

LISS PARISH
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
17th March 2021

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 17th March 2021 via Zoom videoconferencing when 10 members of the Parish Council, County and District Councillor Russell Oppenheimer and 6 parishioners attended.

Mr Roger Hargreaves, Chairman of the Parish Council, presided.

Also in attendance was the Parish Clerk Mrs Sarah Smith.

Apologies were received from Councillors Linsley and Smith.

PRESENTATION OF THE GOOD VILLAGER AWARD 2020

The Chair, Cllr Hargreaves, explained that with the onset of the Covid pandemic and restrictions imposed last March, LPC unfortunately had to take the decision to cancel the Annual Parish Meeting of 2020. The cancellation of this meeting meant we were not able to publicly award the Villager of the Year title for 2020. Although the recipient of the award was not able to attend, Cllr Hargreaves announced that **Emily Harker** was the Liss Villager of the Year 2020. A certificate would be sent to her in recognition of this award.

Emily proved herself to be an inspirational young person in her exceptional contribution to the Christmas Fair 2019. It looked at one time as though the Fair would not include local businesses as there were no volunteers to organise them and there was some negative feeling towards the Fair arising from previous years. Emily changed that. She came forward, with the support of her employer, Tesco's, and threw herself into planning and organising the role of the business community, building relationships and liaising effectively with the Triangle Centre and the Parish Council. She also supported the local voluntary groups, including a great launch for the Men's Shed. Hers was a transformational input in the event, and a positive role model to other young people.

PRESENTATION OF THE GOOD VILLAGER AWARD 2021

Over the past year the covid pandemic has placed unprecedented pressures on the Liss Community. Many individuals have responded magnificently in offering help and support to others and this has been reflected in the number of nominations for Villager of the Year and the contributions they have highlighted. The Parish Council wishes to recognise this position and therefore exceptionally, is awarding the Villager of the Year to three people who have all made an outstanding contribution to the village in these very difficult circumstances.

Jenny Bennett

Founder and coordinator of the Liss and Surrounding Villages Community Board, on Facebook, formerly known as the Coronavirus Support Facebook page, which has played a major role in bringing people together and providing support to the community since the beginning of the covid pandemic, not to mention setting up the Halloween trail for the children of the village to enjoy.

Ruth Taylor

Founder and coordinator of the Liss Forest covid support network, which provides provisions and support to those in a vulnerable position, as well as administrator for the Liss and Surrounding Villages Community Board. She has also been an active member of the Liss Residents Association for many years and was deputy chairman of SOTI (Save Our Temple Inn).

Ella Townsend

Supporter and fundraiser for the Crossover centre who during the first lockdown established a charity bookshop in her garage which has raised thousands of pounds for the Crossover Centre as well as funds for the Brownies and the Liss Food Bank. She also initiated the Crossover service to address 'period poverty' amongst disadvantaged families.

To conclude the Chair added that the whole council was impressed by the number and quality of nominations we received this year. We felt that we could not do justice to the contribution made to the community by those nominated if we limited our award to a single Villager. I hope that by choosing three Villagers we can honour their individual efforts but also reflect the efforts of so many villagers as the whole community has come together.

PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS

The following issues were raised:

- a) Road signage: Redundant signage near the Plestor following amended road layout, signage clutter near the Princes Bridge allotments on Andlers Ash Road plus dirty road signage. Cllr Wilson responded that the lengthsman could be asked to clean the road signs in question. LPC were not able to remove HCC road signs but would be working with HCC as part of the Gateways project and thereby hoped to be able to declutter in agreement with HCC by removing any signs which were surplus to requirements. The parishioner was invited to submit further details on the various issues to enable effective follow up where possible.
- b) The condition of benches around the village, including the bench outside Tesco's (one has a broken slat and the benches are in need of a clean) and those at the

entrance to the Riverside Walk, highlighting the importance of the entrance to the RW for visitors to the National Park. Cllr Wilson noted an ongoing programme as regards bench maintenance and undertook to ask the Groundsman would check on the two benches at the entrance to the Riverside Walk and all those LPC were responsible for. The bench outside Tesco's did not belong to LPC but LPC could raise the issue with Tesco's to see what could be done.

