

# HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Because of Covid 19 the 2021 Annual Parish Assembly was held on April 29<sup>th</sup> by zoom. So HPC is delivering this report to all households to keep everyone informed.

A copy is on the web site with a link on the council's Facebook page.

**Council meetings** have taken place monthly, as usual, but via Zoom. Members of the public have attended most meetings. Meeting agendas, minutes and important information, particularly financial, are posted on council notice boards. The council's Facebook has updates on council business with the village Facebook page being used for brief, more general, messages eg major road works and events in Hermitage. In addition to this the village website is kept up to date with all the latest council information.

### Planning applications

Applications refused by West Berkshire Council: the application the former butchers plot and The Old Farm House site are currently being considered by the government planning inspectorate. Decisions from the district council on applications for the White Horse and Charlotte Close are also awaited.

### Financial matters

In the autumn the council made a grant of £500 to the Hermitage Hardship Fund to match the grant awarded by West Berkshire Council.

This year there is a modest increase in the number of dwellings which has led to an increase in the precept of 2.33% taking it from £ 49,710 to £51,660 Due to organisations not being able to use their full grant last year, the council had fewer grant applications than usual for this year. It has made the following awards:-

	Amount	Purpose
Hermitage Preschool	£645	Fencing and sleeping area.
Hermitage Church	£3020	Pathfinder and live streaming equipment
Hermitage Village Hall	£800	Freezer, coffee machine and sideboard

### Developer contributions (S106 and CIL)

The council has used funds from developers to replace fencing at Dines Way and Furze Hill alongside footpath 18 to keep walkers safe. The ponds in the exclusion zone are shallow (30cm/1 ft) at the edges but rapidly become more than (3m/10) feet deep. In the last year HPC has not received any CIL. It does not expect to receive further contributions until work starts at The Old Farm House.

### Parks and green spaces

The West Berkshire Conservation Volunteers were only able to make two visits during the year. In November they worked really hard to reduce the brambles in the butterfly meadow. After the nesting season they will start on the hazel coppicing which was recently approved by West Berkshire Tree Officers. This should provide an even better crop of spring flowers next year.

It is hoped to use developer contributions to upgrade Pinewood Park. You will soon be invited to comment on different proposals.

## Speeding

Traffic in Hermitage is an issue for many residents. HPC is working hard to implement traffic calming measures on the B4409 but this is not a straightforward process and requires empirical evidence that there is a speeding issue on the road. The council has consulted WBC and has now collated enough data on the northbound B4009 for the community to implement Community Speed Watch in liaison with TVP.

This should be up and running in the next month or so as we ease out of lockdown. Unfortunately, the pandemic has delayed implementation of the CSW programme and other speed monitoring.

The council has also discussed with WBC the monitoring of other areas within the village, particularly Yattendon Road and the south end of the village. Again this will be done as soon as possible.

## Vandalism and Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a police matter and must be reported on 111. If TVP does not know about it they can do nothing to help.

Despite upgrades to CCTV cameras, anti-social behaviour has continued in various parts of the village. For several months the council has been in discussions with Berkshire Youth about the possibility of it doing outreach work in the village.

## Bus shelter on Hampstead Norreys Road

This has been a contentious issue. The council has decided to replace the old, rotten shelter and consequently received letters of objection and complaints from a small group of people. In addition a petition of objection with 71 signatories, of which 50 were parish residents, a small proportion of 1426 electors.

## The Neighbourhood Development Plan

(NDP) team has run a Housing Needs Survey on behalf of the council. This was made possible by a grant from central government.

The group hopes to hold another open session to consult with residents. This is an important part of

creating the plan.

Thanks to all the 279 people who completed the housing needs survey. This is a 35 per cent response rate and higher than usual.

The main conclusion is that, if future development is to meet local needs, it should be for market and affordable home ownership of mainly one to three bedroomed properties. Some properties should be suitable for older people and a little affordable rentable housing.

The highest priorities for improvements are mobile reception (68 per cent) and footpaths and cycleways (58 per cent), the lowest were meeting room (2 per cent) and more shops (6 per cent).

## Thanks

The council is grateful to the Hermitage Support Group (HSS) for all the work it does on behalf of residents, the small group working on the Neighbourhood Development plan and the Thursday Team which takes care of various small jobs that crop up such as for all the maintenance work it carries out in the open spaces.

Congratulations are due to the HSS and Sara Disson who were highly commended for their COVID volunteering work.

The council thanks the clerk, Nicky Pierce, and Mr Lawrence, the groundsman, for all they do for the village.

And thanks to the willing helpers who delivered all the housing needs surveys.

The council can be contacted through the Parish Clerk, Nicky Pierce, by emailing

[hermitagepc@outlook.com](mailto:hermitagepc@outlook.com). The item on meetings lists the many ways that HPC tries to stay in touch and keep residents up to date.