

ELSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

INTRODUCTION

1 This report describes the main items of business carried out by the Council during the financial year 2019/20. It is available on the Council website (www.elsteadvillage.co.uk).

COUNCIL MEMBERS

2 Following the election of May 2019, the members of the Parish Council are Mr Leif Davidsen, Mr Roger Gardiner, Ms Jane Jacobs, Mr John Mathisen, Mr Patrick Murphy, Mr Richard Rees, Mr Stefan Reynolds, Mrs Diane Snape and Ms Jessica Webster. Two long-standing members of the Council, Roger and Joan Holroyd, stood down prior to the election. Roger had been the longest-serving member of the Council in living memory and I would like to record the Council's thanks for his services over so many years. Joan continues to provide support to the Council as a member of the Smith's Charity sub-committee and through her work overseeing the maintenance of the defibrillators for which the Parish Council is very grateful.

3 At its May 2019 meeting, the Council re-elected Mr Murphy as its chairman and Mr Davidsen as its vice-chairman. Ms Jacobs was re-elected as chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee. The Council is again grateful for the regular attendance at its meetings of Councillor David Harmer (Surrey County Council) and Councillors Jenny and David Else (Waverley Borough Council).

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

4 In 2019/20 the Council received £96,035 and spent £84,789. The main items of expenditure in the year (other than administrative costs and sundry maintenance items) were: tree surgery/maintenance (£5,371), grass cutting (£9,470), the maintenance of recreational equipment plus 50% of the cost of the replacement of the wooden train (£3,800) (NB residue of the train to be paid from 2020/21 budget due to the timings at which the invoice was received and paid), maintenance of the recreation grounds (£5,850), further preparations for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) (£16,308) and maintaining the three village defibrillators (£2,444). The Parish Council was pleased to support the following voluntary organisations this financial year; Citizens Advice Waverley (£750), Help in Elstead (£750) and Elstead Village Halls (£1,200). All these groups provide much support for Elstead residents. The Council's income was boosted by a series of donations: a £5,000 grant received from the Billmeir Trust for the planned new Village Green sign, £650 (25%) end of grant payment for successful completion of Burford play area refurbishment project from Tesco Bags for Help, and a £2,000 additional grant received from The Henry Smith Charity.

5 The precept for 2020/19, at £60,000, is 50% higher than in 2018/19. The end of year balance for 2019/20 is £67,270 versus £56,000 in 2019/18. The sharp rise in Parish Council expenditure is the result of new requirements. Principal among these is expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan (£16,308). Although this represents a sizeable share of the budget, the Council has as a result been able to secure a considerable

amount of technical support (SEA, HRA, Design Codes) at no additional cost. All of this support has been undertaken by AECOM, who are independent, government-approved consultants. Their reports add weight to the E&W NHP and can be used as substantive supporting evidence.

6 The Council is also having to take over financial commitments from both the County Council (eg rights of way maintenance) and the Borough Council, as a result of shortfalls in both authorities' budgets. In the case of the latter, our receipts from the Borough Council's compensatory grant, which used to provide 50% of the Parish Council's expenditure on recreation and leisure facilities, have continued to be substantially reduced over now represent less than 25% of relevant expenditure. The result is the council tax payers in the parishes in Waverley having to pay twice for their recreational and leisure facilities (ie in council tax payments both to Waverley and the parish) and are consequently at a significant financial disadvantage compared with their counterparts in the main towns in the borough, where recreation and leisure facilities are provided by the Borough Council. WBC has moreover decided to phase out the compensatory grant and local support grant next year. The Parish Council has raised this issue several times with officers and members of Waverley Borough Council, including the leader of the Council, but to no effect. We have also asked for a meeting with the borough leadership to discuss the matter, but no date for this has yet been fixed.

2019/20 MAIN OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

7 The Council again determined that its main priority for the coming year should be the further development and completion of the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP). A draft of the NHP was issued for public consultation in July 2018. As previously noted, this draft did not include allocations for housing sites owing to disagreement between the NHP Steering Group and Waverley Borough Council (WBC) over the definition of a new Green Belt boundary for the village in order to accommodate the 60 or so new dwellings required to be found in accordance with WBC's Local Plan Part 1.

