



BRAMSHOTT & LIPHOOK PARISH COUNCIL

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**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR THE PARISH OF BRAMSHOTT &
LIPHOOK TOOK PLACE AT 7.30 PM IN THE LIPHOOK MILLENNIUM CENTRE
ON MONDAY 24th MARCH 2014.**

PRESENT:

Cllr M Croucher (Chairman)
Cllr B Easton
Cllr D Hoskins
Cllr J Ives
Cllr D Jerrard
Cllr P Jordan
Cllr J Kirby
Cllr T Maroney
Cllr J Poole
Cllr P Robinson
Cllr E Trotter

There were 23 members of the public and one member of the press present.

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all present and explained the emergency exits.

2. ANNUAL REPORTS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th March 2013.
Proposed Cllr Croucher, Seconded Cllr Poole. Unanimously approved

3. SHORT PRESENTATION - BRAMSHOTT & LIPHOOK PARISH PLAN

Introduction

3.1 Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Trevor Maroney and, as chairman, I have been asked to brief you on our community's Parish Plan. I have been involved from the beginning, initially as the Treasurer then as Secretary and Writer from September 2012. I took over the vacant chair last December with the objective of finishing the project. I

am grateful to Robin Young who, as chairman until last summer, managed to hold us all together and kept us going for so long. I should add that, as a former commuter, I along with many of my colleagues knew very little about the Parish until 3 years ago; we do now!

Parish Plans

3.2 Community Led Initiatives. Parish Plans are a statement of how the local community sees itself growing and developing over the next 10 to 15 years. Successful plans can potentially influence policies and decisions of other bodies on education, environment, housing, infrastructure, planning, transport and social services. This influence can extend over a wide range of organisations including local authorities, businesses, vested interests, charities and voluntary groups that, in turn, can help by funding projects. In principle, the Plan is a community led, independent initiative designed to improve the lives of the whole community.

3.3 Our Plan. Our Parish Plan is one such scheme. From the findings of the Parish Survey in 2008 it was concluded that residents should be consulted on the future of the parish and what improvements they would like to see. At the Parish Council instigation a group of volunteers banded together to form a Steering Group using the Governments guidance notes contained in the Community Led Planning Toolkit. We were formally endorsed at a public meeting in the Millennium Centre on 13th January 2011.

Aim

3.4 The aim of the Bramshott and Liphook Parish Plan is to collate the wishes of the community, prepare a report on what changes the community would like to see and what aspects they would like to retain, draw conclusions, make recommendations, and from these formulate a coherent strategy for the future growth and development of the Parish over the next 10 to 15 years.

Steering Group.

3.5 The members of the Steering Group, the BLPP Governing Body, are:

Executive	Committee:	Primary Portfolios:
Chairman	Trevor Maroney	Emergency Services, Youth, Education & Training & Other Topics
Secretary	Jacqui Poole	Sports & Leisure
Treasurer	John Tough	Traffic & Transport
	Antoinette Afrikian	Assisted with Sports & Leisure (Resigned Jan 14)
	Eve Hope	Health, Social & Welfare & Unemployment
	Phil Jordan	Environment & Communications (Resigned Jan 14)
	Simon Cooper	Facilitator & Media
	Lee Stewart	Business & Employment
	Sarah Frankland	Hamlets

Jeanette Kirby	Planning & Development & Education
Robin Young	Elderly, Disabled & Medical
Carole Holmes	Elderly, Disabled & Medical
Tony Rudgard	Sport & Leisure

Audit Team

3.6 The Audit Team was co-opted onto the project in January 2014. It includes:

Team:	Expertise:
Margit Beavon	Secretary, Bramshott Place Residents Association
Adrian Bird	Architect
Mukund Patel	Scout Leader
Martin Feast	Football Referee
Colin Osborne	Rep. Lowsley Farm Action Group
Andrew Pope	Surveyor/Rep. Bohunt Manor Action Group

The Audit Team was amalgamated with the Steering Group on 12 March 2014.

Research.

3.7 In addition, our research incorporated findings from previous community surveys and census information. These included the Village or Town Appraisal in 1980, the 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses, the Village Design Statement in 2004, and the 2008 Parish Survey. In addition the Group conducted their own ‘Love, Hate, Like’ survey at numerous village fetes, events and local functions in 2011/12; through public meetings held in the hamlets and through a large youth survey conducted in 2012.

Plan Index – (How far we’ve got)

3.8 **Index V2.1.** Talk through Index layout and the colour coding.

3.9 **Caring Plan.** CAB state that both Grayshott & Liphook have pockets of high deprivation. Much to our surprise we have found that members of our community are having to rely on food banks in Haslemere and Fernhurst. Some families, particularly single mothers, are living in just one room. Transport costs are high for those on low wages. How do the unemployed survive in today’s community? As you can well imagine those financially and socially disadvantaged are reluctant, for a variety of reasons, to talk to us. So we have chosen to research their concerns through the various agencies that provide help: CAB, Social Services, Benefits Agency, Housing Associations, Job Centre Plus etc. The aim being to present a caring Parish Plan.

3.10 **Recommendations.** No doubt you will all have seen the Parish Plan articles in last week’s Liphook Herald and Petersfield Post. This outlines our future plans in more detail. At our last 2 meetings we thrashed out what we believe the community is telling us and grouped these under the ‘Community’s’ Recommendations – ‘Wish List.’ We will present these to you at 4 meetings, to be held in public, starting tomorrow night, here in the Millennium Hall. There is a slight change to the programme: the meeting scheduled for 15th April will now be held on Tuesday 13th May; it would have clashed

with EHDC's Community Forum on the Joint Core Strategy. Time does not permit me to highlight some of these recommendations now, suffice to say that there are many. The aim of these meetings is to thrash out working solutions (WHAT we want) to the Wish List such as – as our man in Kazakhstan, Simon Cooper often reminds me – WHO should we ask to do it and HOW should it be done; there is also the question of WHEN BY, but that might be asking too much. This information will form the Executive Summary – The Parish Plan.

