



## LISS PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024

### CHAIR'S REPORT

The 2023/24 Civic Year has been a busy year, of which more in a moment. As has become the norm, we have published our proposed plan for Parish Council activities for the coming year, which 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. The Parish Office continues to be open every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. We continue to use the Liss Parish Council Website at [lissparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://lissparishcouncil.gov.uk) to tell the community about the business of the council. The Council has also continued to maintain its social media presence, via Twitter and Facebook and most recently Instagram, to help keep parishioners informed.

Our main consultations this year have been thoughts about the pump track and regarding possible plans for the enhancement of Liss village centre. Cllr Andy Smith will speak about this project later in tonight's meeting.

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 work of the Liss Speedwatch Group, Liss in Bloom and the Liss Men's Shed. Each year we also give funding support to a variety of local initiatives and we would encourage local organisations to submit grant applications if you require additional funding. Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

#### **New Liss Infrastructure**

Last year I mentioned that we had two major infrastructure projects in the pipeline, one being the new pump track at West Liss Recreation Ground, which was opened in June 2023 and continues to be a very popular addition to our facilities.

The second development is a great example of where we can work in partnership with other village organisations. The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Newman Collard Playing Fields being provided by the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust who currently have submitted the relevant planning application. We look forward to seeing this project progress later this year.

Liss Forest has not been forgotten in all of this either; we were able to replace the multi-play unit there in August 2023 and we have plans to replace the remaining items in the fenced play area later in 2024.

## **Facilities**

The Village Hall and the Pavilion both continue to be well used both by community groups and private bookings for parties and events.

Having redecorated the Village Hall last year, Jed has now redecorated our parish office and I must thank Jed for all of his hard work and the excellent results.

Our allotments continue to be very popular with a high occupancy rate and we are undertaking some improvements to enhance the sites.

After a lengthy pause while some legal issues were resolved, we have now completed work on the Mill Road Community Garden which now provides a community space and play area on the green space along Mill Road next to Woodbourne Close. We also have a growing community orchard at Mill Road Community Garden.

The Petanque court continues to be well used at Liss Forest Recreation Ground.

I would like to thank the Men's Shed for their continued help with projects throughout the village.

We continue to work with EHDC on the control of Himalayan Balsam growing along the Riverside Walk and at the Andlers Ash allotment site.

## **Storms Henk and Isha**

Storms Henk and Isha struck Liss with a vengeance earlier this year, causing considerable damage to trees along the Riverside Walk (where experts now agree we had some tornado activity) and also at Newman Collard Park. I would like to thank our officers and councillors for their rapid action in addressing these problems, and to our tree contractors who did a great job of felling damaged trees and branches to ensure everyone could safely continue using both recreational facilities in our village.

## **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.

We are aware that there are continued issues with traffic along Forest Road and Andlers Ash Road and we will work with Hampshire County Council to investigate possible solutions (and their funding) to improve the situation but sadly we don't have a magic wand and so solutions are likely to take a number of years.

## **Village Centre improvements**

We commissioned Hampshire County Council to work up proposals for possible enhancements to the village centre to make it a more attractive place for residents and visitors alike. The initial consultations have now concluded and Andy Smith, Chair of our Highways Committee will be updating you more on this later this evening.

It is important to stress that this is only the first step in what will be a major project for the village over the coming years.

While talking about the village centre, I must of course pay tribute to Liss In Bloom. Without their hard work and dedication, our village would not have the numerous floral displays which make it such a pleasant place to be.

## **Planning and Development**

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.

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**

I have to start this section with some sad news, Nick Wilson and Phil Deacon both passed away during this year. Both have left very large gaps to fill and are truly missed by councillors and officers.

The elections in May 2023 saw some new faces joining the Parish Council (and the return of a couple of familiar faces), and together with some subsequent co-options, I welcome Ian James, Paddy Payne, Christopher Mort, Robert Smith and Selina Stafford-Tuke to the council and thank them for all of their work this year.

Clayre Williams is my new vice-Chair and Chair of our Finance Committee, Clive Olley is Chair of the Facilities and Charities Committees, Andy Smith continues as Chair of our Highways committee, and I have continued to chair our Planning Committee. I would like to extend my thanks to Sue Halstead and Roger Hargreaves, for agreeing to be co-opted onto committees to help us fulfil our duties as your Parish Council.

## **Parish Council vacancy**

We still have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor, so if what you've heard this evening has inspired you to have a go and give us a few hours every month, we would love to have a chat with you. Please speak to either myself, Clayre Williams or Sarah Smith and we can tell you more about it.

## **District Councillors**

We welcome our two new District Councillors, Roger Mullenger and Ian James.

## **County Councillor**

At county level, we have Russell Oppenheimer as our county councillor. I would like to thank Russell for his continued hard work at HCC and his regular appearances at our full council meetings.

