

LISS PARISH
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2018

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 21st March 2018 when 8 members of the Parish Council, County Councillor Russell Oppenheimer, District Councillors Mike Kendall and Laetitia Pienaar and 16 parishioners attended.

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

Also in attendance was a member of the press and Parish Clerk Mrs Sarah Smith.

Apologies were received from Councillors Dodds, Linsley and Smith.

GOOD VILLAGER AWARD

The Chairman had great pleasure in presenting the Good Villager Award to Mrs Sue Jordan who received the trophy for all of her work in the community.

Sue spent many years volunteering at Liss Infant School. She is a trustee of the Triangle Centre, and volunteers her time in the coffee bar at the Triangle. She is also on the Triangle Centre's events committee where she helps to organise various fundraising events and helps out at the Dementia café afternoons there. She is the secretary of Liss Horticultural Society and part of the team which plants containers in the centre of the village. Sue also runs two walks every week around the village as part of the Walking for Health initiative.

Sue accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers who work with her in Liss and do so much.

PRESENTATION BY THE POICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER

PCSO John Payne reported on the crime statistics within Liss noting some downward and some upward trends, the highest being criminal damage followed by burglaries which had a particular focus on the theft of jewellery. There was also several ongoing investigations into drug related incidents involving young people in the village; outreach work with the Crossover Youth Centre continued.

Mr Payne gave advice on when to use 999 and when to use 101 to report crime and provided copies of the Hampshire Constabulary Home Security Advice, details on the Bobby Scheme which provides a free home safety and security check, a guide to common types of fraud and details of the Hampshire Alert system which provides information on crime and community information for the area in which you live. Copies of all publication would be available for viewing in the Parish Office and further information could be obtained on the Hampshire Constabulary website.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 15th March 2017 had been circulated. Proposed by Mr Neasom and seconded by Mr Kendall, they were agreed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

UPDATE ON THE LISS PAVILION PROJECT

Background

We have reported on the Pavilion project at previous Annual Parish Meetings, and in editions of Village Voice as well as holding public consultations.

You may know, therefore, that the Parish Council have been working to develop a new Pavilion which will meet demand from clubs and community activities as the village grows as well as providing a home for the scouts, and facilities for the Liss Football club, particularly the youth and junior teams.

This is because Liss is a growing village. Studies for the Liss Neighbourhood Plan and consultations with residents tell us that a new, multi-purpose facility for our community is wanted, to add to our well used existing facilities in the village. Also, the existing Pavilion on the West Liss Recreation ground and the adjoining Scouts' hut are in a poor state and have reached the end of their lives.

We started work on the project some time ago, but our first attempts to make provision were too ambitious, and ultimately unaffordable.

However, two public consultations, in November 2016 and June 2017, and engagement with residents throughout the design process suggested significant support for a new building which reflects a traditional sports pavilion, with a flexible, affordable design sympathetic to its surroundings and to the location of the village in the heart of the South Downs National Park. That is what we have been pursuing.

We worked up a design last year, and have recently obtained planning permission for a building which we believe reflects views from the community. The planning application, with all the details of the Pavilion, is SDNP/17/05105/FUL and can be viewed at http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning_applications/. The Pavilion will have changing rooms for footballers, storage for the Scouts, and a small hall, side room, kitchen and toilets for more general community use.

How do we pay for the Pavilion

The pavilion has to be affordable and good value for money. We need to find ways of financing it which do not put too much of a burden on the community and which people feel are worth it. Recent tenders have confirmed that with construction costs, design and other fees the project will cost about £702,000.

The Parish Council have £202,000 funding secured or covered by reserves but we need to find a further £500,000. We are working on several possible sources of additional funding, including the real possibility of a grant of £100k from the Football Foundation. Also, over the next few years, money from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), paid on new housing, will be available. However, none of this money is currently guaranteed.

We have said previously in Village Voice that we intend to fund some of the cost of delivering the new pavilion through prudent borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board. This provides loans at reasonable interest to parish councils.

We have considered delaying the project until we have more certainty about other funding, but if we do that we can expect the price to rise. The Parish Council's view is that it is better to take decisions on the funding situation as it is now rather than wait, but work hard to bring in that additional funding.

