



BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MAY 2021

Forward by Cllr Terry Oliver, Chair of Broadbridge Heath Parish Council

This has been a year like no other. COVID-19 has changed the way we all live, work and communicate. It has impacted on the Parish Council on how we hold meetings, the focus of our activities, co-ordination of community support through the links and communications we have across the village, and beyond. One rewarding feature of the last year for me has been the way our community has pulled together and organised themselves into a support network, extending throughout the village and operating at street-level.



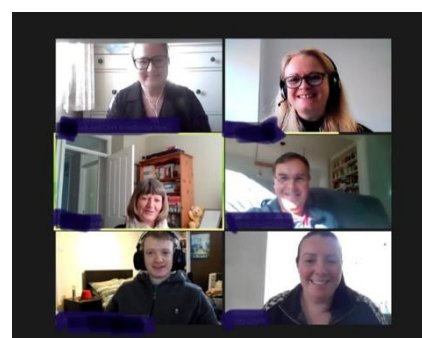
Since April 2020 members of the public were able to access Zoom meetings as we moved to online for all council meetings. This has remained our mechanism for all meetings, whether in lockdown or not, for the past year.



The Parish Council's Website has been a source of information for the Community. A Covid-19 webpage was set up in April 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. A council priority has been the increased use of the Council's social media presence during this time, such as Facebook, which have helped keep residents informed.

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 Broadbridge Heath Parish Council Community Partnership Forum has been established to link more directly with local community groups and voluntary organisations who offer service to residents of the parish.

This forum was initially formed by the Council to ensure that our residents were receiving the necessary individual support during the pandemic. However, it quickly became clear that this forum certainly has a life beyond the current crisis by providing the Council, on a monthly basis, with up to date information on the community's voluntary current activities and their future aspirations and possible needs.



Community Forum Zoom Session

Two areas the Council currently funds are youth support work through '4theYouth' Horsham, and lonely and vulnerable people support through Age UK [West Sussex] Village Agent scheme. It is hoped that other community based initiatives can be partly, or wholly funded by the Parish Council.

The work of the Council on delivering projects has been severely curtailed due to the pandemic. However, the Council's flagship project, the complete refurbishment of the Village Centre, was completed in May 2020.



Social Club at Village Centre

This project was started some five years ago and involved many hours of dedicated work by both the Village Centre Trustees and Parish Councillors for which I would like to thank them on behalf of the community.

It was also hoped that with the completion of this refurbishment, the Parish Council's new Monster Play Area would also be completed; however, due to the pandemic and some site access issues, this will now hopefully be completed during the autumn.

Over the last twelve months the Parish Council has been actively working with Countryside Properties plc and other developers, together with all other interested parties, in trying to secure the transfer of community facilities like the Parish Office, allotments, play areas and green open spaces. I can report that matters have been, and continue to be, challenging for the Council. Equally, I acknowledge the whole community itself continues to face the results of delays which are not all associated with the pandemic.



Parish Office

However, progress has been and continues to be made by the Council, by working with others on a daily basis to deliver the best outcomes for the whole community of Broadbridge Heath. Our expectations now are that most facilities will be transferred to the Council during the next 12 months.

The Council will communicate with residents, as and when each facility is in the ownership of the Parish Council. We are currently working to ensure that the day-to-day management and maintenance is in place and ready to commence following the date of transfer.

Finally, I would like to thank the councillors who commit a lot of time, often unseen and unrecognised, to Parish Council activities. This involves attending meetings, ensuring proper, responsible decisions are made, facilities are maintained and managed, and new initiatives developed. And, of course, thanks to the committed team of Parish Council staff, Lucinda (Clerk), Olivia (Assistant Clerk) and John (Environment Officer) who have continued working, also often unseen and unrecognised, for the benefit of the village throughout this difficult year.

Recreation update by Cllr Christine Knight, Chair of Recreation Committee



During this year, despite the Covid-19 restrictions, the Recreation Committee has sought to carry on with as many projects as possible; these have included sowing a wildflower meadow along the verge of the downgraded by-pass, continuing to support conservation work at Top Common Nature Area, the constant monitoring of litter/dog fouling, and planning for the acquisition of the allotments.

WSCC have given their consent for us to take over the maintenance of the wildflower meadow area, and our regular grass-cutting firm, Grastex, have included an annual schedule of work into their existing programme. Some wildflowers are already appearing, and we hope when warmer weather arrives, we shall see an abundance of butterflies, bees and other insects enjoying the biodiversity.



