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ELSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

INTRODUCTION

1 This report describes the main items of business carried out by the Council during the financial year 2021/22. 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.

3 At its May 2021 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 for the assistance provided by Borough Cllrs Jenny and David Else on a number of issues affecting Waverley Borough Council.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

4 In 2021/22 the Council received £112,326 and spent £122,680. The main items of expenditure in the year (other than administrative costs and sundry maintenance items) were: grass cutting (£8,562), tree surgery/maintenance (£660), the maintenance of recreational equipment (£438), maintenance of the recreation grounds (£6,551), the new village sign (£5,000 – funded by the Billmeir Charitable Trust), further preparations for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) (£2,105, funded by Locality), resurfacing of the car park at Burford Lodge Recreation Ground (£6,000), the replacement of the village clock (£920), reroofing and repairs to the cemetery building (£2,390), the height restriction protective barrier at Burford Lodge (£1,600) and a contribution to the cost of the borehole at the Thursley Rd Recreation Ground (£1,000). Whilst working on the renewal of the lease of the Village Green it became clear that land at Thursley Road Recreation Ground was not registered and the Parish Council instructed lawyers to prepare papers to register the land (£900). The Parish Council was pleased to support the following voluntary organisations this financial year: Help in Elstead (£1,040), the Clockhouse Milford and Villages Day Centre (£1,500) and the Village Hall (£1,500). All of these provide much support for Elstead residents. The Council's income was boosted by a further £2,000 additional grant received from The Henry Smith Charity.

5 The precept for 2021/22, at £67,500, is 6% higher than in 2020/21. The end of year balance for 2021/22 is £76,601 versus £86,406 in 2020/21.

6 The Council continues to have to take over financial commitments from both the County Council (eg verge cutting and clearing rights of way) 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 the maintenance of recreation and leisure facilities, have now ceased. The result is that council tax payers in the parishes in Waverley are 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. 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 are still awaiting for a positive response.

2021/2 MAIN OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

7 The Council determined that its objectives for the coming year should be:

- The further development and completion of the Elstead and Weyburn Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) and the associated updating of the Village Design Statement.
- The erection of the new village sign on the green and the supply of electricity to the green.
- Reroofing the cemetery building and associated repairs and improvements.
- The construction of a borehole at the Thursley Rd Recreation Ground.
- Completion of the Elstead-Milford cycleway
- Resurfacing of the Burford Lodge Recreation Ground car park
- Redraft the Elstead Emergency Response (EER) plan
- Initiate planning for a village business hub, with a view to public consultation on the plans.

Neighbourhood Plan (NHP)

8 The public consultation on the regulation 14 draft of the NHP, published in March 2020, included 3 candidate housing sites in the village – Sunray Farm, Croft 2 and Land at 4 Trees in Hookley Lane. As a result of the consultation, 3 further housing sites were submitted by landowners as candidates for inclusion in the plan – Springfield (which lies within the Settlement Area and outside the Green Belt and is part of Waverley Borough Council's social housing estate), Kingsmead Park and land adjacent to Watermeadow Place. All 3 new sites were the subject of assessment and evaluation by the professional consultancy, Aecom. In the light of the Aecom assessment, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NHPSG) concluded that a further NHP consultation exercise would be necessary in order to allow the public to comment on a revised allocation of housing sites. The NHPSG's revised proposals were that the outstanding requirement for a minimum of 62 new dwellings should be met by the allocation of 40 dwellings (plus space for a business hub) at Sunray Farm, a net 16 additional dwellings at the Springfield redevelopment, and 11 dwellings at 4 Trees. This would provide a total of 67 new dwellings, sufficient to ensure that the outstanding target of 62 dwellings would be met. As a result, only 2 of the previously allocated 3 sites (Sunray and 4 Trees) would need to be removed from the Green Belt. These sites are deemed more appropriate for development than the other sites which have been put forward.

12 The new consultation was initiated early in April and extended over a 6-week period. The results of the consultation strongly supported the NHPSG's proposals for its 3 preferred sites. The revised NHP was accordingly submitted to WBC in accordance with the Article 15 procedure in September 2021. WBC then initiated its own consultation on the plan in accordance with the regulation 16 procedure and subsequently referred the draft plan for examination by an appointed Inspector. The examination started in January 2022 but has been delayed for several weeks owing to the need to

answer a number of procedural questions raised by the Inspector. These have now been answered and it is expected that the examination will resume shortly.