We are therefore proposing that the Parish Council should take out a loan now to cover all the outstanding £500,000. Should we be successful in sourcing further grants, donations and CIL Liss Parish Council we will use these funds to reduce the loan, if it makes financial sense for the village to do so. The loan would be paid back over 25 years, which would mean that each band D household would have added to its Council Tax about £10.99 a year to service and repay the loan. This would mean a £3.6%

increase in the overall precept for 2019/20 over 2018/19. However, as set out in the Finance Report, that reflects an increase in the precept for this coming year, 2018/19, which includes a contribution towards paying off the loan.

A consultation of all the council tax payers in Liss, on whether or not we should take out a loan, starts this week with the delivery of a new edition of Village Voice enclosing a consultation leaflet. Without the agreement of council tax payers the project will not go ahead and the proposed new Pavilion will not be built. It will also mean that the money put aside in 2018/19 will not be spent on the Pavilion and will be used to offset the precept in the future. I urge everyone to respond with their view by the closing date, 23rd April.

If the loan is agreed by the community and by the Public Works Loan Board we would hope to agree the tender at the beginning of the summer and for construction to start shortly after. The building should be completed somewhere around February or March next year.

This is undoubtedly the biggest project the Parish Council has undertaken for many years but I believe it to be worth it and that the village, particularly its young people, will benefit hugely over the next few years.

In response to a question from Cllr Pienaar, the Chairman advised that a simple majority of those who voted would be required in order to meet the requirements of the PWLB and for the project to proceed. In response to a question from a parishioner, the Chairman advised that funds allocated to the Skatebowl project had been transferred to the Pavilion project. A parishioner enquired about whether funds spent to date were included in the total project cost of £702,000. Cllr Mayo advised that a little over £30,000 had been spent so far since the project re-commenced and that this was included in the total figure.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A year ago the Parish Council committed itself to an Action Plan for 2017/2018. I will share with you how we have got on in delivering that plan, although, of course, other things have happened during the year which we have responded to.

Village of the Year

One of the big, unexpected events was that Liss won Hampshire and Isle of Wight Village of the Year. Alongside that award the Triangle Centre was awarded Best Village Feature, the Crossover Centre the Inspired Places Award, the Community Engagement Award to the whole Village, and Excellence in Localism to the Liss Neighbourhood Plan and also the RVS Luncheon Club.

In fact, although the Parish Council put the village forward, and Councillor Sue Halstead did all the work in contacting everyone and putting together the bid, the credit really goes to all the organisations in Liss which make it a vibrant community. Our application was at the last minute, with no big build up, and success was a real surprise but it reflects the village as it is. A good place to live.

The Liss Pavilion

I have outlined earlier the work we are doing to provide a new Pavilion for the village and that report should be read alongside this one.

Provision of play equipment at Newman Collard Playing Field

In October last year Damian Hinds, our MP, opened new play equipment at the Newman Collard Playing Field, replacing worn out and limited equipment. This was provided by the Parish Council, along with the Newman Collard Trust, supported by a large grant from Biffa's Environmental Fund. We undertook extensive consultation with the schools, the Crossover Centre, Puddleducks and other organisations to see what was wanted and this had a big influence on the final provision. The work for the Parish Council was led by the chairman of our Grounds Committee, David Dodds along with the joint Clerk Sarah Smith. It has proved very popular and I believe is a great success.

We are now starting work to look at the play equipment at the West Liss Recreation Ground to decide how that can be improved and how we can finance that. But that is a task for next year.

Drainage at Newman Collard Playing Field

One of our commitments has been to work with the Newman Collard Trust to commence work on improvements to the drainage on the football pitches. Anyone who has played or watched a match there in winter will know the problem. That is underway, but the solution, however, is not easy. Some clearance work on drains has taken place but we are having to survey and investigate all the drains, including working with Southern Water, to get to the root of the problem. For the moment, it is work in progress.

The Liss Village Neighbourhood Development Plan

Last November 1428 people voted in a referendum and a resounding 87% percent of those voting supported the Neighbourhood Plan. As a result, the plan has been adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority and made part of the statutory Development Plan covering Liss. The work on the Liss Neighbourhood Plan is now finished and Liss has a working plan for the future development of the village.

The plan is the outcome of a huge amount of work over the past three years by volunteers from the village. Many more villagers contributed to the successful completion of the project, by commenting through the consultations. The Parish Council are very grateful to Sir John Dunt, Chairman of the group steering the work, and to all its members and those of the various working groups who contributed to the plan. For the Parish Council the work has been led by Sue Halstead, Chairman of the Planning Committee, Angela Wright, and myself. The village can be proud of a real community effort.