- c) Condition of the Millennium Mosaic – dirty, tiles breaking up and in need of covering to prevent further decay. The Chair noted that the restoration of the mosaic featured as a commitment in the LPC Action Plan. Cllr Wilson added that covering the mosaic to protect it could be considered but a project was currently being initiated; there would be an update at the meeting of the Facilities Committee the following week.
- d) Office re-opening: The Chair noted that this is governed by Government advice along with interpretation from HALC. LPC would continue to adhere to the latest advice.
- e) The lack of footpaths on some roads for safe walking and running, including linking the garden centre via a footpath: The Chair noted that footpaths are the responsibility of HCC but that footpaths would be considered as part of the village centre re-design project and factored into any wider discussions with HCC.
- f) Dog fouling, particularly at Newman Collard - the possibility of signage, DNA testing dog poo to track down owners, a volunteer group to monitor dog walkers and the possibility of introducing a rule to keep dogs on leads. Cllr Wilson advised that this was also a continuing cause of concern for LPC, particularly for families with young children and grounds used for football matches, and that LPC like others was keen to find the solution to the problem. LPC and the Trust had considered on many occasions – LPC had and put up campaign posters (only one now remained) and had provided dog poo bag dispensers on LPC managed land. However, the question was whether a legal requirement to have dogs on leads would improve the situation as those who do not pick up after their dog may also not follow a requirement to keep their dog on a lead. He highlighted the key issue of enforcement which would require a designated, trained person for which LPC did not have capacity. Cllr Wilson concluded that it would be for the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust to consider whether a bye law on keeping dogs on leads at Newman Collard was desirable – Cllr Wilson would raise with the Trust. LPC were always open to other suggestions, the latest idea was to make use of signs designed by school children as had been produced to discourage speeding in the village.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF 19th MARCH 2019

The minutes of the meeting of 19th March 2019 had been circulated. Proposed by Cllr McDonald and seconded by Cllr Finn, they were agreed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair, Cllr Hargreaves, provided the following report:

It has been extraordinary year for us all and covid restrictions have meant the Council has had to close some facilities and carry out its business in very different ways from usual. As always we have been working to an Action Plan and I am pleased to say that we have managed to deliver a lot of our services and to continue building for the future. The plan for 2020/21 is attached to this report.

Community Engagement

The Parish Council is committed to encouraging effective local community engagement, and to developing relationships between the Council, individuals, and voluntary and community groups. Even under covid restrictions its has continued to communicate as widely as possible. The business of the council has continued through its usual council and committee meetings, but since March last year these have had to be held remotely, using Zoom, and have all been carried live on Youtube. The Parish Office has had to remain closed since March but officers of the council have worked from home and have been available by telephone and email.

The Liss Parish Council Website at lissparishcouncil.gov.uk has been used to tell the community about the business of the council. A Covid-19 webpage was set up in March 2020 and has continued to provide up-to-date links to the latest information as well as sources of help and practical support for those who have needed it, making use of local links as well as more formal schemes. We compiled a comprehensive guide to locally available Covid-19 support and are grateful to the numerous volunteers who helped deliver the Covid-19 flyer to individual households in April 2020. The Council has also continued to increase its social media presence during this time, such as Twitter and Facebook and most recently Instagram, to help keep parishioners informed. We had to close some facilities under the covid lockdown restrictions. The Village Hall and the Pavilion could not be used at all from March 2020 onwards until the lifting of the first lockdown. Since then, following comprehensive and rigorous risk assessments, we have been able to keep the Village Hall and Pavilion open for activities allowed under covid regulations, such as the RVS using the Village Hall kitchen to provide meals for the elderly. Children's play areas at Newman Collard, West Liss and Liss Forest were closed under the first lockdown but we have been able to keep them open after that. Allotments and other open spaces have been open.

An important form of engagement with the community is that Parish Councillors serve as representatives on a variety of local bodies, for example, the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust, The Triangle Centre, Crossover and the Liss Forest Residents Association. We have also supported the creation of a Liss Speedwatch Group, and the setting up of a Liss Men's Shed. Each year we also give funding support to a variety of local initiatives.

Investing in Liss

The Parish Council has the ambition to provide better facilities throughout the village. We have a programme of projects to provide new facilities and to improve the environment and safety of roads in the village and also to support other community and social initiatives. We cannot expect to pay for most of these from our Council Tax precept but they are made possible by finance from developer contributions, or grants from various bodies. Developer contributions have become a major source of funding, some from what are known as s106 payments, but increasingly from money collected from developers under a relatively new system called the Community Infrastructure Levy. This money can be used for a wider range of uses than S106 money and crucially now that we have a Neighbourhood Plan 25% of the money levied on development is paid directly to the Parish Council.