3.11 Updates. All information on the Plan, including minutes of meetings is published on the website at www.liphookplan.co.uk, which is regularly updated. There are also hard copies in the Parish Office and Library.

3.12 Exhibition. Once the Executive Summary is complete we will hold a public exhibition in late May or early June at which we will invite final comments. Where appropriate these will be incorporated and the Parish Plan published in the autumn.

3.13 Thank you.

3.14 Any Questions?

A question was raised about publishing the document in draft form so that it can influence the Joint Core Strategy. Cllr Jerrard stated that this would make no difference from a planning perspective.

A question was raised about the merit of having a Parish Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan. This will be covered as part of the Planning Committee report.

4. ANNUAL REPORTS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

4.1 FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE – CLLR P JORDAN

The Finance & Policy Committee is comprised of the chairpersons of the Parish Council Committees, the Chairman of the Council, myself as Chairman of F&P and Cllr Maroney as Deputy Chairman. I would like to thank them all for their proactive involvement and enthusiasm during the year. Sometimes being a Councillor feels like a full time job rather than voluntary work.

The committee meets 6 times a year, although this year we held a seventh to finalise the budget.

The Committee's core work concerns the financial wellbeing of the Council's activities. This involves setting a monitoring budget, proposing a precept, seeking to ensure that internal controls are robust and that management of risk is adequately addressed. It also has responsibility for staff matters.

Thanks to the Clerk's implementation of quarterly budget reviews incorporating a forecast of likely expenditure, based on expenditure to date and where necessary revised assumptions, the Committee are now better aware of possible problems and options to redirect expenditure.

We have this year benefitted from the appointment in the 2012/2013 period of new Internal & External Auditors. They replace auditors of many years standing and brought a fresh pair of eyes (or being auditors perhaps I should say ears) to the review of long standing practices.

Their reports have been very helpful in directing our attention to areas where improvement can be achieved including efficiency of operation. We have at our meetings been frank and open about recommendations made and action taken. It is pleasing to note that the Internal Auditors interim report congratulated the Council on progress made. Once again our thanks to the Clerk for tackling the issues with resolve and engaging Councillors in the process.

One major task arising from the auditor's comments concerns the risk evaluation that the council are required to undertake. I wish to thank Cllr Maroney for almost single handedly tackling a major review of our documentation, policy and procedures to recognise potential risk, evaluate those risks and recommend any necessary action. This ensures a safer environment for staff and users of the council's buildings and facilities

I wish to return to the setting of the coming years precept. You have been informed through EHDC's rates notification the Parish Council rate will increase next year. The increase for a Band D equivalent property is £9.04 or £5.14 per Parishioner per year.

An increase is always looked upon unfavourable, however as assets are to be maintained at the required standard for use by the community and resourced effectively then we considered 10p per week per parishioner necessary.

Over the last three years the Council has lost some £24,000 income on the grass cutting contract with EHDC.

The Council had to part fund improvements in the Phase 1 of the Children's Play Park at the Recreation Ground, which at the time was intended to be fully funded from grant aiding bodies.

Millennium Centre is now reaching an age when repairs are required. There have been two roof leaks costing some £19,000. Ground subsidence at the rear of the building will cost some £12,000. Neither of these are covered by building insurance.

Further to these costs the stage lighting requires expenditure of £3,500 and the lift some £5,000.

In the budget we have recognised our responsibility of maintaining the reserves for contingent events and equipment replacement with some £27,000 added to reserves.

An additional £5,000 will be invested in Radford Park this year. Other material costs have been incurred by the Recreation Committee and will be commented on By Cllr Robinson.

We have kept financial support for local organisations at £17,000 with a further £3,250 subsidised use of the Millennium Hall by the Youth Club and weekly Luncheon Club for the Elderly

We will also be investing more in the Parish Office to free up time for the Clerk to focus on staff management, efficiency improvements and seeking grant aid funding for potential capital improvements over and beyond that obtained from EHDC. An area of potential income this Parish has failed to tap into for many years.

We also intend to invest more in the Millennium Centre resources to make the facility more accessible on weekends and evenings. We are also seeking to increase commercial letting income and this requires front-end investment.

In setting the Precept we investigated how we stood compared to comparable sized Parishes. Viewed as the amount per parishioner Hook is 56% higher, Botley 30% higher and Bishops Waltham 82% higher. Whitehill our near neighbour was also marginally higher.

It is I assure you neither our intension nor desire to set rates based on league tables, however such awareness is informative.

The Policy part of the Finance & Policy Committee largely refers to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations established by the Parish Council to regulate its activities. During last year central government promulgated proposed amendments to Standing Orders. They are being studied by Clls Barbara Easton, Jane Ives, Jackie Poole and the Clerk; proposals for any change will be considered by the Council. This is a time consuming task requiring attention to detail and a good understanding of Council work. We thank them for their volunteered time.

A major element of F&P's time this year has been to review the strategic objectives of the Parish Council, its support of Parish activity, it's facilities and the organisation structure required to deliver these. We have also carried out a thorough review of staff policies and procedures and contracts of employment with a view to establishing consistency.

To assist in this work we employed the services of Hampshire Association of Local Councils, and in particular Louise Channel a person with a wide knowledge of practices across Hampshire as well as sound qualifications in Human Resources Management.

This project has also absorbed considerable Councillor time.

The project is coming to completion next month, and we will be engaging with our staff to discuss the outcome and implementation of the review. We are unable to give any details at this stage as we wish to discuss this with the parish staff first. I do though wish to thank the staff for their help during the process and support in completing a questionnaire seeking their views.

One consequence of the organisation review, which I can announce here is that the Clerk Peter Stanley has accepted a revised terms of employment and job description. This will be effective from the 1st April. We are making this announcement this evening

because of the importance the Parish Council attaches to Peter taking and being seen to take the key role in implementing changes. As from 1st April Peter's title is Executive Officer of Bramshott & Liphook Parish Council.

