

MINUTES OF THE **ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY** OF THE ELECTORS OF EVERSLEY  
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE ON **Tuesday 27th April 2021** AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Malcolm Benjamin  
Margaret Benjamin  
Amy Blunkett  
Dr Anne Crampton (HDCllr)  
Cllr Des Deane (EPC)  
Cllr Shawn Dickens (EPC)  
Cllr Edward Dixon (EPC)  
Cllr Colin Edge (EPC)  
Cllr Susan Hughes (EPC)  
Cllr Adrian McNeil (Chairman)  
Cllr Philip Todd (EPC)  
Brian Webb  
1 other resident

ALSO PRESENT: Julie Routley (Parish Clerk),  
Richard Quartermain (HDCllr/YTCllr), Rayner Mayer (YTSG)

**1. Apologies for absence**

No apologies had been received.

**Introduction**

Cllr Adrian McNeil introduced himself as the Chairman of Eversley Parish Council and welcomed all present to the meeting. The Chairman introduced the Eversley Parish Councillors including the 2 new councillors Susan Hughes and Des Deane. He also welcomed District Councillor Dr Anne Crampton and District and Yateley Town Councillor Richard Quarterman who was standing in for David Simpson. A warm welcome too was given, to Rayner Mayer from the Yateley Group who will give an overview of Yateley's emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

This was an opportunity to hear what the Parish Council has been doing over the past year, to hear from the District and County councillors and other speakers and to let the Parish Council know what residents' concerns and priorities were for the coming year.

Firstly, the Chairman noted that David Simpson is standing down. He has been a County Councillor for a long time and has been a long-time friend of Eversley. So on behalf of the parish council the Chairman thanked him for his support and wished him well in his retirement.

The Chairman commented that Eversley now has a full complement of Parish Councillors. He was grateful to Susan and Des for joining; and thanked all the Parish Councillors for the time they give voluntarily to make life in Eversley that little bit better. They are all busy people yet volunteer a great deal of their time for the benefit of the community.

He also thanked Julie Routley, the Parish Clerk. He noted that Covid hasn't made life any easier for her, yet she has managed the business of the council with her usual thoroughness and attention to detail.

And finally, thanks to the people who support the parish council, particularly Sandra Miller for leading the Speedwatch team; Nick Robins, who does so much to keep our

green spaces tidy and free of litter; Mike Hayward who keeps litter at bay; and Keith Morrison, who does little things in and around the burial ground to keep it tidy.

## **2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Tuesday 10th March 2020**

The Chairman explained that the minutes were available on the website.

It was commented that it would be nice to name the electors who attended. The Clerk noted that permission would have to be sought in advance in order for names to be included and that they could be included on future meetings.

No errors were reported, and it was **resolved** that the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**AM**

## **3. (a) Eversley Parish Council Report – Cllr Adrian McNeil, Chairman**

### **Finance**

You will be pleased to hear that the PC has decided, for the second year running, to keep the Parish precept at £78,977 for the coming financial year. This means that each household will be paying the same as last year, perhaps a little less because of the increase in dwellings in the village.

I am also pleased to record that the parish accounts were again approved, without qualification, by the auditors. Our thanks go to the Clerk, who as ever, has kept EPC's financial accounts in an exemplary manner.

### **Planning and enforcement**

EPC has commented on a fair number of planning applications for individual or small developments in the Parish. It has also made known to Hart its concerns about the lack of enforcement of compliance with planning conditions.

EPC is keeping a watchful eye on proposals for bigger developments because of their potential effect on the village. Chief amongst these is a proposal to create a "garden village" of between 5000 and 10000 houses in Winchfield; and the possible development of sites at Love Lane and Firgrove Road. Against that backdrop, EPC considered again the need for a Neighbourhood Plan and decided that, because the government's emergent planning policy could completely undermine Neighbourhood Plans, it should defer a decision until October when the government's policy - we hope - will be clearer.

### **Affordable Housing**

Mags Wylie from Action Hampshire and Nicola Harpham from Hart DC gave a presentation at last year's annual assembly. Since then, a housing needs survey has been conducted, which identified a need for affordable rented housing for 24 households and work has progressed to find a suitable site for about 10 affordable homes.