8 In parallel with the consultation, WBC issued its proposals for its Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2). These included plans for housing sites in the village, under which most new development would take place on two locations in Hookley Lane. These proposals received over 90 adverse comments from respondents in the village, the bulk of which supported the Steering Group's plans for the majority of new homes to be built closer to village services at a site at Sunray Farm.

9 While both these consultations were being undertaken, the government issued new planning guidance which as from January 2019 enables NHPs to make minor modifications to Green Belt boundaries to provide land for housing (previously, this power was reserved to the Borough Councils). In the light of this changed guidance, and the adverse responses to WBC's proposals for LPP2, our local Borough Councillors, David and Jenny Else, arranged a meeting between Steering Group representatives and the leader of WBC, Councillor Julia Potts, to discuss the best way forward. The outcome was an agreement that the definition of the Green Belt boundary and the allocation of housing sites should be matters to be determined in the NHP, rather than in LPP2.

10 In consequence, a new draft of the Elstead and Weyburn NHP has been prepared with the assistance of the Council's new consultants, Nexus Consulting. This was issued for regulation 14 consultation on 11 March 2020. The revised plan includes the identification of housing sites, as well as the matters covered in the draft plan published in July 2018. It takes account of a new housing needs survey, a traffic survey, detailed professional assessments of each of the identified potential housing sites (Sunray Farm, with 42 dwellings, Croft 2 with 10 dwellings and 4 Trees with 11 dwellings), and a Strategic Environmental and Habitats Directive Assessments of the NHP's proposals. The deadline for response to the consultation has been extended to 8th May 2020.

11 The aim is to produce a Regulation 15 draft of the plan for with a view to submission to WBC and examination by an Inspector later in 2020. Unfortunately, owing to the restrictions resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, the government has recently announced that no referenda on NHP can take place before 2021, which means that the final version of the NHP cannot come into force before then.

Coronavirus and Elstead Emergency Response (EER)

12 Following the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic in late march, the Parish Council mobilised the Elstead Emergency Response team under the leadership of Parish Councillor Richard Rees. This small team of volunteers, which includes both Parish Councillors and local residents, meets frequently to organise help for those who need additional support during lockdown. This includes shopping, collecting prescriptions, help with animal care and moral support over the telephone. The whole village was leafleted to enrol volunteers willing to provide support and also to identify those in need of help. A dedicated phone help line, operated by volunteers, has been set up to enable those in need to get in touch, while the village website also provides information and links to the EER team.

13 As at the end of April, the EER had provided support to 26 residents needing some form of support, provided by the pool of 160 wonderful volunteers who had registered. The EER established clear safeguarding practices to support and protect both clients and volunteers, working alongside other volunteer efforts in the village such as Help in Elstead. The team engaged with the Springfield Medical Practice to enable those needing support could be connected to a volunteer. It is also linked to other voluntary organisations across the county (eg Voluntary Action South West to Surrey) which also are able to provide support in the village. Posters advertising the helplines available to provide assistance have been put up around the village.

14 So far, although the use of volunteers has been fairly limited, the EER has established a support system and processes capable of providing support to the community in the current emergency. If you can think of any improvements which we might make in these arrangements, do not hesitate to contact us on epceer@gmail.com. All our information is kept in line with the Parish Council's privacy policies.

15 The response from the village to the EER request for volunteers has been truly magnificent and is testament to Elstead's neighbourly spirit and its residents desire to help in these challenging and difficult times. A big thank you to everyone involved and in particular to EER's chairman Richard Rees and his team of volunteers, Cllr Jenny Else, Cllr Diane Snape, Will Godwin, Ellie Greenan, Michael Organe, Dawn Davidsen, Jules Williams and Rev Hannah Moore.