Will it make any difference? We believe it will. For example, the plan sets out where new housing will go. Those locations were decided by the Liss community and not by the National Park Authority, and you chose to have development spread around the village and not in one place. The plan also puts a tight boundary around the village to stop it spreading into the countryside or into gaps between parts of the village such as that between Liss Forest and the rest of Liss. It has also brought in strong protection from development to most of the open areas in the village by giving them the official designation of Local Green Space.

But that is not the end of it! The Parish Council now have the job of making sure the plan is carried out properly. We must hold the planning authority to account on its decisions about future development, particularly taking account of the views of the community on design. A first test is the current planning application by Cala Homes for 77 homes on two developments along Andlers Ash Road. The Parish Council has commented extensively to the developer and to the planning authority on the proposals.

We will need to ensure that spending of money arising from the new Community Infrastructure Levy, which arises from new development, is properly spent for the benefit of the Community. And we also have unfinished business over making improvements to the village centre identified in the plan. There is a lot to do and we will need help from the community. It is a major commitment for next year's Action Plan.

Accessible Toilet in the Village Hall

One of the small but important improvements we have been able to make is the provision of an entirely new accessible toilet in the Village Hall, partly paid for by grants from our district councillors. It is part of a programme for modernising the facilities at the Hall.

Running the Council

Much of the work of the Parish Council is the daily turnover of bookings for the village hall, managing the allotments, and the maintenance of the three recreation grounds. One of the changes we have introduced is to outsource cleaning of the Village Hall and also some of the grass cutting on pitches. The early signs are that these deliver a better service at less cost. Good financial control is important, and Angela Wright, chairman of the Finance Committee will set out our financial position, but I will just mention that we have started to transfer all of our financial process to SAGE, which is a commuter programme used widely by Councils and many other organisations. It will be one of the principal tasks of our new Finance Officer to complete that process, which should give us a far more efficient and streamlined form of financial control.

The business of the Council is conducted through committees and I particularly extend thanks to all our committee chairmen, including Angela Wright for Finance, Sue Halstead for Planning, Keith Budden for Buildings, David Dodds for Grounds, Howard Lindsay for Highways and Liane McDonald for our Review Advisory Committee. I also chair our Pavilion Development Committee. During the year we were very pleased that the Council was joined by Kate O'Malley but we still have a vacancy for a Councillor and invite anyone who is interested to write to the Parish Clerk or call in at the Parish Office behind the Village Hall.

I would also like to mention the considerable support given to the Parish Council by the three East Hants District Councillors who represent various parts of Liss. They are Keith Budden, who is also one our Parish Councillors, Mike Kendall, and Laetitia Pienaar. That representation is likely to change at the next District Council elections because the boundary commission has been looking at district council wards in East Hampshire and its current proposal is for Liss to be represented by just two councillors. This would be to revert to the position that we have had for many years in Liss, but we await the final decision. A new County Councillor for Liss, Russell Oppenheimer, was elected during the year, and has proved assiduous in keeping the Parish Council in touch with his work.

A new Parish Clerk and other people

Dick Bowery, our long standing Parish Clerk, retires at the end of this month. Last year Sarah Smith was appointed as joint clerk with Dick, but since the beginning of the year Sarah has been the sole Parish Clerk and Dick has continued as the Responsible Finance Officer. A new Finance Officer, Jan Allen, was appointed to take over from Dick and she started at the beginning of March.

Dick was appointed Parish Clerk in 2002 and for many it will be difficult to imagine the council without him. His knowledge of Liss and the workings of the Parish Council has been outstanding, as has been his commitment to the job, working far longer hours than he was supposed to do. A wry, sometimes irascible sense of humour is an essential part of the man. We could not persuade him to come tonight, but we will be honouring him at a dinner later this month. His support will be missed by me and all the Councillors.

Sarah Smith faces the challenge of taking over from Dick. But I am completely confident that she will be able to do so. She joined the Parish Office as Assistant Clerk in 2014 and quickly became the obvious person to take over from Dick, bringing her own style and capabilities to the job. We all wish her every success in her new role.

Another important change has been the retirement of Tim Pay as caretaker and the recruitment of Miriam Baines last November, who is proving a great success. Frances Cook, our indispensable admin officer, continues to hold the office together during these changes while Luke Mannerings leads the grounds team, supported by Paul Knibbs. Michael Jarman's work as our litter warden is much appreciated in the village. We also have a number of volunteers who help over flowers, planting and generally looking after the village. On behalf of all the Council I would like to say how much we are grateful to all our staff and our volunteers, all of whom do so much for the village.

