Action Group Emergency Plan and Flood Prevention Strategy; particularly through the promotion of community resilience,
- Working towards attaining the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme,
- Completing the upgrade of the Liss Parish Council website,
- Promoting training and induction and ongoing support for new councillors,
- Training and induction of new members of staff,
- Completing the transition to a more effective and transparent accounting system for the Council.