



LISS PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Chair's Report

It has been an 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 it 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.

Thank you.

Cllr Roger Hargreaves
Chair, Liss Parish Council
March 2021

DRAFT Liss Parish Council Action Plan for 2021/2022

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.

Finance 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 2020/2021 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%.

Cllr C. Williams
Chair of LPC Finance Committee
5th March 2021

Clerk's Report on Councillor Attendance – Year 2020/21

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.

Sarah Smith

Parish Clerk