Our Elstead

16 Our Elstead is a subcommittee of the Parish Council establish in January 2019 with the objective of enhancing the appearance and image of the Parish. It has three Parish

Councillors, including its Chairman John Mathisen, our two Waverley Borough Councillors and five residents.

17 Projects began in February with a working party clearing up the picnic area by Elstead Bridge. In March, many residents joined a litter pick of the village and main approach roads collecting over 50 sacks. In April, three sponsors funded the purchase of three planters to display summer flowers on the Village Green. A team of residents took responsibility to deadhead and water the planters, thus maintaining the splendid display throughout the summer. In June, another litter pick concentrated on the Green and surrounds in preparation for the Elstead Marathon. In November, we swept 22 bags of leaves from the pavements around the Parish Church and War Memorial in preparation for Remembrance Sunday. On December 6, a Christmas Tree was lit on the Village Green for the second year with a splendid event attracting over 200 people. With the help of Elstead Scouts, free mulled wine and mince pies with juice and biscuits for children were provided, thanks to a grant from Spar Stores. A choir and live musicians led community carol singing. Three sponsors (the Holroyd family, VantagePoint and DCB Landscapes) gave £150 each towards the Planters on the Green and the Blakemore Foundation gave £200 toward the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony for which Our Elstead and The Parish Council is extremely grateful..

18 A similar programme was planned for this year but is now in abeyance owing to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we hope the planters will come out again. Other planned projects include a Village Sign on the Green (funded by a generous grant from the Billmeir Trust) and an evaluation of an annual village summer event or celebration involving village youth and other groups as well as local businesses. Our Elstead depends upon many volunteers and in particular the energy and efforts of the Chairman, John Mathisen. The Parish Council is grateful for all those who helped in 2019 to make the village a more attractive place to live.

The Former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works Site - Development

19 Planning consent for the building of 69 dwellings, together with a care home, on the former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works site (located in both Peper Harow and Elstead parishes), was granted on appeal in early 2017. Construction started in 2018 and most of the homes are now nearing completion, with a few already occupied.

20 A number of issues have arisen over the development. First, several homes in the lower lying area of the site were effectively cut off by floodwater during the extremely wet weather of late winter/early spring 2020 and only narrowly avoided being inundated. This is a potential problem which the Parish Council made both the developers and the planning authority aware of prior to the development being authorised, but its comments, based on local knowledge of flood events over recent years, were unfortunately disregarded.

21 Second, the developer has in the Council's view failed to meet its planning obligation to provide an adequate play area for the development, even though there is a clear planning requirement for them to do so (set out in the report of the Inspector who granted consent for the site). We have taken this matter up with WBC's planning enforcement officers, but so far to no effect. The failure to meet this commitment does not reflect well on the developer, Clarion Homes, which is a registered charity.

22 More recently, the owner of the land at the rear of the former Weyburn Works site, Victoria Asset Management, has presented proposals for the construction of a further 52 homes on this land. These would be in addition to the homes allocated in the NHP. These proposals raise several important planning issues and will be considered in the context of the consultations on the draft NHP.

Planning Applications

23 The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications received by Waverley Borough Council. The PC's responses are dealt with by the Planning Sub-Committee, which normally meets at least monthly. The sub-committee welcomes comments from parishioners on individual applications and where appropriate will incorporate these views in its own response. It is however important that parishioners also send their comments direct to WBC to maximise their impact on the planning authority.

24 The Council notes with appreciation that parishioners recently submitted over 100 individual responses (almost all objections) to a particularly sensitive application for the development of parts of Bonfire Hill, in support of the Parish Council's own comments.

Tree Survey and Maintenance

25 The Parish Council's own land (the recreation grounds, play areas, village greens and the cemetery) accommodates a large number of mature trees whose condition needs to be formally surveyed every two years for safety reasons. The Council accordingly commissioned an expert survey of all its trees in 2017 (at a cost of c.£4,000) in order to identify all those needing attention. A large programme of maintenance work started in 2018, with priority given to those trees needing urgent work for safety reasons. A further tree survey was commissioned in Autumn 2019 and a programme of maintenance work arising for this has been put in hand for completion by the end of 2020.