### **Flooding**

Work to mitigate flooding in Lower Common, Webb's Corner and Warbrook Lane was completed in May 2020. Hampshire designated this as phase 1 and plan to embark on phase 2 in the coming financial year. This will include mitigation of flooding along the A327 from the Great A to The Street.

The Parish Council has continued to press Hampshire to address the causes of flooding in Chequers Lane itself and its possible causes upstream, towards Cooper's Hill and the Busta Triangle; and it has also harried Hampshire to resolve the flooding on the B3272 at Eversley Cross.

### **Condition of the A327 and B3272**

EPC objected to the applications to extend the working life of the quarries at Bramshill and Fox Lane, principally because of the volume and size of the HGVs that drive through the heart of the village and the environmental effects on the village roads. In the case of the A327, EPC have repeatedly asked Hampshire to resolve the problem of mud that has built up on the road and verge. So far, our efforts have met with little success, but we plan to tackle the new County Councillor when s/he has been elected.

### **The Open Spaces Committee**

This is the only standing committee of the Council. It was chaired by Shawn Dickens until October and by Colin Edge since then.

#### Colin Edge's report on Open Spaces Committee activity

Firstly, thank you to Shawn for his work in the early part of this year ensuring the Eversley's open spaces were kept in the best condition. There are a number of key projects this year for the OS committee:

Centre Green – new playground. The plan is to replace the old play equipment and fencing with a modern safe environment for the parents and children.

Pond area – there have been a large number of trees removed due to disease or damage. We are considering clearance of the area and a tree planting program.

2021 Great British Spring Clean campaign a nationally run campaign to clear our villages of litter. This year, volunteers can join us by again making a simple pledge and let us know how many minutes they'll clean-up for during the campaign (**28 May – 13 June 2021**).

Volunteer groups as we take on initiatives during the year we will look for help from our residents. Pathway clearance, planting and light maintenance to our play areas and open spaces – please can you listen out for request through Facebook "Eversley Matters" and the Parish Magazine.

Any volunteer works will be carried out with current government COVID guidelines and with your safety in mind. With COVID restrictions slowly lifting we look forward to continuing our work in the Parish.

Questions:

A resident mentioned that she is allocated volunteering days by her work and would be keen to use these to help out with the Open Spaces in the Village. The Chairman suggested that she contact the Clerk.

### **( c ) Report from David Simpson – Hampshire County Council**

David Simpson was unable to attend and therefore Richard Quarterman (HDC/YTC Cllr) was attending on his behalf and read out his prepared report.

An interesting year.

We all stayed home for most of the time but I was continually reminded of flooding and potential flooding in Eversley.

After years of it being put off by the Env Agency the water company and the County I managed to get the funding for Webb's corner to have drainage works done.

Naturally it immediately brought forward further problems and the water coming down Chequers lane kept bringing problems as the ditch on land across the Reading road was not cleared. County legal are involved. I have taken this as far as I could so my successor will no doubt ensure it is finally finished.

Meanwhile other casework continued. In Heckfield a group of would be racing car drivers regularly speed near the Wellington CP roundabout and the police are busy trying to collect evidence.

In Bramshill woods/Forest of Eversley there have been incursions by quad bike owners again I had to involve the police.

Speed and cars are a common complaint in all eight villages that I represent but the County Council decided it would only do things if there were KSI (Killed Seriously Injured) statistics to justify work. The officers do look at potentially dangerous areas but the ruling party laid down the law that money would only be spent with KSI statistics to back up the decision.

Which leads me to an infrequent but persistent complaint and that is the belief that the Officers are running Hampshire not the councillors. That is not true. The Councillors select the Cabinet (obviously the ruling Party wins that vote) in turn the Cabinet instructs the Officers and lay down the policy on everything. Change the policy and you can change how the officers act - remembering always that there are strict budgetary controls to back up Cabinet and Executive member decisions.