13 In parallel with the development of the NHP, a sub-group of the NHPSG has started work on updating the Elstead Village Design Statement, originally drafted in the early 1990s.

Village Sign and Electricity Supply to the Village Green

14 Very shortly these two Our Elstead projects should be complete. The Village Sign has been fully funded by a generous grant from the Billmeir Charitable Trust. The design of the sign, which represents Elstead's history and heritage, was developed by a team consisting of Paul Williams, Stefan Reynolds and John Mathisen working with blacksmith Nick Bates of Burrows Lea Forge, who created and installed the sign on the village green. Grateful thanks to all of these for their efforts.

15 Mains electric power was installed on the green in a cabinet in a central manhole. The availability of power will enhance the power of the Christmas tree lights (replacing the weaker battery power) and will enable to use of public address systems for community events on the green such as the Elstead Marathon. Surrey County Council provide a grant for the scheme, though the good offices of Cllr Harmer, and the supply was installed by the local firm DJK Electrical Contractors.

Cemetery

16 Major works were undertaken during the year to repair the cemetery building and to improve the walkways through the site. The building was entirely re-roofed and several fallen trees were removed. A new finger post sign has been installed to help visitors locate the site it from the Thursley Road. As a result of these further improvements, the cemetery is now much more secure, accessible and tidy. Some further minor works are due for completion in 2022/23.

Borehole at the Thursley Rd Recreation Ground

17 The grass surface at the Thursley Rd Recreation Ground has over recent years suffered significant erosion and degradation owing to a series of dry springs and early summers and pressure from increased use for recreation. A major factor has been the lack of moisture arising from the sandy nature of the soil and its poor moisture retention capacity. To overcome these problems, the village cricket and football clubs, together with the Elstead Recreational Trust and the Parish Council, agreed to fund the installation of a borehole at the ground to provide irrigation water during periods of drought. An ad hoc committee was formed to raise funds, which succeeded in raising over £20,000 for the project, assisted by substantial donations from the Billmeir Trust and Burns and Webber and numerous individual donations from members of the public, together with the sports clubs, the Trust and the Parish Council.

18 The borehole was successfully completed in late 2021, capable of producing nearly 100 l/min – quite sufficient for its purpose. Grants have now been applied for to fund a semi-automatic irrigation system, but in the meantime a manual system is in place to provide water when needed.

Elstead - Milford Cycleway

19 The Parish Council has for several years been pressing for an upgrade of the bridleway route across Elstead and Ockley Commons in order to provide a safe and accessible cycle route between Elstead and Milford, avoiding the hazardous Milford Road. Happily, Surrey County Council were at long last able to access funding in 2021 which has allowed them to resurface the bulk of the route to an

excellent standard. This will be a huge benefit to cyclists, walkers and riders in terms of both safety and amenity.

Resurfacing of the Burford Lodge Recreation Ground Car Park

20 As a result of heavy use the car park at the Burford Lodge Recreation Ground had become potholed and uneven. The Parish Council accordingly arranged for its contractor Richard Knight to repair and resurface the site, work which was completed satisfactorily in May 2021.

EER Plan

21 A redraft of the Elstead Emergency Plan has been initiated following a useful meeting with WBC's Emergency Planning Officer. The redraft will be completed in the coming year.

Village Business Hub

22 The proposals in the NHP for the development of the Sunray Farm site include plans for a village business co-working hub. The Parish Council has accordingly entered into discussions with the site developer to establish what will be required in terms of accommodation and how the facility might be configured. The Council has also concluded that it should own and manage the site in the interests of the local community and that it should include a Parish Council office. The aim is for these proposals to be further developed over the next few months and for them to be the subject of local consultations.

OUR ELSTEAD

23 Our Elstead (OE) is a sub-committee of the Parish Council whose objective is to improve the appearance and amenity of the village. Two major OE initiatives – the village sign and power to the green – are reported above. For Christmas 2021, as an experiment, three smaller trees, along with the smaller oak trees, were illuminated on the green, powered by battery lights. We are grateful to all who contributed to and participated in the turning on event – Oxenford farm for the trees, Spar store for the mulled wine, Elstead Women's institute for the cakes and biscuits, Scouts for the protective netting and to the OE volunteers who marshalled the event and raised £320 for Help in Elstead. For 2022, OE plans to have a single tree with festoon lights illuminated by the new mains power supply.