Wildflower Verges



Relocated dog bins and bag dispenser

Residents have been encouraged to join HDC's 'Adopt-a-Street' campaign, and we are grateful to all those that have; because of more people around in their high-vis jackets picking up careless dropped litter items, the village is looking tidier. Dog bins have been moved nearer to paths to facilitate their use, even in wet weather, and two more dog-bag dispensers will appear shortly by bins at the Ducky.

The Allotments Sub-committee has continued to plan for the acquisition of the allotments at Churchill Way (WHG) and Weston Avenue (Solomon's Seal) but the weather and delays by the developers have caused frustrating setbacks. Churchill Way may come online first, and plots will be offered as soon as is possible.

For further information about current plans, and future projects, please read the minutes of the Recreation Committee's meetings which are posted on our website. If there is a project you'd like to see developed in the village, please let us know by contacting the Clerk about your idea; even better, why not join the Parish Council and be directly involved!

Planning update by Cllr Geoff Clark, Chair of Planning Committee

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic that has dominated our lives and associated activities over the last year the Parish Council Planning Committee have remained active in reviewing the numerous planning applications that have originated from within our parish.

We also from time to time comment on significant applications from within neighbouring / adjoining parishes where it is considered that an application may have effects on the parish of Broadbridge Heath.

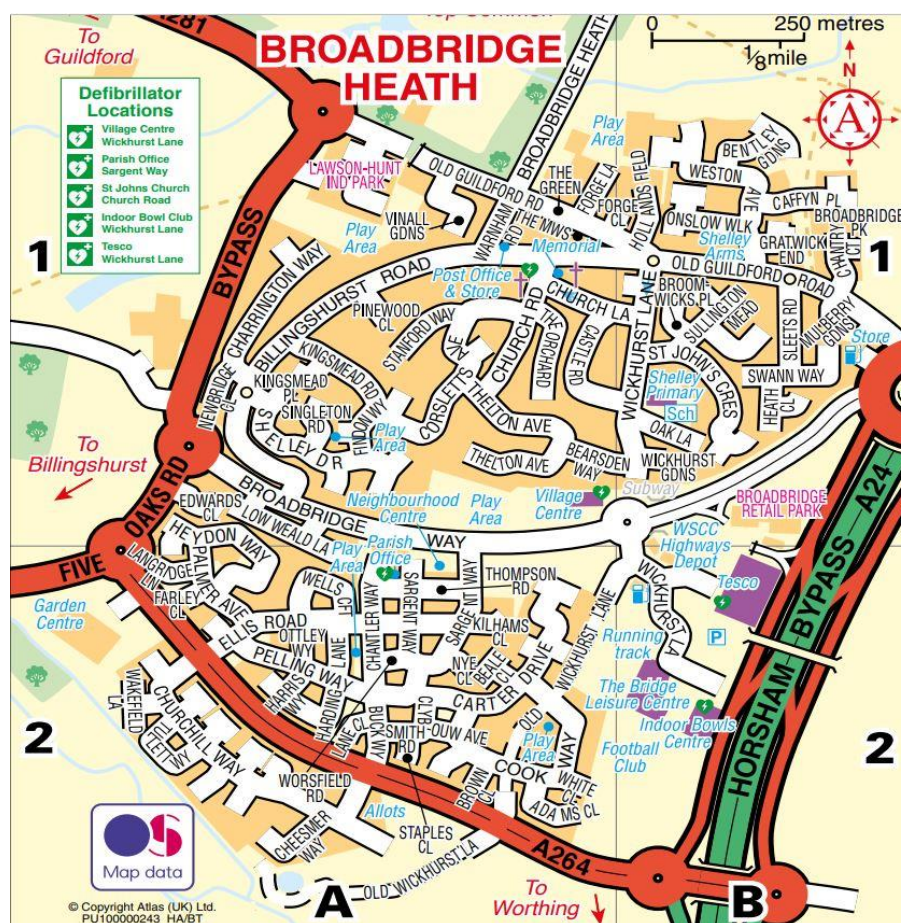
The work of the committee during the last year has been dominated by planning applications for changes to domestic dwellings by house owners wishing to develop or make changes to their properties. The committee also comment on applications for proposed surgery to trees that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.



All planning applications are ultimately and formally considered by the Planning Committee of the Local Planning Authority, in our case Horsham District Council, who hold ultimate responsibility for approving or refusing all such applications.

Most applications that the Planning Committee review are accompanied by very professionally prepared plans and drawings, however we continue to see supporting documents that are of a lower quality and this makes it more difficult for the planning committee to objectively review and make our comments to the District Council. It is worth noting that we have not seen any significant or large scale applications lodged within the parish this last year, perhaps indicative that following the major developments of recent years that we now have less land on which to continue development on any major scale.

My thanks to the planning committee members who have devoted time to review all the plans we have received in the last year.



Village Map