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. A key issue for us is how to best to engage with the community in setting priorities and projects.

Improvements to facilities

In March last year the Council was able to overhaul the play equipment on the Riverside Walk with money from developer contributions allocated by the South Downs National Park Authority. Funding has also been allocated for the Council to contribute to a 3 year plan for controlling Himalayan Balsam growing along the walk. We have completely refurbished the toilets in the Village Hall following a successful bid for funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy pot held by the South Down National Park Authority. We are also starting a programme of external refurbishment and redecoration of the Hall as part of a two year improvement programme as recommended by a structural report on the building.

Following the loss of the previous Petanque court when the Temple Inn pub was redeveloped, A new Petanque court, or terrain has been provided within the Liss Forest Recreation Ground using funding from S.106 money paid to the Parish Council. We have also allocated some additional funding to provide a hard pedestrian path to the terrain.

Drainage on the Newman Collard Playing Fields has been a problem for some time and following technical investigations work has been carried out on drainage in the Centenary Gardens with S.106 money which has assisted in reducing the flow of surface water on the footpath into the playing fields.

A path for greater accessibility has been laid through the car park of the Liss Pavilion, along with improvements to the pavement outside the Pavilion, and this has been linked

to the provision of a courtesy crossing across Station Road, all funded from S106 contributions.

We have also introduced a new rolling allotments tenancy agreement to provide greater clarity for tenants, to better manage the reallocation of unworked plots and reduce the administrative burden of the annual renewal process. As a result of this, and in response to increased interest in allotments, we have been able to allocate plots to 10 new tenants.

Another project which should get underway soon is the Mill Road Community Garden which will provide a small community park and play area on the green space along Mill Road next to Woodbourne Close. There has been considerable support from neighbouring residents to the proposals, funding has now been secured from S106 money and we are close to agreement with EHDC who own the land over a licence to use it.

A larger project we are pursuing is a sports and leisure hub on the West Liss Recreation Ground. Proposals currently include a new play area for toddlers and young children, a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for children and teens and a Fitness Area & Obstacle Course for teens and adults but we will need further community engagement to get it right. The proposals are intended to complement the new Pavilion and to fit within the Parish Council's strategy for working with partners to expand and renew recreation provision across Liss. It is dependent on a successful bid to the South Downs National Park Authority. Although we were unsuccessful last year the Authority recognises the project as a high priority for us.

The Council has also recently signed an agreement with the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust which will enable the Liss Mens' Shed project to use part of the Groundsman's Hut at Newman Collard and which secures future provision for the Council for our grounds maintenance needs.

Roads and Traffic

Traffic through the village is a continuing concern for residents and the Parish Council has been promoting a number of measures to address concerns. S. 106 developer contributions have been collected specifically to support traffic and highways works and made available by the South Downs National Park and this is enabling us to:

- Deliver a pedestrian courtesy crossing on Station Road, by the Liss Pavilion and to work with Hampshire County Council to deliver a further crossing at the Business Centre,
- Develop proposals to put a number of gateways at the parish boundary to create a clear sense of place and discourage speeding, working with the South Downs National Park and Hampshire County Council,
- Develop proposals for street scene improvements on Hill Brow Road, particularly around the schools, to improve the environment and discourage speeding, working with Hampshire County Council and Liss Infant and Junior Schools.

Forest Road in Liss Forest has problems both of speeding traffic and difficulties for pedestrians on the length of road with a low kerb. This is a complicated issue, but we are engaging with Hampshire County Council to understand the costs associated with designing a plan for improvements. Along Forest Road and also elsewhere in the village we are supporting Liss Speed Watch in their efforts to reduce speeding in the village.

Village Centre improvements

The Liss Neighbourhood Plan, which has been overwhelmingly supported by the community identifies improving the village centre as a priority. Liss Parish Council wants to ensure that the village centre is a vibrant location where people want to spend time. Achieving this will be crucial as businesses and the community seek to recover from the impact of COVID-19 in the medium term.

Liss Parish Council recognises that it has a key role in convening stakeholders, residents, and businesses to take this work forward. We are looking at ways to provide some initial financial investment to scope options and develop proposals that have the support of the community and also key stakeholders such as Hampshire County Council as the Highways Authority. If there is community support proposals will be used to bid for funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other community, highways and economic development funding streams.