Thank you for listening.

No questions were raised.

4.2 RECREATION COMMITTEE – CLLR P ROBINSON

Ladies and gentlemen. It is my happy task to report to you on behalf of the Recreation Committee with regard to the tasks and developments encountered during 2013/2014 and to touch upon our plans for the forthcoming year.

As we all know the truly appalling and unprecedented weather conditions that beset us late last year and in the early months of this year presented our Ground Staff with considerable problems and almost impossible conditions in which to address them

The long awaited drainage work on the allotments was at last completed at considerable cost to the Council despite almost continuous rainfall. The Committee felt it was important that this work be completed before this year's important growing season. A French Drain has now been laid from the top edge of the plots into an existing drain in the centre of the allotments and this has resulted in the effective passage of ground water making several plots now workable.

It was necessary to contract out the removal of some very large trees on the boundary of the allotment site and it has been noted that more work will be required to remove some more trees that are hanging over the rabbit proof fencing or have been blown down in the copse alongside Tunbridge Lane.

I am pleased to report that following a decision to halve and quarter some vacant plots, we were able to offer allotments to many who had been on the waiting list for a very long time. We now have full occupancy however it is regretted that we still have a waiting list of thirty seven people. The Recreation Committee is still looking for an alternative area for more allotments.

Regular walkers in Radford Park will have seen the devastation that the recent storms have had on the trees in the park. Once again, at considerable expense, it was necessary to bring in specialist tree surgeons to deal with some of the large trees that had fallen over the paths.

In all we estimate that we have lost twenty five to thirty trees in the Park alone. However that would appear to be just the tip of the iceberg. A recent survey carried out by Council Ground Staff has identified a greater number of trees that are vulnerable due to the sheer volume of ground water that has loosened the soil and sand around the roots making them susceptible to topple over when the trees are in full leaf.

There is good news from the Park. This year, on seemingly the only two fine days we have had, the Radford Park Working Party has made considerable progress in clearing brush, brambles, small trees and a surprising variety of rubbish from the London Road end, along the river bank. I would at this point like to publicly thank the twenty or so willing members of the working party who have given up their time to help in restoring the Park after a considerable period of neglect.

This work continues as we work our way deeper into the Park. The Council is resolved to improve the pathways and repair the bridges to make greater access to this area of considerable natural importance and biodiversity.

The unprecedented rainfall has resulted in considerable ground water running off of the War Memorial Recreation Ground into Malthouse Meadows and the London Road. Although there are existing drains in both areas these have proved inadequate to cope with the sheer volume of water. The Council is currently collecting quotations to improve these problems.

A recent inspection of the fabric of the old pavilion currently occupied by The Willows Nursery has indicated that considerable work will be needed to halt the deterioration and ensure that the building is kept weatherproof. The Council is currently seeking quotations for this work.

The children's play areas continue to be popular and work was carried out last year to restore the ground work near the slide and tunnel that had become worn away from repeated use.

After long consideration, and with the help and advice of the E.H.D.C. Dog Warden, the Council has decided not to proceed with a Dog Control Act due to considerable expense required to train staff in the legal operation of the Act and in view of the fact that new legislation in the form of an Anti-Social Behaviour Act is to be introduced in May this year which would cover the need for dog owners to be held responsible for their animals at all time.

On the advice of the Dog Warden, signs with the approved wording will need to be placed on the Millennium Green and the War Memorial Recreation Ground. These areas would continue to be patrolled by the E.H.D.C. Dog Wardens and any owners found not to be supervising their dogs and or not clearing up after them would be liable to a fine not exceeding £1000.00. These signs are currently in production and will become visible around the village in the coming weeks.

Litter continues to be a problem in the village and whilst the ground staff do daily litter picks on Council properties, it is clear from the recent annual 'Litter Pick', organised by Liphook In Bloom, more needs to be done. The recent Sunday morning collection resulted in over thirty bags of assorted rubbish in just two and a half hours!

The Recreation Committee wishes to record its thanks to the tireless work of Tony Rudgard our Parish Sports and Recreation Representative. He continues to liaise with

all the users of the Council's facilities and is currently trying to find a venue for table tennis clubs, especially for the young, who currently have to travel out of the village to use the facilities in another village.

Finally, the committee wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the Council's Ground Staff, who despite all that the weather continues to throw at them, continue to maintain the Council's properties in first class order.

A question was asked about placing a Dog "Clean it up" sign at the footpath by the Church Centre. Cllr Robinson advised that the council takes dog fouling seriously and had ordered some new signs that will be erected shortly.

Mr Ellis asked whether there should be a requirement for dogs on leads to be extended to Radford Park. Cllr Robinson stated that he felt this was not needed as dog owners need somewhere to allow their dogs to run freely however he understand the need for other users. The key was for dog owners to clear-up after their dogs.

Mr Young asked for an update on the skate park. Cllr Robinson stated that this project had been on the back burners for a while but quotations had been received and the council are committed to providing new facilities. However, additional funding sources would need to be found.

4.3 LIPHOOK MILLENNIUM CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – CLLR J IVES

I am currently Acting Chair of the Millennium Centre Management Committee, having taken the reins from Councillor Dawn Hoskins during the latter months of last year due to her ill health. Cllr Hoskins has worked tirelessly for the LMC and reported this time last year that her dilemma was between seeing the Centre as a charity running for the benefit of the community or a business with a profitable balance sheet.

I don't believe we have solved this dilemma yet, but part of the issue was with regards to the charging structure that was in place. Over the last few months the LMC committee have studied this at great length, looking at usage and charges for all rooms and trying to decide the best way to ensure the LMC is on a good financial footing. The aim of this review was not to allow the deficit to grow as it is the council tax payer who would ultimately have to foot the bill. The committee have had to make some tough decisions around charges which had not been increased since 2009. In the end charges were reviewed, and in some cases increased, in some cases decreased. To try and mitigate the increases being too high for community users we have introduced a new community discount of 15%. This is aimed at those users who are local organisations run by a voluntary committee with generally charitable aims and we are pleased to be able to support them in this way. Businesses and private one off bookings would pay the new rates in full.