24 The planters on the green have again helped to improve the attractiveness of both of the village greens. Di Mathisen and Di Snape have organised their planting and management over the past 3 years and now Hilary Hamlyn has generously taken over responsibility. But more volunteers are needed to help with watering and deadheading over the summer months.

25 Other projects planned for the coming year include the tidying up of the picnic area near the bridge, the bank between the Thursley Rd and Staceys Farm Rd, clearance of overhanging vegetation and a new village litter pick. Again, volunteers needed!

THE FORMER FEDERAL MOGUL/WEYBURN WORKS SITE - DEVELOPMENT

26 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 the site was completed in 2021.

27 Several issues arose with the development. First, a number of 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.

28 Second, the developer has in the Council's view failed to meet its planning obligation to provide any children's play facilities for the development, even though there is a clear planning requirement for them to do so (as set out in the report of the Inspector who granted consent for the site). We took this matter up with WBC's planning officers, who have accepted that the planning conditions in regard to the play area were discharged in error without proper compliance.

29 The Parish Council, along with representatives of Peper Harow Parish, have continued to press the developer to provide suitable play facilities at the site. No progress has however been achieved and now that the development has been completed it is unlikely that any usable play facilities will be available on site. The failure to provide any proper children's play facilities at such a large development reflects poorly on both WBC's planning department and on the developer, Clarion Homes, which is a registered charity and one of the government's principal suppliers of social housing.

30 Other planning issues affecting the site, notably the provision of accessible Suitable Alternative Green Space (SANG) and the completion of an accessible pedestrian link between the development and Elstead village, have been satisfactorily resolved so far as the developer's inputs are concerned, but only after lengthy delays and pressure from both Elstead and Peper Harow communities. The Council is however pressing Surrey County Council to complete the upgrading of the pedestrian access route (FP61) between the Watermeadow Place boundary and Ham Lane, for which the developer has already provided SCC with the necessary funding.

ELSTEAD VILLAGE ROAD SAFETY

31 The Elstead Village Road Safety sub-committee, chaired by Councillor Diane Snape, was established during 2021 in response to community concerns regarding speeding, parking and road maintenance throughout our village. Initially the intended approach was to establish Community Speed Watch (CSW) teams; investigate use of Psychological Deterrents and to identify potential speeding and parking improvements in addition to monitoring the status of Thursley Road maintenance works.

32 The extended SE Water upgrade project significantly impacted our plans to implement CSW, however the sub-committee have engaged with the Surrey Police CSW Co-ordinator to arrange training for any interested villagers. A request for volunteers has been posted on the village Facebook page and in the Village News. We will co-ordinate and participate in the initial start-up activities, however the teams are intended to be resident-led once established.

33 Pilot use of psychological deterrents are currently being implemented with more planned throughout the coming year. Academic research has reported significant success with this approach and we aim to gather and publish specific village statistics from the pilots in support of wider application.

34 A prolonged re-organisation of the Surrey County Council Highways Department has delayed progress on parking and speeding improvements. However, the new teams and processes are now established and we are progressing some initial recommendations including the use of Speed Data Recorders to be attached to our existing Vehicle Activated Signs. At a national level there is a drive to

implement 20 mph restrictions with many counties and villages adopting the policies. Our committee is considering whether this would be appropriate for our village and has engaged with the '20 is Plenty for Surrey' team to understand more about the opportunities. Community support is key to this strategy and, if pursued further, we will be actively seeking resident feedback.

35 Although the SE Water project caused a few disruptions some positive outcomes were the reduced speeding and improved parking in the vicinity of St James School. Meanwhile discussions with BT regarding use of their land for school staff parking have finally progressed and provisional agreements reached. This is now awaiting final BT legal approvals. The Council is grateful to our borough Councillor Jenny Else and our local MP Jeremy Hunt for expediting these arrangements. We would also like to thank the Village Hall Committee for releasing the space alongside the Youth Centre, providing four additional parking spaces for village hall users.