Planning and Development

Andler's Wood, the new Cala Homes development on the former Hilliers land at Andlers Ash Road is now well underway. While there were some initial teething problems, we have found Cala to be a very receptive developer so that items such as heavy construction traffic through the centre of the village were rapidly resolved. The development is now progressing at pace and will continue to develop throughout 2021. The development has also seen the creation of a new area of public open space near Cumbers, on the opposite side of the River Rother to the main Riverside Walk. This open space area will continue to evolve over the next couple of years.

We have continued to provide feedback to the local planning authority, the South Downs National Park, on planning applications across the Parish, and we are pleased that for the majority of decisions our views have been taken into account. As much as Covid-19 restrictions have allowed we have kept a careful eye on developments across the village and reported any concerns to the planning enforcement team at East Hampshire District Council for investigation and action where appropriate.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we anticipate plans coming forward for some of the other development areas identified in the Liss Neighbourhood Plan and taking up the planning issues arising from the Village Centre proposals.

Changes to Councillors

During the year three members of the council stood down, Ian James, Cyndi Edwards and David Dodds. Our thanks to all three for their contributions but I will mention David Dodds in particular who has been a councillor for many years, making a huge contribution as chairman of our Facilities Committee and I am glad to say that he has been co-opted as a non-voting member of that committee so that we can continue to benefit from his knowledge and experience.

We advertised the vacancies on the council on two occasions and we were pleased to have an excellent response from a number of high quality candidates. We have selected Ginnette Lowe, Rob Finn and Jenny Bennett to serve as new councillors and I warmly welcome them to the Council.

Keith Budden has continued as vice-chair and chair of our Planning Committee, Andy Smith as chair of our Highways committee, and Liane McDonald as chair of the Review Committee. Nick Wilson has taken over as chair of the Facilities Committee and Clayre Williams as chair of the Finance Committee.

District and County Councillors

Since elections in May 2019 Liss has been represented on East Hants District Council by two councillors, Keith Budden, who is currently chairman of that council as well as serving as Vice-Chairman of the parish council, and Russell Oppenheimer, 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, Sarah Smith and the support within the Parish office. The office team consists of Sarah, Lizzy Keeling the Assistant Clerk, and Liz Ford our Responsible Finance Officer. They have been under enormous pressures over the past year, having to adapt their way of working and carry on serving the community from their homes. Liz has also been preparing the adoption of a new financial planning and accounting system for the Council which we hope to fully introduce in 2021.

All have worked extra hours to keep the Council going and to support initiatives to improve our services and I am so impressed by their commitment and enthusiasm and particularly by Sarah's leadership in holding the Council together during this difficult year.

They have been supported by Miriam Baines, the caretaker for the Village Hall, and Julie Ryan as the caretaker for the Pavilion. With the Village Hall and the Pavilion being closed for most uses due to covid they have taken on other tasks. Also, Michael Jarman, who will be familiar to many as he litter picks around the village and Paul Knibbs our invaluable groundsman. This is a very good team serving the village.

Cllr Linsley joined the meeting during this item at 8.44pm and Cllr bennet left the meeting at 8.45pm.

LISS PARISH COUNCIL DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR 2021/22

During the Council year 2021/22 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.
- Engage with the community, including parishioners, local businesses, community groups and organisations in Liss by maintaining an up-to-date website and social media presence in the village in line with the Community Engagement Policy.
- 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.
- Work with key local groups for the benefit of residents, including the Liss Forest Residents Association;
- Deliver speedy and transparent decisions through full meetings of the Council, supported by appropriate committees and working groups.
- Maintain good financial practices, ensuring transparency and value for money.
- Identify and secure sources of funding to advance LPC priorities.
- Promote training and induction and ongoing support for members of staff and councillors;
- Maintain good governance, including adhering to relevant benchmarks to achieve Quality Status of the Local Council Award Scheme.

Key projects for 2021/2022 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.
- Identifying priorities for the use of CIL funds allocated directly to Liss Parish Council, using extensive community engagement.
- Making use of new accounting software to manage finances and provide enhanced reporting data to support decision making.
- Highways priorities:
 - Delivering the village gateways project;
 - Developing the school zone proposals, including reviewing options for the crossing point on Hill Brow Road; and

Exploring the opportunity and costs of improvement work on Forest Road, including traffic calming.