This has resulted unfortunately, and somewhat inevitably, in some users being unhappy with the new rates which are to be introduced in April 2014, but the committee felt that the rates agreed upon were competitive when compared to other similar local venues.

Now that the charges review is completed we have a better picture of our expected income for this year, and are keen to attract new users from both the community and local business to try and fill the financial hole that still exists. Our attention needs to shift to increasing the usage of the Centre. The LMC is a great venue but we need to look at marketing and advertising the facility in a much more high profile way during this coming year to attract new users. The committee does have a working party which is focussed on Marketing and Events and this group will be looking at running events that will turn a good profit for the centre. This may be by running musical events, table top sales, pamper evenings, speciality markets (for example book fairs), or local band nights. All of this will take some time to come to fruition but with the right type of events I believe the LMC can be a popular and successful local venue. We are very keen to hear from anyone who has an idea for an event that we could host at the Centre, and we would like residents to consider this venue when planning their own event.

Over the past year we have ended the catering contract that existed at the LMC. We do not now have a contracted caterer which means that anyone booking the centre can bring in their own caterers if required. We have a new contracted bar facility run by Peter Whiteley from Whiteley's in Standford. The bar is available for any user that wishes to have that facility for their event. This brings in additional income for the LMC.

The LMC has housed for some time the Liphook Heritage Centre – a great source of information for local history – and recently the Citizens Advice Bureau have moved out of the parish office and into the Centre making it even more of a community hub.

The LMC has suffered from a few problems recently possibly caused by the horrendous weather we have suffered. We have had some issues with a leaky roof which have now mostly been resolved. We have recently had a problem with the amphitheatre area at the back of the centre which has started to sink. There are plans to fix this and the Parish Office will continue to monitor this along with the LMC staff and the committee. These type of problems do come at a cost of which we are acutely aware.

The LMC committee will be changing in structure from April. This change has had to be made as the new standing orders imposed on us by Government mean that from now onwards committees with 'spending powers' are only allowed to consist of elected councillors. This left us with a dilemma as the users that have sat on the Committee over the years have provided much welcomed feedback and information about their experience of using the Centre. We were therefore very keen to keep users of the Centre involved so there will be an Advisory Committee set up straight away consisting of representatives from both community and business users. All regular users will shortly be invited to nominate a representative to sit on this Committee. This Advisory Committee will be chaired by a Parish Councillor who can feed the output directly into the LMC committee when it meets on a bi-monthly basis.

The LMC is used by many local groups and we are pleased that we can continue to support them. These consist of groups such as the youth club, Liphook in Bloom, U3A, LAMPS, the Parish Plan and the Senior Citizens Lunch Club. On the business side we have users such as fitness and dance classes, and private parties.

The cinema continues to be a popular evening held once a month. There have been some great films showing over the past year and the latest cinema event 'Philomena' held on the 7th March was sold out. I would like to thank the volunteers who run the cinema evening so professionally and also acknowledge their contribution to the funds that are raised by the cinema evenings. The cinema runs at a profit for the LMC and we certainly hope that it continues this way. We have recently extended our cinema licence which would allow us to show films for children, and we hope to get this up and running over the coming year with a view to providing a great service for young families at a cost far less than the larger cinemas can provide while at the same time helping to increase profits for the LMC and reduce the current deficit.

To go back to my starting point on this report, I firmly believe the LMC can be both a community venue and balance the books and in a perfect world turn a small profit. I cannot deny that much work needs to be done over the coming months to increase usage and our focus needs to be on attracting business users whilst continuing to support community groups.

I would like to end by saying that members of the public are always welcome to attend the LMC Management Committee meetings which are held on a bi-monthly basis. Dates and agendas are published on the parish council website.

A question was raised about the status of the Management Committee. Cllr Ives stated that the committee would continue and have full spending powers and this is why users will have a separate advisory committee.

Mr Young asked whether there were plans appoint a manager for the LMC. Cllr Ives stated that not comments could be made as the organisational review was still to be discussed with staff.

A question was raised about the need to have two separate committees rather than one. Cllr Ives advised that only councillors had voting rights and therefore it was better for users to have an advisory committee.

4.4 PLANNING COMMITTEE – CLLR J KIRBY

Cllr Jerrard stated that there were 8 experienced councillors on the planning committee and he felt the committee did a very good job. He reminded the audience that the council was only a statutory consultee and the decisions are made by EHDC and the SDNP. This meant that the councils role is to consider applications and have an influence on the final decision. It was normal for developers at proposed sites to attend planning meetings and give presentations of their plans. A working party had been established to look at all the proposed developments and consider them objectively.

Joint Core Strategy

- Awaiting Inspector's approval
- 175 houses plus 25 affordable
- Concern over wording 'minimum' rather than 'about'
- Understand SDNP have a 5 year housing supply – EHDC don't so looking for sites

Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment

- SHLAA sites being looked at by working party
- Meeting requested with staff from EHDC and SDNP (planning) and District councillor. Hope to get EHDC to prepare plan for Liphook. Horndean have requested a similar project
- Currently over 20 sites submitted by landowners in the parish. 5 in the SDNP, 6 in Liphook itself with good chance of successful planning applications

Neighbourhood Plan

- Had feasibility study – stress this is where housing should go and does not prevent development.
- Costs estimated between £15,000 to £20,000 for a settlement size of Liphook. Grants only about £7,000. Parish council have not allocated a budget for a NP
- Rely heavily on volunteers rather than use consultants.
- Timescales average 18 months – 2 years (Petersfield currently overrunning and they have help from SDNP)

Parish Plan

- Timescale over 3 years but very comprehensive. Meetings over next few weeks for public input – encourage people to attend

Large Planning Applications

- Lot of work for councillors on planning committee. Often hundreds of documents submitted.
- Have to have knowledge and work within legal constraints (NPPF, JCS and aims of SDNP).
- Special thanks to local groups who also contribute to reading and researching these applications. These included Lowley Farm; Bramshott Place Village; Chiltley Way and SOS Bohunt Group. Steep learning curve for all of us.