## **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, Rebecca Lawrence our Assistant Clerk, Sandra Humphrey our Responsible Finance Officer and Katrina Burns our Projects Officer. We sadly said farewell to Lizzy Keeling during the year, but we still have contact with Lizzy as she is now working for the Hampshire Forest Partnership, who have provided some of the new trees we have planted around the village.

All of our officers have worked extra hours to keep the Council going and to support initiatives to improve our services and I would like to express my sincere thanks to them for their commitment and enthusiasm and for Sarah's continued steadfast leadership during the year.

They have been supported by Jed Deane, our caretaker for the Village Hall and Julie and Pete Ryan, our caretakers for the Pavilion. Also, Michael Jarman, who will be familiar to many as he litter picks around the village and Paul Knibbs our invaluable groundsman, ably

assisted by Jed as Assistant Groundsman. We are very fortunate as a village and I am very fortunate as their Chair to have such an excellent team of councillors and officers, and of course I must also thank the many volunteers who work alongside us to help keep the Parish Council business and projects running.

### **Liss Band**

And finally, we come to Liss Band. We are incredibly fortunate to have Liss Band in the village, they have now been a part of the village community for 50 years and I am very pleased to be able to confirm that they are going to perform a selection of music for us later this evening. We are currently working with Liss Band and other interested parties to pursue their ambition to have a bandstand within the village where they can perform and we hope you will see some real progress on this as we move forward through this year.

So to conclude, another very full year for your Parish Council,

Thank you for attending this evening.

**Cllr Keith Budden, chair, Liss Parish Council**

## LISS PARISH COUNCIL DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR 2024/25

During the Council year 2024/25 Liss Parish Council will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain, improve and promote the use of recreation grounds, open spaces and the Village Hall and Liss Pavilion.
- 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 Authority and Hampshire County Council.
- Engage with the community, including parishioners, local businesses, community groups and organisations in Liss, including 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 and support local groups for the improvement of the facilities, environment and social and economic wellbeing in the community.
- 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/Gold Status of the Local Council Award Scheme.
- Fulfil responsibilities as Sole Trustee to three Charities: (West) Liss Recreation Ground (Charity number 301871), Village Hall; (Charity number 301872) and Parish Allotments (Charity number 237190).

### Key projects for 2024/2025 include:

- Funding: Deciding priorities for the use of CIL funds allocated directly to Liss Parish Council, drawing on previous and future community engagement, and accessing other sources of investment, including SDNPA CIL.
- Highways priorities:
  - Completing the school zone proposals.
  - Exploring options for highways improvements with HCC using the Community Funded Initiatives Scheme, in particular on Andlers Ash Road and Forest Road.
  - Deploying the two new Speed Indicator Devices (following HCC delivery of necessary infrastructure).
- Facilities priorities:
  - Renovating the children's play area at Liss Forest.
  - Considering further enhancements to the recreation grounds in line with the vision for each site, working with partners as necessary.
  - Undertaking an improvement programme to enhance the allotment sites.
  - Implementing an electronic booking management system for the Village Hall, Pavilion and West Liss football pitch.
- Village Centre Improvement:
  - Consulting on options for enhancement of the village centre with Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.
  - Pursuing funding for the railway platform extension.
- Environmental issues:
  - Contributing to nature recovery through green space projects to enhance biodiversity and protect the environment.
  - Considering the LPC approach to reaching Net Zero by 2050.

## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Budget 2023-2024

The precept for 2023/24 was £254,103. 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.

Local organisations and associations supported by Liss Parish Council grant funding during 2023/24 include:

East Hants Area CAB  
RVS Luncheon Club  
Liss Historical Society  
Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust  
Rake Village Hall  
St Mary's Church  
Liss Community Association (The Triangle)

HIOW victim support  
Home Start Butser

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and allocations to date are as follows:

**CIL Funding**

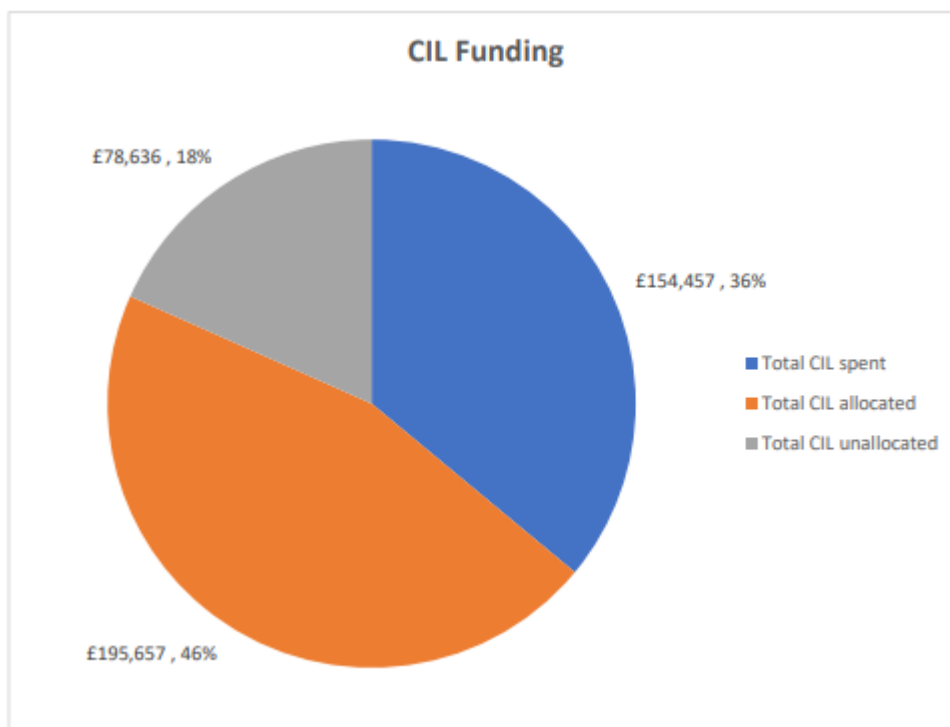
Total CIL received	£ 428,750
Total CIL spent	£ 154,457
Total CIL allocated	£ 195,657
Total CIL unallocated	£ 78,636

**Spent**

Liss pavilion - construction and fit out	£ 6,281
Path to new pentanque terrain	£ 2,970
Watering system for village centre	£ 445
Village Hall building maintenance	£ 5,033
Mill Road Community Garden	£ 6,595
Public notice board - village centre	£ 610
Moveable goal posts - WL and NC	£ 3,776
West Liss play area	£ 25,000
Sports wall at Newman Collard	£ 5,585
Floodlight installation fees	£ 1,151
Crossover	£ 5,206
Pump track installation	£ 59,218
Installation of gym equipment at West Liss	£ 950
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 30,317
Green space projects	£ 1,320

**Allocated**

MUGA at Newman Collard	£ 50,000
Village centre improvements	£ 120,000
Green space projects	£ 3,680
Crossover	£ 2,294
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 19,683



Allocations are provisional and any underspend will be released for future projects.

### Budget 2024-2025

Budgeted expenditure for 2024/25 is as follows:

	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	% change
<b>Budget:</b>				
Staff cost	127.7	138.3	156.6	12%
Insurance	7.2	8.3	8.7	4%
General administration	14.9	13.9	15.1	8%
Grounds maintenance	30.5	31.9	30.9	-3%
Village Hall running cost	21.6	26.3	27.1	3%
Pavilion running cost	21.1	24.8	25.8	4%
Allotment running cost	0.0	0.7	5.2	87%
Grants to local associations	10.1	10.3	14.5	29%
Pavilion loan servicing	27.5	27.5	27.5	0%
Capital projects and provisions	0.0	10.0	20.0	50%
	260.6	292.0	331.3	12%
<b>Funded by:</b>				
Precept	237.4	254.1	263.6	4%
Interest and other receipts	0.0	0.0	20.0	
Rental incomes	23.2	37.9	43.8	13%
Transfer to/from reserves	0.0	0.0	3.9	
	260.6	292.0	331.3	

Staff costs include all salary, employer's NI and employer's pension cost. Staff costs also include an increase to salaries in accordance with guidelines for public sector pay rates.

Allotment running costs are expected to increase by £4.5k. The increase to these running costs is as a result of a renewed allotment maintenance programme and will be somewhat offset by an expected 13% increase to rental income.

Provision is made for capital works in respect of feasibility studies, replacement play equipment and safety surfacing.

The Council has set a precept of £263.6k for 2024/2025 and the charge per Band D dwelling will therefore be £98.20 compared with £95.11 in 2023/2024. This is an increase of £3.09 or 3.25% per Band D dwelling.

The audit of 2022/23 accounts was carried out in April 2023 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 19 June 2023. BDO Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor, signed the final clearance of the accounts in September 2023

**Cllr Clayre Williams, Chair of the Finance Committee**

#### CLERK'S REPORT ON COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE – YEAR 2023/24

Since the last scheduled Annual Parish Meeting on 22nd March 2023, the Parish Council has met formally a total of 9 times.

Cllrs Budden, Baldwin, A Smith and Williams have attended all 9 meetings.

Cllrs James, Olley and Tordoff have attended 8 out of 9 meetings.

Cllr Jerrard has attended 6 out of 9 meetings.

Cllr Payne has attended 5 out of 9 meetings.

Cllr Wilson attended 3 out of a possible 5 meetings.

Cllr Stratford-Tuke has attended 7 out of a possible 7 meetings since her co-option in June 2023.

Cllr Mort has both attended 4 out of a possible 4 meetings since his co-option in October 2023.

Cllr R Smith has attended 3 out of a possible 4 meetings since his co-option in October 2023

**Sarah Smith, Clerk to Liss Parish Council**