- Facilities priorities:
 - Creating a new sports and leisure hub at West Liss Recreation Ground to complement the new Pavilion (subject to the availability of funding);
 - Delivery of the planned Community Garden on Mill Road;
 - Working with partners to further develop a village wide strategy for recreational facilities;
 - Exploring options for restoration of the Millennium Mosaic,
- Developing proposals for enhancement of the village centre.
- Exploring opportunities with supporting organisations for enhancing the social welfare of the village.
- Liss Neighbourhood Plan: working with the SDNPA to set up arrangements for the implementation and monitoring.

The Chair welcomed any comments on the proposed Action Plan which would be considered for approval at the April meeting of Council.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Williams, Chair of the Finance Committee, provided the following report:

The precept for 2020/21 was £218,208. 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 to be largely in line with budget. Estimated rental incomes from the Village Hall and Pavilion are expected to be effectively zero and have been replaced by East Hampshire District Council Coronavirus Grant funding.

Local organisations and associations supported by Liss Parish Council grant funding during 2020/21 include:

East Hants Area CAB

The Triangle Community Centre

Crossover

RVS Luncheon Club

Liss Historical Society

1st Liss Scouts

Home Start Butser

Liss AFC – Juniors

Rake Village Hall

LUPIN

HIOW victim support

St Mary's Church – for war memorial and burial ground

King's Arms Young Carers
Liss Village Club
Liss Mens Shed

Contributions from S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding of £31.5k have been invested in the refurbishment of the toilet facilities in the Village Hall, provision of a new pétanque terrain on the Liss Forest Recreation Ground, improvements to drainage on Newman Collard Playing Fields and an accessible pathway to the Pavilion. The audit of all 2019/20 accounts was carried out in April 2020 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 15th June 2020. PFK Littlejohn Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor signed the final clearance of the accounts in September 2020.

Budgeted expenditure for 2021/22 is as follows:

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	% change
Budget:				
Staff Cost	97.3	101.5	105.7	4.2%
Insurance	7.3	7.3	7.5	2.7%
General administration	12.3	13	15.7	20.8%
Grounds maintenance	26.3	28.1	32.3	15.0%
Village Hall running costs	13.6	12	10.6	-11.8%
Pavilion running costs	15.1	13.9	15.7	12.9%
Grants to local associations	13	15.8	15.7	-0.6%
Pavilion loan servicing	27.5	27.5	27.5	0.0%
Capital projects/provisions	19.7	14.2	4.1	-71.3%
	232.1	233.3	234.8	0.6%
Funded by:				
Precept	212.9	218.2	224.3	2.8%
Interest and other receipts	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.0%
Rental incomes	21.9	17.1	12.5	-27.2%
Transfer to/from reserves	-3.2	-2.2	-2.1	-3.0%
	232.1	233.3	234.8	

Staff costs for 2021/2022 have been budgeted to increase by 4.2 % in accordance with current legislation.

The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic national lockdown has resulted in the closure of both the Village Hall and the Pavilion. While both will re-open in accordance with government guidelines when it is safe to do so, rental income is expected to be 27% or £4.6k lower than budgeted in 2020/2021.

Liss Parish Council is expected to make grant payments of £15.7k to local organisations and associations – a decrease of £0.1k or 0.8% from the previous year.

The budget for capital works has decreased by 71.3% as the Council expects to receive significant Community Infrastructure Levy funding which will be allocated to project work in the village in accordance with the Liss Neighbourhood Plan and in consultation with the community.

£32.5k has been received for investment in courtesy crossings and pavement improvement outside the Pavilion, development of the Mill Road Community Garden and a pathway to the pétanque terrain. These works will commence in the coming months.

The Council has set a precept of £224,250 for 2021/2022 and the charge per Band D dwelling will therefore be £86.69 compared with £84.42 in 2020/2021. This is an increase of £2.27 or 2.69%.

REPORT ON ATTENDANCE OF COUNCILLORS

The Clerk, Sarah Smith, reported that since the last scheduled Annual Parish Meeting (which did not take place due to Covid), the Parish Council has met virtually, via Zoom videoconferencing, a total of 8 times.

Cllrs Hargreaves, Budden, Baldwin, Linsley, McDonald, Smith, Wilson and Williams attended all 8 meetings.

Cllrs Jerrard attended 4 of a possible 8 meetings.

Cllr Finn attended 4 out of a possible 5 meetings since co-option in October.