(SHLAA Sites in Liphook)

Headley Road – 40

Chiltley Farm – 104

Lowsley Farm extension – 175

Little Boarhunt – 25

Bramshott – 5

Bramshott Place – 40 (if go to appeal)

Total - 389

Pre-submitted questions

What does the Parish Council understand to be the total number of approved planning applications for new houses in Liphook in 2013/14? What does the Parish Council

understand to be the total number of all known planning applications pending but yet to be approved for new houses in Liphook in 2014/15? What does the Council feel is the maximum number of new houses that could be built in Liphook over the next 5, 10 and 20 years?

Could you schedule the status of planning applications for housing with numbers scheduled out with the following headings

- Approved during the last three years, but not yet constructed
- Approved during the last year
- Pre-applications
- Applications currently being assessed
- Anticipated applications

Is the Parish Council lobbying for the County Council or District Council to erect signs on the approach roads signifying that Liphook is a Gateway settlement to the South Downs National Park

These were answered as part of Cllr Kirby's presentation above.

In response to a question concerning how the public might help the council, Cllr Kirby stated the key problems are traffic, the use of The Square, access to the A3 and school traffic. Help can be provided by attending Parish planning meetings and expressing views so there is greater public involvement.

A member of the public stated that parking will be a future problem with extra cars needing to park in places like Sainsbury's where there is no extra capacity. Cllr Croucher stated that this was an issue that Sainbury's would need to consider in providing a service to customers.

PARISH COUNCIL – CLLR M CROUCHER

Cllr Croucher thanked staff for all their hard work over the past year. Cllrs had also worked to support the office following the resignation of the deputy clerk and one of the foyer assistants.

Thanks were also expressed to councillors who work hard on behalf of the council and are unpaid volunteers.

Finally he invited all present to join councillors for a drink and informal discussion after the meeting.

A question was raised about the parish office closure in the afternoon. Cllr Croucher stated that statistics of usage showed very little use of the office in the afternoons and it was better for staff, in particular, the clerk to use time for other activities.

A question was made about the councils insurance claim. It was reported that the matter was ongoing as such claims are complex and take time to resolve.

5 REPORT FROM EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

The council year began with a change of leadership – Ferris Cowper replacing Ken Moon. Your three district councillors gave Cllr Cowper their full support. Cllr Moulard (communications) and Cllr Glass (planning) are members of Cabinet. Attached to this report is Cllr Cowper’s budget speech to the council on February 27th plus a dynamic corporate strategy document which sets out how the authority is preparing to face the future.

You will see that the council has been able to freeze its share of the council tax bill. The aim is to avoid any increases for the next five years and become less reliant on grants from central government. Among the innovations introduced by the council are partnership working with other authorities and a decision to invest in property rather than the banks.

The council has a budget of £12.2m, which includes a projected surplus of £518,000. Some of this surplus has been created by the upturn in the national economy and the decision by the Chancellor to ‘kick start’ the economy by allowing more house building. More housing means more fees for planning and building regulation applications.

The downside, of course, is that more housing is one of the most contentious issues currently facing the council. You will know that the Government rejected the first Joint Core Strategy drawn up in conjunction with the South Downs National Park on the grounds that not enough new housing was planned.

A revised version is now in front of the Government inspector and a decision is overdue, apparently because of the pressure of work on the planning inspectorate. Whatever the outcome, it has become obvious that Bramshott and Liphook will have to have more houses than those already granted planning permission. We are working around the figure of 175 and, needless to say, landowners and developers are queuing up to offer different schemes. A further complication is that part of the parish is inside the national park which is likely to be the decision maker for at least one major scheme.

The lack of an approved strategy makes it extremely hard to resist some applications. We were able to persuade the EHDC planning committee to refuse an application for 40 more ‘cottages’ and a care home at Bramshott Place, but it is inevitable that the applicant will try again. A new report by the Campaign to Protect Rural England has

revealed that the number of successful appeals against local decisions to refuse planning applications on greenfield sites has doubled in a year.

The year ahead will be a challenging one in terms of planning, with changes to the Planning Policy Guidelines already published. A series of consultation exhibitions will be held around the District, which will enable your District Council to discover the views of local people in all areas, with regard to the planning applications coming forward. As part of this process, at the next round of community forums, residents will have the chance to ask officers questions about this important issue. The meeting for this parish is at the Millennium Centre on Tuesday April 15th at 6.30pm.

For future Forums, Cllr Ken Carter, the Cabinet member with responsibility for communities, is anxious to make the forums more attractive to the public and is to introduce a 'Question Time' format with a panel of experts available to answer questions, on specific topics.

Your three District Councillors have been pleased to take part in the community grants scheme, introduced by Cllr Cowper. This gives individual members a budget of £3,000 to spend on local projects. These have included the Peak Centre, the community laundry, the football club, the tennis club, Bramshott Educational Trust, and, hopefully, the Carnival Committee. In addition grants have been given to Liphook Carers group, LAMPS, and the Heritage Centre, to purchase a new display cabinet to house part of the World War I exhibition. Applications have to be determined by the end of this week, and there is still a little in the pot.

Around the Parish, we have been able to assist different groups, and individuals, with a variety of requests and problems. This is part of our role as District Councillors, and we will continue to do so, providing a link between the residents of Bramshott and Liphook, and East Hants District Council.

EHDC Leaders' speech

East Hampshire District Council has a hard won reputation for being innovative and creative.

Our partnerships, our working practices and our commitments to Council Tax freezes have all been ahead of the national curve.

But while we can be proud of our achievements in reaching this point we cannot relax and we cannot be complacent.

Designing a modern, responsive council is not a job that is ever 'finished'. There's never a point at which you can stand back, dust off your hands and congratulate yourself on a job well done.