Footpath 64

26 Footpath 64, which runs alongside the River Wey between the Mill and Fulbrook Lane, has been closed for several years following the partial collapse of the riverside bank. This has been a popular and well-used route, which the Parish Council is anxious to see re-opened. It has been in discussion with SCC about minor diversions which would both retain the attractive riverside views and secure an accessible route by-passing a heavily waterlogged area to the north-west. SCC has tried to secure the landowner's consent to these proposals, but having failed to do so it presented plans for a diversion order which was endorsed by the SCC Local Committee in February 2020. The next step is formally to issue the order, which in the event of an objection may then need to be subject to a public enquiry. The Parish Council fully supports these proposals and has renewed its offer to help fund works which might be necessary to facilitate the diversions.

Henry Smith Charity

27 The Parish Council acts as Trustee for the Henry Smith Charity in Elstead. Trustees meet once a year in November and in 2019 distributed £3,000 to a number of families before Christmas. In February 2020 the Clerk successfully applied for additional funding from the Henry Smith Charity. As a result, the Parish Council has been awarded a further £2,000 for distribution this year and the following two years for which it is extremely grateful.

Website

28 The Parish Council has successfully set up the new village website, which has links to village organisations, together with a dedicated events page plus a history/archive page. There are separate pages also for Parish Council information and Neighbourhood Plan documents. The Parish Council would again like to thank Dawn Davidsen and Paul Williams for their help with setting up this project and Dawn in particular for her efforts in maintaining its successful operation. It has proved to be extremely useful in maintaining the flow of

information to parishioners during the current lockdown. The running cost of the new website is only the half the cost of the previous facility.

Defibrillators

29 The Parish Council has provided three defibrillators for use by the community. One defibrillator may found at Burford Lodge Rec and another at Thursley Road Rec Pavilion. The third defibrillator was relocated this year from the outside the Spar to the front of the village hall to provide more even coverage throughout the village. This year the defibrillator cabinets at both of the recs have been replaced with new models. The cabinet at the village hall has not been changed as this was replaced last year following a delivery lorry damaging it. The defibrillators receive a formal annual service and are checked informally by the Parish Council on a weekly basis.

30 The Parish Council ran a series of training sessions in October on defibrillator use and CPR which was attended by Parish Councillors and members of the Village Halls Committee. Unfortunately following the introduction of social distancing measures the community training sessions that had been planned for March 2020 have had to be postponed. The PC hopes that these sessions can be rearranged for the Autumn 2020.

Grants

31 Where possible the Parish Council seeks to apply for grants to help it undertake its various projects. This year the PC was awarded £1,000 through WBC's Environmental PIC funding which it has allocated towards improving the waste / recycling facilities at Woolfords Lane Cemetery. Currently there are no such facilities and waste cannot be disposed of in the correct manner.

32. In addition the PC received £788 through WBC's recreational PIC funding which was given to the football club to help towards the cost of the new portable floodlights.

33. The Parish Council has funded some much needed pitch improvement work at both recreation grounds and the Cricket Club, Sharks and senior Football Clubs contributed £431.67, £1,596.67 and £431.67 respectively towards this.

Parish Council Contractor

34 The Council's contractor, Richard Knight, continues to carry out minor maintenance and renovation works to its property in the village and to undertake other minor public works of importance to parishioners. These have included the construction of a wheelchair-accessible ramp linking the Golden Fleece car park with the footpath at the rear of The Street, together with assistance to the Our Elstead committee. Without exception, this work is carried out promptly, effectively and economically.

Parish Clerk

35 The Parish Council is fortunate to have available to it the services of our Parish Clerk, Juliet (Jules) Williams. Jules continues to provide excellent support to the Council, in spite of the heavy workload associated in particular with the Neighbourhood Plan process and more recently the coronavirus pandemic. I wish again to record our recognition of her efforts in this regard.

P W Murphy
Chairman, Elstead Parish Council

May 2020