Cllr Lowe attended 3 out of a possible 5 meetings since co-option in October.

Cllr Bennett attended 2 of a possible 2 meetings of Council following co-option in January.

Cllr Knibbs attended 4 of as possible 7 meetings prior to her resignation earlier this month.

Cllr Edwards attended 2 out of a possible 4 meetings prior to her resignation in November.

Cllrs Dodds and James attended the 1 meeting of Council held prior to their resignations in June and July respectively.

UPDATE ON HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

County Councillor Russell Oppenheimer congratulated the three Villagers of the Year, thanking them for everything they had done. He provided the following annual report:

Cllr Oppenheimer started his report by noting that it had been a difficult year for so many due to Covid, but noted that the end is in sight so we could look back at this point at how we had come through this together. HCC had worked with the district council and locals groups and parishes which was amazing and had played a big part in positive outcomes including lower infection rates in the county which was something to be proud of.

Over the last year, the Public Health team at HCC have done an amazing job of working with the NHS to keep us safe. Infection rates in Hampshire were lower than in neighbouring counties thanks to everyone pulling together. HCC and EHDC worked tirelessly – with incredible support from local voluntary groups – to ensure that vulnerable people in our communities were protected and supported. At HCC we were all very sad when Fareham County Councillor Keith Evans died from Covid-19 at the end of December. I extend my sincere sympathy to all those who have lost friends, family members and colleagues to this dreadful virus.

The Hampshire Highways Team have managed to keep the roads safe despite the challenges. HCC managed to get our Household Waste and Recycling Centres operational again with a new booking system to ensure social distancing. With support from HCC, our schools have kept going throughout the last year for key workers. Schools were made Covid-safe and ready to welcome back all pupils this month.

The financial costs to HCC of the pandemic are still being counted. As well as the extra costs of looking after people, there is also lost income from services such as Country Park cafes and cancelled ceremonies. The Government has provided some emergency funding, but we still face considerable budget shortfalls.

Nevertheless, due to sound financial management and forward planning, Hampshire County Council is in a much stronger position than most other County Councils. We have strong reserves which enable us to invest in new schools and infrastructure. Our Capital Investment programme runs to over £750m for the coming four years. This will help with the Green Recovery. That capital programme includes:

- £68million in new and extended school buildings in the next four years to ensure there is a local school place for every child in Hampshire;
- £118million for structural maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges in Hampshire over the next three years;
- £91million for integrated transport schemes including over £18 million specifically focused on walking and cycling improvements;

- £33million for decarbonisation schemes covering solar PV and single to double-glazing window replacements.

This last bullet point forms part of our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which was approved by Cabinet four months ago. We will plant one million trees and millions more wildflowers on County Land and verges. We also have a group-buying solar scheme called “Solar Together”. It is a great scheme and residents should consider registering. Even if you have solar panels already, you can still use the scheme to get a discounted battery. I had solar panels installed last Summer, so this is what I am doing. You can register for solar, battery storage or both by 26 March at solartogether.co.uk/hampshire

Everyone in Hampshire can be proud that HCC Children’s Services are still rated “Outstanding in all Areas” by OFSTED. Only one other Council has achieved this accolade and it is a much smaller one than Hampshire. This is a tribute to our outstanding social workers.

To boost local jobs and support the recovery, HCC has doubled funding to Apprenticeships and set up a Skills Hub. We are determined to do everything we can to get young people into work and training.

In February 2021 HCC secured funding to continue our highly successful Supporting Families Programme. To date, positive outcomes have been recorded for 1,923 families who have accepted support and achieved changes within the family as a result, such as sustained employment or improved school attendance. Independent evaluation by Solent University demonstrated that between 2015-19 the support given to families to get back on their feet translated into savings of £27million to the public purse.

On transport, we face a real challenge to rebalance our streets towards walking and cycling. It is a challenge we are determined to meet. This is crucial for our own health and wellbeing as well as for the climate and the health of the planet. We have started consulting on a bold new Local Transport Plan for Hampshire which puts Active Travel first. That consultation will resume later this year when we publish the draft plan.

Finally, for the sake of good accountability I would like to use this report to share a table of all my County Councillor grants made in the financial year – see below. This included funds allocated to two Liss projects – Home Start Butser to support families in Liss and to Liss Junior school towards new dining tables. Cllr Oppenheimer looked forward to being able to support the Crossover when the new round of funding opened on 1st April and possibly other possible projects from Liss.