Blackbushe airport lost their case to decommission land at the Appeal court and have now decided to go to the Supreme Court - exactly where I and a Hampshire Officer forecast it would end up when we were still at the Inspector's Planning Appeal stage. The fourth arm of the A327/A30 roundabout is now scheduled to start in the autumn of this year with the report mentioning that I had been campaigning for it for six years. Indeed if they had done it when it was originally designed, as I wanted, then well over a million pound of our taxes would have been saved by the County and drivers would have saved half a million miles a year by not going up to BCA and back again to turn right - according to the original survey statistics by Hampshire.

Tip/Dump/HWRC moving it to the site near the A30/A327 roundabout was too expensive for a number of reasons but other sites are being explored and one is particularly attractive for a number of reasons. Unfortunately it must remain confidential until financial negotiations are complete.

Finally I would like to say thank you to everyone for helping me to serve you for the last 16 years.

Questions:

The Chairman commented that Eversley Parish Council would like to pick up the long standing issues in Eversley with whoever is elected as the new County Councillor.

The Chairman thanked Richard Quartermain for delivery David Simpson's report.

**(d) Report from Dr Anne Crampton – Hart District Council**

It was an extraordinary year. Hart's joint Chief Executives divided council matters into business as usual and Covid related matters. There were no guidelines initially on whether we could hold virtual meetings and the first discussions with the joint Chief Executives was how we could hold meetings in the council chambers safely. Oddly enough a year later we are now considering coming back into the council chambers and how we can hold our meetings safely again.

We were faced with how to liaise with capita on business rates, holidays and administration of the hardship fund straight away as soon as the pandemic started and also how to support the community through Hart Voluntary Action. By the end of March we were discussing how to organise remote meeting, having been given the necessary permissions but we hadn't a clue how they were going to work. The local resilience forum declared a major incident which gave our joint Chief Executives emergency powers which overrode the normal democratic decision making process. They could move staff away from their normal roles and allocate them elsewhere and they could make decisions. The Council offices were shut and garden wats collections were suspended and recycling centres had restricted access. The Country parks were closed and businesses other than essential all had to close. Food parcels had to be distributed by Hart to the extremely vulnerable and offer them support. HCC opened a health helpline and rough sleepers had to be found accommodation and of course communications had to be rapidly improved.

In April we had an urgent need to have the local plan adopted so the council's first virtual meeting was to adopt the local plan. However distribution of business grants did not go very well capita who were responsible were getting rather behind in getting the grants out and my first week or two in April was desperate business owners calling me for help. I had over 30 calls a day that week and spent hours on the phone chasing up information on when the grants would be paid. Also HDC had the head of finance leave at the end of May and had to recruit a replacement but I am very pleased to say we appointed an excellent replacement.

By June we were inundated by kind and generous people offering to help Hart Voluntary Action. So many that they couldn't process them all so a raft of local groups took over organising support for vulnerable in their area and that has worked extremely well and we hope to continue to support that kind of community spirit that emerged at that time. Talking about the emergency plan I was involved in discussions over the summer with the Ministry of Housing Communities and local government on the white paper for reform of the planning laws. The intention was to make planning more accessible to residents. Hart would be advised to allocate land for growth, regeneration or protection and once these areas were identified then really the input from our planners would be on design and as you can expect it created a great deal of controversy and I was asked to help out the planning department to formulate a response. Following the consultation we are expecting the final draft of the white paper to be published soon and I'm sure there will be more information then and will have to discuss the implications for our local areas. The local plan, newly adopted in April, will have to be revised and as yet we have no guidance as to the number of houses we need to build though I and other councillors have objected to the original numbers which have now we are told been revised.

July brought news that the Fleet high street was to be pedestrianised. In order to make the high street covid safe the government were giving out grants and there was a short time window to apply for them so no time to consult with local businesses or residents. Fleet Town Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Fleet business Improvement District were all willing to pay money towards it. However we did manage to send out a survey which showed nearly 80% against but the scheme went ahead and anybody who has been following council meetings will know that I have submitted a motion and tried over the next few months to have the scheme reversed. However it was reversed in October and the final cost to the Council has yet to be determined.