The Action Plan 2017/18

In conclusion, I believe that the council have very successfully achieved what we set out to do, and fulfilled almost all the items in the Action Plan.

NB. Both the Action Plan for 2017/18 and 2018/19 were attached to the Chairman's Report to the APM and are available for viewing on the LPC website.

FINANCE REPORT

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

The precept for 2017/18 was £182775 and the Council Tax Support Grant was £11725 giving an income of £194500. 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 for 2018/19 remain similar to the current year despite substantial increases in pension contribution costs; this is due to some planned staff changes. Included in the budget for 2018/19 is an amount of £20560 for costs of servicing a public works loan for construction costs of the new pavilion development and an amount of £5000 to cover running costs in anticipation of the facility being open for business in the latter

part of the financial year. The Council has set a precept of £202690 for 2018/19 and the charge per band D dwelling will therefore be £79.80 compared to £72.81 in 2017/18 an increase of £6.99 or 9.59%. The Council Support Grant of £11725 which has been received for the past four years is no longer available & the loss of this sum represents an increased cost of £4.62 per dwelling or 6.3% of the total increase.

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

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/2019	Increase/-decrease	
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Staff costs	97.5	107.6	107.1	-0.5	-0.46
Insurance	7.3	8.7	10.0	1.3	14.94
General administration	10.2	10.5	13.4	2.9	27.62
Grounds maintenance	15.4	16.8	19.4	2.6	15.48
Village hall costs	8.5	8.1	7.6	-0.5	-6.17
New pavilion running costs	9.5	0.0	5.0	5.0	
Grants to local associations	14.4	12.8	12.8	0.0	0.00
Neighbourhood Plan costs	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
New pavilion loan servicing	0.0	5.5	20.5	15.0	272.73
Capital projects & provisions	25.6	47.7	20.5	-27.2	-57.02
	<u>190.4</u>	<u>217.7</u>	<u>216.3</u>	<u>-1.4</u>	<u>-0.64</u>
Funded by:					
Interest & other receipts	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.00
Rental incomes	13.8	14.5	14.8	0.3	2.07
Grant Funding	0.0	10.0	0.0		
From to reserves	-0.7	-1.9	-1.8	0.1	-5.26
	<u>13.7</u>	<u>23.2</u>	<u>13.6</u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>1.72</u>
Precept	165.0	182.8	202.7	19.9	10.89
Council Tax support grant	11.7	11.7	0.0	-11.7	-100.00
	<u>190.4</u>	<u>217.7</u>	<u>216.3</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>3.95</u>
No. of band D dwellings	2490.03	2510.13	2540.00		
Band D tax	£66.28	£72.81	£79.80	£6.99	9.60

The audit of 2016/17 accounts was carried out in April 2017 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 15th May; BDO Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor signed the final clearance of the accounts, without any changes on 14th September 2017.

Audited 2016/17 accounts for the Charities accounts were approved at Council on 19th June 2017 and our thanks go to Mr West for his services as auditor. Lightatouch were appointed as auditors for the Charities accounts in February 2018 following Mr West's resignation.

REPORT ON ATTENDANCE OF COUNCILLORS

The Clerk reported that since the last Annual Parish Meeting, the Parish Council had met 13 times. Mr Hargreaves, Mr Budden, Mrs Halstead and Mr Linsley attended all 13 meetings. Miss O'Malley attended all 8 meetings following her co-option in July.

Mr Dodds, Mrs McDonald and Mrs Wright attended 12 meetings. Mr Mayo attended 11 meetings. Mr MacNamara attended 10 meetings. Mr Jerrard attended 9 meetings. Mr Smith attended 8 meetings. Mr Wiles attended 2 of a possible 2 meetings following his co-option in June and subsequent resignation on 16 September.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

County Councillor Russell Oppenheimer provided the following report:

As I approach the end of my first year as a County Councillor I have been reflecting on the past 12 months. It has been a rewarding year and a great learning experience. I am pleased to have built strong relationships with Liss Parish Council and the Liss Community Association. I have also spent a lot of time getting to know the key Councillors and Officers at Hampshire County Council so I know who to get in touch with about issues as they crop up.

I have also enjoyed my work on the South Downs National Park Authority over the last year. This role dovetails neatly with my County Council responsibilities. I am keen to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park whilst providing more opportunities for people to get out and about and enjoy it. There is still a lot more to learn and I am looking forward to the challenge of the next 12 months.