Each year I do my best to spread the grants around the entire Division. But Petersfield Hangers is a large Division and so this is not easy! If re-elected, next year I will be looking to fund projects in villages that I did not manage to support with a grant this year. The next County Councillor grant round opens in early June 2021.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR GRANTS AWARDED IN 2020-21

Organisation	Project Title	Project Description	Amount Awarded
Hawkley Parish Council	Coronavirus Support Programme	We have established a group to deal with the impact of Coronavirus on the local community. It supports self-isolators and also addresses other unforeseen impacts of the current situation.	£1,000
Petersfield Youth Theatre	Elf - the Musical	To support the performance of 'Elf - the Musical', (Project was delayed but will be brought back)	£750
Steep and Stroud Newsletter	The Steep and Stroud Newsletter	We publish the newsletter ten times a year and it is delivered free to every household in the two villages. It is a much valued link for the community	£300
Home-Start Butser	Home-Start Butser support for families in Liss	We urgently need funds to be able to continue our vital work with local families who are facing unprecedented challenges during the Covid-19 Coronavirus outbreak.	£1,000
Petersfield Open Air Pool	upgrades to admin/change room building	We will replace and upgrade the guttering, soffits and fascias of the pool admin/ change room building.	£1,500
Federation of Liss Infant & Junior School	Dining Tables	There are issues that we need to overcome when pupils return to school. The pandemic has heightened our need to replace the existing dining tables & chairs.	£1,500
Greatham Parish Council	Improvements to traffic/ transport	We have applied to HCC for various traffic improvements to help ease speeds of traffic in the village and make improvements for pedestrians.	£1,000
Funding to Community First	Emergency funding to food banks	Emergency funding to support Hampshire's most vulnerable children and families.	£2,000
Hawkley Parish Council	Fingerpost Refurbishment Project	The refurbishment and repair of traditional iron fingerpost signs situated around the parish	£400
The King's Arms youth project	Youth Project	We have purchased and are setting up a new hub in Petersfield. We are in the process of changing the building from a restaurant to a youth club/hub.	£544

I would like to acknowledge the resilience and dedication of all Parish Councils and Petersfield Town Council, who kept going impressively throughout the pandemic despite the challenges, serving the local community and taking forward important projects. Thankfully we can all look forward to a better 12 months ahead.

UPDATE ON EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cllr Budden, District Councillor for Liss, advised that the main focus of EHDC for the past year had been Covid related and, as Chair of EHDC for the second year running, Cllr Budden extended his thanks to all staff who had responded to the challenges and worked from home to keep services running. This had included administering Covid grants which had been done so in such a timely manner and had substantially beaten Government target for the distribution. Other Covid related issues included:

- EHDC had succeeded in getting the homeless people off the streets during the pandemic;
- The closing date for EHDC administered business interruption grants was 31 March and so any applications would need be submitted by this Government deadline;
- EHDC had provided free parking at EHDC car parks near vaccination centres which were managed by EHDC. This had been well received;
- The Covid helpline was still in operation but receiving less calls;
- EHDC has been working with local foodbanks to ensure adequate provisions to provide for those in need during the pandemic.

On a more local level, Cllr Budden added that he was pleased that EHDC were working with LPC on the Mill Road Community Garden to transform a derelict piece of land for more positive use. He noted that he had given district councillor grants given to the Triangle and Crossover Youth Centre within Liss.

Cllr Budden finished by noting that the next round of applications for district councillor grants (with a budget total of £1m) would open on 1st April. The applications would need to support at least one of three community benefits: supporting positive mental health in residents in particular young people, reducing social isolation, in particular in older people and supporting the recovery of residents from the coronavirus pandemic. He encouraged local groups to submit applications which he would be happy to endorse as early as possible to ensure some of the funding would be spent within Liss.

District Councillor Russell Oppenheimer paid tribute to Cllr Keith Budden as the longest serving Chairman of EHDC for his outstanding job particularly over the last year in difficult circumstances, including chairing meetings using Zoom and Skype. He felt Liss should be proud of Keith. Cllr Oppenheimer congratulated Cllr Budden for his excellent work, adding how impressed he was and proud to be co-councillor. LPC Chair Cllr Hargreaves echoed Cllr Oppenheimer's sentiments.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chairman thanked residents for attending & the meeting was closed at 21.13hrs.