The world is changing all the time, and the environment for local councils is changing faster than ever.

Advances in technology, the pressures of the economy and changes in public expectations all mean councils must adapt fast or be left behind.

That is why we must create a new future for ourselves, a new vision which will see East Hampshire District Council evolve the skills and the instincts needed to thrive in this new environment.

To do this we must ask ourselves fundamental questions about what we want our district council to look like in five years. What will our customers want from us?

Certainly we will hold fast to our priorities. We will always maintain sustainable council finances, we will promote economic growth, deliver excellent public services and look for creativity and innovation in everything we do.

But within this framework we can make further pledges. They are bold and ambitious but they are achievable.

Our financial strategy will be driven by three exciting aspirations:

- We will aim to avoid council tax increase for 5 years, including the coming year
- We will be free from reliance on discretionary government funding by 2018/19
- We will enable our residents to choose the range and cost of services they prefer.

Our record of freezing Council Tax is one that will stand up against the best and our charges are among the lowest in the country.

We are proposing to freeze Council Tax again next year, the fifth time in the last eight years, in order to ease the financial burden on our residents and improve the economic sustainability of the district.

With a vastly reduced Government grant and low interest rates these have been tough years for every level of the public sector, not least EHDC, but through appropriate partnerships, efficiencies and savings we have always preserved our excellent level of service while keeping Council Tax low.

We must continue this fine record, and improve upon it if possible. It is our intention to freeze Council Tax, not just for next year, but for the foreseeable future. This will give our residents confidence and security in setting their own budgets. They will do so in the knowledge they can trust their district council not to weigh further taxation pressures on their shoulders and that in a growing number of cases they will be able to choose the services they want and the price they want to pay.

Just because central government cuts back its subsidies to local government, that does not make it right for us to inflict that on residents by higher tax or reduced front line services.

We are determined to be one of the very few public sector bodies that takes this stance.

The government grants that local councils have become dependent on are called the Revenue Support Grant and the New Homes Bonus and they comprise about 30% of our income. We expect those may disappear by about 2018/19 and that is why we must plan for that eventuality now. Many councils are having difficulty facing into this without resorting to the blunt instruments of more tax and reduced service. Our solution is more innovation and reduced bureaucracy. Ten years ago government grants comprised 50% of our income and so we have managed the loss of the 20% despite no tax increases in four of those years and improved services such as glass recycling. So it can be done.

By setting this example we would be a beacon to what is possible not just for our residents, but to other local authorities and across the nation.

So how is this to be done?

Certainly we will have to work with our partners, such as Havant Borough Council and Winchester City Council, to deliver services more efficiently. But we cannot simply attempt to change what we do – we may have to change what we are.

We must ask ourselves what we mean by the term local government and what we think a council should look like in the future.

What services should we deliver to our residents? Should we continue with the same inherited services or should we be delivering new ones, letting others go as they fall out of use.

We should be offering our residents a choice in the services they pay for. Our relationship with each customer can be a personal one, depending on their own needs and demands.

People shouldn't pay for everything, because some people don't use everything. They should be able to buy what they want to buy.

Of course, there must be a base level of services that supports those who most need our help, but built on that could be a package of services tailored according to each individual. There will always have to be a safety net for those in need when it comes to public service provision

We already run some services with choice, for example the garden waste collection, but the principle could be expanded to include many more.

We can generate income through our services. Not just by supplying to residents but also to other authorities. High quality, well run services are in demand and we are already looking at selling our best services to other areas.

To do this we must have motivated and committed staff. We will continue to keep officers highly trained and make sure we recruit into the organisation the skills we need.

New technologies will allow us to have ever more flexible working patterns for officers -

our partnership with Hampshire County Council IT already allows staff to work from home or from other Hants IT locations. In turn this will mean we no longer need to have

such large and expensive offices as we have had in the past. We are already looking at leasing parts of Penns Place, to generate income and further integrate with the business community.

Technology will also shape the relationship we have with our residents, shifting customers to the channels of communication most-cost effective to us and most convenient to them.

Some of our residents will always need face-to-face contact with officers and it is right that we should make that time available to them, but we must always be committed to more efficient means of customer contact. Our new phone system demonstrates how that can be successfully achieved.

We will make use of the deep resources we already have at our disposal, drawing on the expertise of respected local businessmen, through the newly-formed Non-Executive Board, and on the coal-face experience of our officers, through the staff survey.

We will always be looking to make improvements and changes in everything we do. Change is coming to local government. We must ensure we are ahead of those changes, leading the way for others, not being dragged along behind.

These ambitious plans start with next year's budget. Officers and councillors have worked extremely hard to set realistic budgets from scratch and have reduced the overall cost without compromising services.

The coming year will see further work on prioritising expenditure, considering service levels and discussing with councillors how we will meet the continuing challenges of customer expectation and efficiency.

We are pleased to put before you today a balanced budget of £12.2 million, that requires no increase in Council Tax and includes a projected surplus of £518,000.

EHDC STRATEGY

Introduction

This strategy is written in five sections. They are explained here.

The **Mission** describes what the Council is here to do; it could be termed “purpose” or “objective”. The Mission is unlikely to change in the medium term and has been our Mission for some years now.

The **Vision** describes our aspirational future state. Inevitably, it includes a significant element of “stretch targets”. It is written in the present tense as though it was 2019 and the Vision has been achieved. This attempts to paint a “verbal picture” of the aspiration.

Behaviours define the basic principles of behaviour in our Council, for both officers and councillors. Like the mission, these are not expected to change in the medium term and have been adopted by the council for several years. They do not replace the generally accepted standards for the Code of Conduct which are more detailed.

Values describe our corporate philosophy and strive to set us apart from other councils. Adherence to these Values will ensure we will achieve our aspirations of excellence as defined by the Vision.

Our Vision for the future gives a clear view of what success will look like. The **Enablers section** describes what we need to have in place to achieve the vision by 2020. It can be seen as a first cut of the “how to”.