In October I had meetings with businesses in Fleet to look at what steps were needed to be taken to improve our retail centres across Hart. The pattern of shopping has changed dramatically over lock down and online sales are very much more prominent than could have been anticipated even a year ago. I am a member of the Civic Regeneration Group and in the 18 months that we've been meeting we haven't got any firm plans yet but we are planning community engagements which are due to go out after the elections.

I was happily retired until April when I was reinstated by the General Medical Council and I began working again as a doctor. General Practice went from being a largely face to face affair to telephone contact operation. GPs were advised not to see patients face to face if it could be avoided. But early on they did and a lot went down with covid however that created a great deal of opportunity for me to do locum work.

In January I started as a clinical supervisor and vaccinator at the Harlington Centre in Fleet. The patients are so keen to be having the vaccine and light is beginning to be seen at the end of this very long tunnel. Shops, pubs and hairdressers have opened, face to face meetings are being planned for and the ambulance service, of which I am a governor is beginning to return to normal pre-covid levels of demand. We can now turn our attention back to the important issues of the day such as climate change, economic growth and the abandonment of the Shapley Heath project and getting the Hart District council finances on a more secure footing. A deficit has been budgeted for this year which will come from reserves but the net financial year is looking very uncertain. Some of our joint contracts with other councils have collapsed or have had to be modified which has meant a sharp rise in the council staff budget and I am in discussions with MHCLG about local government finances as we're not the only Council to be facing such financial difficulties. The upcoming election will have a very different feel to it. Polling Stations will be covid secure and the advice is to bring your own pencil! More postal vote applications have been received than for the general election and the count will be done not overnight as it usually is but over several days.

The next year is likely to be challenging. There is a rise at the moment with people contacting me wanting to move to Eversley into social housing. We're trying to get Enforcement back to doing site visits which is very important at the moment and I am really looking forward to next year's challenge. I know its going to be a challenge. I'm still vaccinating so am still working outside of the council but let's get our lives back to normal again.

Questions:

The Chairman said that one of the priorities for Eversley Parish Council is the Road Traffic and Safety Working Group and it will resume this with whoever is elected as district councillor following the elections.

It was noted that EPC had started to track enforcement issues and that a lot of applications had recently been refused and he would hope that enforcement follows through on these issues. Cllr Dr Anne Crampton said that she had been corresponding with Enforcement and they are also frustrated that cases are not coming to court and that there have been problems with site visits. They will do their best to catch up over the next year and please keep her informed about any issues.

The Chairman thanked Dr Anne Crampton for her report.

#### **4. Other Parish Matters for discussion**

##### **a) Yateley's Neighbourhood Plan**

Rayner Mayer from Yateley's Steering Group gave a talk on Neighbourhood Plans which covered the following:

Neighbourhood Plans form the third tier of the National Policy Planning Framework whose purpose is to promote sustainable development. Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It enables a community to develop a set of design rules to embody the vision of how it wishes to evolve in a way that meets future needs and vision.

Neighbourhood plans will have legal status alongside the Local Plan once adopted by the residents of the Parish or an area like Yateley, Darby Green and Frogmore (YDF).

##### **Methodology**

- A working group of persons interested in identifying YDF's vision and future needs
- These were articulated in a first draft of the Plan
- All residents were then consulted by way of a survey delivered to every household
- A second draft was completed by a consultant
- Formal consultation from May 10 for 6 weeks

##### **Design rules**

- These total some 16 in number and relate to
- Protecting the environment
- Enhancing the infrastructure
- Improving housing provision
- Reducing impact of transport
- Promoting leisure facilities

##### **Managing flood risk**

- A major concern because of Yateley's topography and the way that housing has evolved
- Also that climate change modelling by the UK Met Office predicts greater extremes in weather including heavier & prolonged rainfall
- So development will be permitted in areas at low risk of flooding
- Any settlement to provide sinks for excess surface water

##### **Housing provision**

- Any development should –
- Promote good local design features

- Minimise environmental impact through not adding to the carbon burden and utilisation of renewable energy sources
- Optimise housing mix to meet YDF's needs including affordable homes
- Make provision for footpaths and cycle lanes which can link to schools, shops and public transport.