36 The anticipated repairs to Thursley Road, which are conditional on an assessment from a deflectogram machine, are expected to occur this year although we are still awaiting formal confirmation on timings. We would like to thank Surrey County Councillor David Harmer for his support and dedication in ensuring this finally takes place.

THURSLEY NNR FIRE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BOARDWALK

37 At the end of May 2020 a large wildfire destroyed much of the nearby Thursley National Nature Reserve, a site of international wildlife importance and a popular recreation area enjoyed by many local residents. One of the consequences of the fire was the destruction of an extensive and widely used boardwalk, which provided access to areas of the reserve which would otherwise be inaccessible.

38 Following the fire, both Elstead and Thursley Parish Councils received a large number of enquiries from the general public – both local and from further afield – asking what could be done to help restore the reserve and in particular to reinstate the boardwalk. As a result, the two councils agreed jointly to establish a fund for this purpose and to solicit donations from the public. Within a matter of days, significant sums had been contributed and currently the amount in the fund stands at over £55,000. This is a remarkable achievement and is testimony to the importance which the public attaches to the reserve.

39 At the same time, the two Parish Councils established a joint sub-committee, consisting of members of both Councils, the public and Natural England (NE, the owners and managers of the site) to advise on how best the funds might be used in the restoration process – the 'Preserve our Reserve Committee'. NE have since produced plans for the boardwalk reinstatement and the Councils, together with NE, lodged an application with Waverley Borough Council for the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funds to assist with the funding of the restoration. This proved to be successful and a further £98,000 has been allocated towards the project. Together with NE's own funds, the amounts raised are now sufficient for the boardwalk restoration to be completed.

40 The restoration project does however require planning consent. The planning application was lodged in October 2021 but delays in WBC's planning department mean that it has not yet been determined. It is hoped that consent will be forthcoming shortly and that the project can start at the end of the bird-nesting season in late summer 2022.

'NO MOW MAY'

41 In early 2021, WBC introduced its 'No Mow May' policy, under which it planned not to cut roadside verges and amenity grassed areas on its own estates during the month of May in order (it claimed) to

encourage biodiversity. The policy was introduced in haste, without any consultation with Parish Councils. In the event, the policy was maintained until late summer, with the verges and grassed areas in Elstead not being cut until mid-August. When at last WBC's contractors attempted to cut the tall vegetation they found their machinery was unable to cope effectively – demonstrating a lack of planning and foresight.

42 The Parish Council received many complaints from parishioners about the uncut grass, which became unsightly and a hazard to pedestrians owing to the encroachment of nettles and brambles and the risk of tick bites. Footways became clogged with encroaching vegetation and the highways became similarly obstructed, forcing cyclists and pedestrians further out into the carriageways and obscuring sightlines and road signs. The Council sought an urgent meeting with the WBC portfolio holder, Cllr Townsend, to discuss the impacts of the policy. 4 times a meeting was arranged but on each occasion it was cancelled by Cllr Townsend. Eventually a meeting was arranged early in 2022 with the new portfolio holder, Cllr Mirylees, which proved to be constructive. Cllr Mirylees understood our concerns about a repetition of the policy and indicated that a programme of grass cutting would be reinstated in 2022, in consultations with parishes.

PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTIVES FOR 2022/3

44 At its February 2022 meeting the parish Council agreed that its objectives for 2022/3 should be as follows:

- Completion of NHP
- Public consultation on co-working hub
- Tidy up verges at Staceys Farm Road
- Complete the redraft of the EER
- Complete the refurbishment of the cemetery building
- Remove old concrete foundations of floodlights at Burford Lodge Recreation Ground and reorganise football pitches.

PARISH COUNCIL CONTRACTOR

45 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 works of importance to parishioners and associated with the Our Elstead sub-committee. Without exception, Richard's work continues to be carried out promptly, effectively and economically.

PARISH CLERK

46 The Parish Council is fortunate to have available to it the services of our Parish Clerk, Juliet (Jules) Williams. I wish again to record our recognition of Jules' efforts over the past year and her role in helping to deal with the many challenges which have faced the Council over this difficult time.

P W Murphy
Chairman, Elstead Parish Council
April 2021