

NEWS FROM HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL

Because of Covid 19 there was no Annual Parish Assembly this year so HPC is taking the unusual step of circulating this newsletter to keep you informed. The annual report for 2019-20 is on the Hermitage web site, www.hermitage.org.uk.

HPC is aware that some residents prefer electronic communication so this newsletter can be found on the web site. A link is on the Hermitage Facebook page.

Council Meetings have taken place monthly as usual but via Zoom. Perhaps the ease of attending from your own home has encouraged more people to get involved which has been good to see.

But, as usual, agendas and minutes of all meetings plus the names of councillors are posted on notice boards. These, news updates and important information are on the web site: hermitage.org.uk. A brief summary of issues discussed is usually posted on the Hermitage Facebook page and a report is printed in the parish magazine, Pathfinder, which is distributed to residents of the village for £5/year.

Two new councillors have joined the committee this year to complete its allocated number of 11 councillors.

HPC was instrumental in creating **Eling Way** through its support and funding. Completed in the spring, it links Hermitage and Hampstead Norreys for non-motorised travellers and is proving extremely popular. Two seats for the path are on their way and a further dog bin has been installed at the Hermitage end.

The **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)** committee is separate to the Parish Council but is supported by it financially. One of the things it may consider is whether Eling

Way could be extended further into Newbury.

HPC thanks this small but hard-working committee for its recent open event, which was well attended by residents.

The NDP is now commissioning a housing needs survey to take place in the new year. HPC strongly encourages all residents to complete it so that future house building can match the real needs of the village.

Traffic in Hermitage is an issue for many residents. HPC is working hard to implement traffic calming measures on the B4009 but this is not a straightforward process and requires empirical evidence that there is a speeding issue on the road.

Over the past few months, traffic speed has been monitored by a Black Cat radar system as well as by the Community Speed Watch system. A few residents have received letters from Thames Valley Police after being caught speeding by the CSW.

Deploying the Vehicle Activated System (VAS) reminds drivers of their speed so, hopefully, they slow down if speeding. After this is removed, the Black Cat radar is re-deployed to see if there has been a change in behaviour. This work will continue in 2021.

At every monthly council meeting, there are **planning applications**. This has included major developments such as the Co-op, Cala Homes and development of The Old Farmhouse. HPC always comments on applications but the final decision is made by West Berkshire Council. The council has also responded in detail to the Government's Planning Future's White Paper.

Parks and green spaces

The council maintains most of the green open spaces in the village, including Furze Hill,

Pinewood Park and Furze Hill playground. It uses S106 money from the Forest Edge developers, also known as the commuted sum, for all work at Furze Hill. It is generally agreed that the importance of green space for mental well-being cannot be underestimated.

Much of Furze Hill is a Local Wildlife Site, including the woods which are covered by a tree preservation order. The butterfly meadow and the area between the drive and the top of Pinewood Crescent are maintained for butterflies in perpetuity. The Council has help from the West Berkshire Conservation Volunteers to maintain these areas.

Upgrading the play facilities at Pinewood Park is being considered. Suggestions from residents are welcome. And the recreation ground at Furze Hill is now being used regularly by a Cold Ash young people's football team.

Every year the parish council awards **grants** to voluntary organisations working for the good of the village. This usually includes the village hall, the play group, scouts and cubs plus others. It is that time of year again and any group wishing to apply should contact the parish clerk for information and an application form.

Vandalism and Anti-social behaviour

Sadly, there have been incidences of ASB in and around Hermitage. The Parish Council has contributed money for upgraded CCTV cameras around the village hall and in Pinewood Park.

One **bus shelter** has been replaced on the B4009 near to Marlston Road. Consideration is being given to the fate of the other shelter which is opposite the school.

Covid 19

The council has supported the Hermitage Hardship Fund in the latest round of Members' Bids (funds held by each WBC

member to use in their district) and is extremely grateful to all the volunteers that have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to help residents of the village.

The council is pleased to announce that the Hermitage Support Group has been awarded £500 from the West Berkshire COVID recovery funding. HPC is matching this with a further £500.

Despite Covid there will be a **Christmas tree** lit up in full splendour outside the Fox pub. The lights will be switched on on Saturday December 5th. At the time of writing the isolating arrangements for Covid are unknown and so no arrangements have been made for Carol singing.

But what is Hermitage's favourite carol? Lay minister, Margaret Fisher, has run a survey through Facebook and is planning a zoom carol singing session of all the favourites for December 5th.

The council can be contacted through the Parish Clerk, Nicky Pierce, by emailing hermitagepc@outlook.com. The item on meetings lists the many ways that HPC tries to stay in touch and keep residents up to date.

**Hermitage Parish Council
wishes everyone a very happy
Christmas and joy in the,
hopefully Covid free,
New Year**