#### **Advantages of a neighbourhood plan**

- Articulates a vision of how a community wishes to evolve
- Assists development by providing a set of design rules
- Identifies areas where housing developments could be located
- Ensures that any new housing meets local needs
- Helps promote sustainable development through strengthening of biodiversity and reducing carbon emissions to limit climate change

Questions:

Q Likelihood of Acceptance? High as YDF Residents completing Survey were 90%+ in favour of policy proposals

Q How would it affect CIL distribution? Not considered

Q Time period? YDF will be 4.5 years; but with hindsight it could have been delivered much quicker say within 2 to 2.5 years; this shorter time period can be achieved by ensuring appropriate membership of steering group

Q Impact of Planning for Future white paper? It accepts role of Neighbourhood Plans within Planning framework; it will not impact existing Plans nor those in pipeline as primary legislation will be required should Government wish to proceed which is by no means certain

Q Is time and effort in developing such a Plan desirable for a small Parish? Yes because –

- such Plans embody a vision of how Parish would wish to evolve
- provides a clear set of design rules which reduces the time that developers spend on developing any settlement

Q Would Eversley have to consider all policy proposals that YDF has considered? - No but the Inspector would likely require proposals relating to the following topics – protecting the environment, enhancing the infrastructure, improving housing provision and reducing impact of transport in line with the UK Climate Change Act and the 6th carbon budget.

The Chairman thanked Rayner Mayer for his talk.

#### **b) Eversley Parish Council's Rights of Way project**

Rights of Way: the parish council has embarked on a programme of work to survey and prepare online and hard-copy versions of the footpaths in Eversley.

Planting of flowers and bulbs on Cross Green will get underway this summer. EPC is looking for volunteers! A small group of volunteers has already started and EPC would like to thank Lindum's Nursery for donating plants.

Entrances to the Village: EPC have engaged Hampshire to assist in putting up new village signs and, where appropriate, “gates” at the main entrances to the village. The parish council has agreed a budget for this work, but Hampshire cannot start work until sometime after the start of the new financial year.

### **c) Eversley Parish Council’s Emergency Plan**

Emergency Plan: the framework is complete. The next stage will be to engage individuals and organisations in Eversley to volunteer their assistance at a time of emergency such as flooding, a prolonged power cut or roads being blocked.

### **d) Opportunity to raise any issue for discussion**

HGVs It was noted that in the survey of Yateley residents over 90% had been in favour of banning HGVs from entering Yateley.

Reading Road The state of the Reading Road near the Fielders was mentioned and that the County Council should realise that each time it floods the road further deteriorates. It was also noted that the footway is sloping into the field by The Fielders. The Chairman endorsed these points and this would be added to the list of points to raise with the new County Councillor.

Hole in the road It was noted that there is a huge hole in the road on the cycle track on the Reading Road which could cause an accident.

Flowers It was noted that any money spent on flowers is wonderful and never wasted.

Hollybush Lane It was noted that half of the road has been flayed but the other side has not and is dangerous.

The Chairman noted that this would be a matter for Highways.

Speed Indicator Devices It was mentioned that these work well in the Village but if more could be purchased or the current ones moved around to also cover Warbrook Lane and Eversley Street.

Quad Bikes It was mentioned that there is an ongoing problem with people racing around on quad bikes in the early hours and other anti-social behaviour and attempted break-ins. It was asked if it would be possible to have CCTV at a least a couple of locations so police could catch some of the offenders.

The Chairman said that the Road Traffic and Safety working group would be reconvening at the Parish Council Annual Meeting and once set up it would be looking at all these issues.

Policing Matters EPC would be attending a policing meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> April if there were any issues that anyone wanted raised. The Parish Council also meets quarterly with the Police. The Police have limited resources but if we keep plugging away with issues.

All the members of the Parish Council were thanked for all their help in the village.

As there were no other matters, the Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and for giving up their time to attend. He hoped that in this post covid year that many things could be achieved in Eversley.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Chairman.....Date.....