Lastly, we must embrace a significant reconstruction of the manner in which the public sector delivers service and so “**Alternative Models of Service Delivery**” describes some possible approaches.

1. Mission

To improve people’s lives by providing excellent public services that represent good value for money and meet our communities’ needs.

Our operational priorities which deliver this Mission are;

- Financial Sustainability.
- Economic Growth.
- Environmental Sustainability
- Public Service Excellence.
- Creativity and Innovation.

2. Vision

It is 1st May 2019, just over five years since we finalised our strategy at the beginning of 2014. We can report the following successes.

EHDC is the most admired local authority in Britain.

Our Council is **financially independent** of all government funding. Council Tax has been held at 2013-14 levels throughout this period. We have developed new and sustainable revenue streams to fund essential services. A study is under way to assess the possibility of progressively reducing our requirement to levy any tax at all.

The key to our success has been our focus on **revolutionary change** through creativity and innovation. By focussing on the art of the possible, we have developed an approach to research and development that has enabled us to deliver new services in proactive and radically different ways that add value to our customers' lives.

An example is that we adopt new and innovative solutions for dealing with refuse. This will include maximising income from recycling and using residual waste to generate energy locally to feed in to the National Grid. As a result, refuse processing is now a profit generator and underpins our plans to remove Council Tax.

Council services are now seen in the same way that products are seen by the private commercial sector. **New Product Innovation** has become a core council activity, together with a programme of product development and product segmentation offering a menu of services at varying levels of service and varying costs to residents, giving customers choices to suit their budgets and requirements.

This is possible because of the new **freedoms for local councils** enacted in response to our political lobbying.

EHDC is an **innovative and entrepreneurial Council**, leading the way for public service in Britain. We have recruited and developed professional council officers with a range of skills, experience and commercial acumen. EHDC is not risk averse and has a culture that embraces and implements new ideas.

The **working environment has been transformed** for officers and councillors alike into one of strong motivation. Staff are happy to give their time, effort and performance, in return for excitement and high levels of reward and recognition.

We are seen as the most business-like partner for the public, private and voluntary sectors and have a reputation as **the most business-friendly Council in Britain**. This has helped to develop a buoyant and growing local economy. We have supported local businesses to ensure that local people of all ages are able to find employment and remain in East Hampshire.

We have revamped and modernised the old concepts of partnership working which remain vital models of service delivery. We have led the way in providing a single, simple interface for the public to access all public services, regardless of provider. As a result **EHDC has established itself as a national leader in partnership working** and will take on the management of shared services for other councils in return for a management fee.

We are robust **guardians of our ‘natural capital’** providing leadership and inspiration to others in our ability to balance our responsibility to generate income, while reducing harmful emissions, protecting our local and global environment. Therefore it is a feature of our economic development strategy to promote and support a strong green economy within the district so as to maximise the opportunities afforded by this growing sector.

When making policy and investment decisions we acknowledge an equal and serious responsibility to safeguard and improve our residents’ quality of life, cultural wealth and our natural heritage. Financial self-sufficiency has been achieved using **economic and non-economic calculus as a basis for investment cost benefit analysis**. Preventing the degradation of our natural asset base holds equal value when determining investment and service level decisions. The rate of financial return is not our sole marker for success.

Throughout, **EHDC has remained a well-defined local council** with an admired and trusted mutually beneficial relationship with the residents and businesses of East Hampshire. Our focus on our customers ensures that services are accessed in ways that reflect their preferences and needs which has resulted in improved customer satisfaction and experience as well as reducing our costs.

We have supported the delivery of the Spatial Vision for **East Hampshire which is now the best place in Britain to live and enjoy life**. It is an excellent brand for partners to be associated with and for staff and local residents to be proud of. Taking our Spatial Vision for living, business and relaxing together with our radical approach to new services and products, East Hampshire is at the top of the list of preferred places to live and work.

3. Behaviours

Fairness and integrity in all that we do

Responsibility for our actions

Respect and support for each other

4. Values

- **Customer focus** - putting the Customer at the centre of everything we do. Never say “NO” to a Customer.

- **Innovation** - finding radically new and better ways to meet the needs of our Customers.
- **Entrepreneurship** –open to the consideration of new and untried ideas as innovators and embracing constructively the opportunities from being a “fast follower”.
- **Cost Effectiveness** - giving excellent value for money.
- **Environmental Sustainability** – safeguarding the environment for future generations

5. Enablers of Delivery

5.1 Marketing Strategy

Our approach to service delivery adopts the principles of marketing which are to assess the needs of the resident, business and visitor population using customer insight and then to design and secure delivery of services to meet those needs.

Marketing is the way our whole organisation works and specifically how we deploy our resources to best effect to meet local needs. This approach will help us to ensure that our resources are focussed on the priorities of the community we serve. We will develop sustainable funding streams and make strategic investments to meet both our financial and environmental goals.

5.2 Our Staff and Councillors

We want our staff and councillors to share in these aspirations. This will require a new skill-set and mind-set. We will need effective organisational development to ensure our people develop, or are recruited with, the appropriate skills and competencies to deliver the ambitious programme of innovation and change we have planned and work within an enabling and effective structure.

5.3 Creativity and Innovation

In the current economic climate we cannot rely on business as usual. It is only through fresh ideas and by doing things differently that we can meet the challenges we face.

Innovation will be at the heart of adding value to our services by continually challenging the status quo, understanding customer insight and developing timely, imaginative and novel solutions.

We need to create the right conditions within our organisation to allow innovation and creativity to flourish. To be successful we will need to ask questions, challenge one another, see possibilities, think differently and be willing to accept risks. Most of all we will need the passion to drive an idea to its conclusion.

A key to success will be to unlock and harness the talent, energy and imagination of all our people. Innovation is not the domain of a small group of people; it is the responsibility of everyone.