1. County Council highlights of the year

I am pleased to recap below some of the key County Council highlights pertaining to Liss from the last year:

- Hampshire County Council has awarded £30,000 to the Liss Community Association from the Community Buildings Fund. The award enables the Association to carry out renovation of the existing roof, repairs to the guttering and essential damp proofing. This will commence in the summer and paves the way for the transfer of the building, hopefully later this year.
- Speed limits were reduced in the centre of the village last Summer. On Hill Brow Road the 30mph limit was extended up the hill (previously it was a 40mph limit). The B3006 was reduced to a 40mph limit (from National Speed limit). And Rake Road now has a 30mph limit (previously it was National Speed limit). Speed limit reductions are an important part of maintaining a tranquil village atmosphere and I am pleased that we were able to implement these speed limit reductions.
- Following consultation with their stakeholders, the governing bodies of Liss Infant and Liss Junior schools took the decision on 5 March 2018 to form a schools federation. The federation will be formed on 1 September 2018. The Governor Services team at Hampshire County Council will continue to provide support to the new unified governing body.

2. County Councillor Grant Scheme

In the last year Cllr Oppenheimer was delighted to support two Liss projects with awards of £1,000 each from my County Councillor grant allocation of £8,000. The projects are:

- A grant of £1,000 to Liss Junior School to develop a new IT room on the first floor. I am delighted that the children now have this excellent facility and that space has been freed up on the ground floor.
- A grant of £1,000 to Homestart Butser to support troubled families in the Liss area. I am looking forward to presenting awards to the HomeStart volunteers on 24 April at the Triangle Centre.

3. County Council finances

At Full Council on 22 February 2018 it was formally decided that Council Tax will rise by 5.99% from April 2018. The increase will ensure we can maintain important services such as school crossing patrols, tips and community transport whilst continuing to look after the most vulnerable people in society.

Hampshire still has one of the lowest precepts of any County Council and our finances are in good health despite the financial pressures. Council Tax was frozen for five years from 2010-2015 and the level of Council Tax in Hampshire is still lower in real terms than it was 8 years ago (i.e. when you adjust for inflation).

HHC were balancing the books whilst investing in the future. We have reserves of over £500m which enables us to make capital investments in improving the County.

Given the pressure on local government finances I think Hampshire County Council has performed admirably over the last 10 years.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

District Councillor Mr Kendall reported that the development on Andlers Ash Road had reached the formal planning stage; there were many objections from residents on traffic issues. In response to a parishioner's question, County Councillor Oppenheimer advised that HCC were aware of potential traffic issues and that traffic calming measures may need to be considered at a later stage under the Community Funded Initiative Scheme, possibly drawing on CIL funds.

Councillor Kendall highlighted that following a reduction in council tax last year there was a freeze for the coming year; the EHDC policy of commercial property investment had helped ensure the maintenance of services.

Finally Councillor Kendall reported that the work of the Flood Action Group continued and that a consultant's report on flood prevention and mitigation would issue shortly.

District Councillor Pienaar provided the following reported on the allocation of district councillor grants.

All three District Councillors had contributed to the following projects: Conversion of existing toilet facility in Liss Village Hall to accessible toilet with baby changing facility, a new IT suite at Liss Junior School, the extension of the main room at the Newman Collard Pavilion with increased storage and minor works to an alternative venue for Liss Band.

Cllr Budden had also contributed to a yoga course for the Crossover Youth Centre, a mural project in partnership with the East Hampshire Rail Partnership and the Crossover and a new PA system for the Liss Forest Residents' Association.

Cllr Pienaar had also contributed to the Triangle Community Centre film festival, gardening equipment for the Rother House Residents' Fund and additional planters to supplement the existing shrubs and hanging baskets in the village.

Cllr Kendall had also contributed to Liss Athletic Football Club towards new football pitches and the purchase of shrubs, plants and seeds for the Rother House Residents' Fund.

District Councillor Budden reported that following the boundary review there would be a reduction from 44 District Councillors to 43; Liss Forest would become part of Liss and the Hangers, Greatham and Hawkley part of neighbouring wards. The formal report should be issued early April and the changes would take effect from the District Council elections in May 2019.

Cllr Budden also reported that negotiations on The Temple Inn continued between Fullers and the prospective purchasers and it was hoped that the outcome would be known by Easter.

PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS

No questions were raised.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked residents for attending & the meeting was closed at 21.45hrs.