5.4 An Enabling Political Environment

The current legislative regime will constrain our plans for the future. Without significant change our innovation will be stifled and our ability to generate income limited.

We will lobby to achieve this change and to remove the numerous paradoxes of policy that have been introduced. We need central government to be innovative too and we look forward to a trusting and mature conversation with them to help us to deliver these results.

5.5 Technology

Our customer focussed approach will be supported by technology that will help us to deliver seamless public services together with our partners. Local access to services will be supported by online facilities making it easier for customers to conduct their business with local public services according to their preferences of both time and type of contact. We need to help Customers secure the service they want without the Customer worrying about who delivers it by offering a utility “front end” similar to “DirectGov”.

Mobile technology will allow our officers to deliver services more flexibly wherever they are, in the office, in the customer’s home or anywhere on the move. This will improve access and speed of delivery.

6. Alternative Models of Service Delivery

The status quo is not an option. We must take a hard look at what services need to be delivered and who is best placed to deliver them. A radical approach is required to deliver ‘more for less’. This includes reviewing whether internal, external or mixed economy solutions are most appropriate.

This approach may include the more traditional outsourcing, shared service and partnership options which still have an important role, but may also include joint ventures, mutuals and social enterprises. New models must demonstrate they can deliver services for less.

Part of this picture is changing our relationship with the voluntary sector by moving away from grant funding to the commissioning of specific strategic outcomes that align with the Council’s priorities and customer needs. Work has already started to prepare our voluntary sector partners for this approach.

Cllr. Ferris Cowper, Ms. Gill Kneller and “Critical Friends 7th February 2014.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR FERRIS COWPER

General County Council Comments

- Hampshire County Council, (HCC), is freezing Council Tax for 2014-15 but continues to experience severe budgetary pressure as Government Grants are rapidly withdrawn.
- This has resulted in proposed or actual service reduction in many areas including Libraries, Public Transport.
- Highway activity in this area has also been affected by some redistribution of funds early in 2013 and sickness absence in Traffic Management.
- The programme to repair potholes has been overwhelmed by the effects of the extreme weather. All available resources in the Council and its subcontractors are being deployed. Whilst Hampshire Today states reassuringly that all these jobs are being prioritised, which is true, unfortunately, there are no due dates on these priorities. So, as an example, pothole repairs in Newtown Road are approved and prioritised but there is no due date for completion.
- For information, County-wide, highway repairs due to the extreme weather already total £30m. Resources are sent to the areas most in need.

Main Highway Projects.

As your County Councillor, I initiated the following works on your behalf during the year;

- Measures to alleviate parking problems in Avenue Road by the school, as well as improved road signage. This project, whilst approved, has suffered a 6m delay due to staff sickness. Alternative resourcing is now in hand.
- Gunns Farm junction with Midhurst Road. Existing signs and lines are being improved and repainted and later this year an additional advance warning sign will be installed on the shopping centre side of the junction.
- Upper Hammer Lane, Bramshott Chase, school walk to Woolmer Hill School. The new footpath on the open side is approved and funded. Negotiations with the landowner, (MoD), are almost concluded and an announcement is hoped for this week to enable work to start shortly.
- Green Dragon pub fire, temporary footway. Has been installed.
- Resurfacing The Square. Despite at times severe disruption, the project was completed on budget and only slightly late, with all technical highway issues fully resolved.
- Midhurst Road treebelt by Sainsbury's. Agreement has now been reached with Sainsbury's to maintain the trees.
- Liphook Golf Club crossing of Portsmouth Road. The likely solution is improved road signage and an option to reposition the crossing.
- Bramshott Lanes calming. A scheme of signage and rustic "gateway" warnings has been out to local consultation and work will start later this calendar year.
- Relief Road for Central Liphook. Given the growing volumes of traffic I have reopened this project with the Strategic Highway planners at HCC. Very early stages.

- Highway Agency projects. There are two. One is a programme of analysis of the effects of the Hindhead Tunnel on Haslemere Road, Hewshott Lane, Sandy Lane and Hammer Lane. The wider project is called POPE, (post opening project evaluation). Results still awaited. The second is improved white lining on the A3 southbound off ramp at Liphook, scheduled for fiscal 2014-15.

‘Buses

We know there are threats to the services. However I am working very hard to get the 250 service extended to Haslemere Hospital, (particularly to help those who have lost facilities at The Chase Hospital) and I can announce tonight that I am now in negotiations with Waverley Hoppa to extend the service further into Liphook. In both cases there has been encouraging news of new sources of funds from organisations other than HCC.

Education

Following HCC’s policy decision not to resource admissions from out of the local catchment area, capital funds for an expansion of Liphook Primary School were rescheduled to 2016-17.

Broadband

Addition funding from HCC will ensure that 95% of dwellings in the county can receive 24mbs by the end of 2017. The strategy for the remaining 5% is still under review.

Grants from My Devolved Grant Fund.

I have made the following grants locally from my devolved grant budget during 13-14;

- Liphook in Bloom Summer and Winter planting, £1,000.
- Liphook Senior Citizens’ Lunch Club, lunches and travel, £500.
- Conford Village Hall recirculating fan, £900.
- Peak Trust first aid refresher course, £330.
- Peer productions event at Bohunt School “Addictions Project”, £650.

Parking

- Consultation over Canada way restrictions is complete and work will commence shortly.
- The holistic study of parking problems in Liphook is approved and funded and will start during 2014. This will included an assessment of options.

Other Matters

- I presented prizes at Liphook in Bloom awards ceremony and judged the “Best of the Best”.
- I attended and submitted a written report to, at least every other Full Council meeting of the Parish Council, throughout the year.

‘Bus Survey

Please note the lead story in last week's Herald. If you want to retain or improve our 'buses please take part in the consultation on the website at www.hants.gov.uk/transportconsultation2014, or Gina in the Parish Office has some hard copy forms for those without internet access.

A number of questions were taken by Cllr Cowper including the need for a relief road, the importance of considering road safety.

Meeting concluded at 9.45 pm.