

WELLOW

Parish Council Annual Report 2021

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1. Introduction

This report highlights the main activities of the Parish Council for the period April 2020 to the end of March 2021.

Your Wellow Parish Councillors are:

Cllr Gaye Chesterton-Kay (Chair)
Cllr Edmund Chesterton-Kay
Cllr Christopher Craig
Cllr Mike Jones (Vice Chair)
Cllr Sue Jones
Cllr Richard Light
Cllr Rich Millard
Cllr Charles Payne
Cllr Mike Simpson
Cllr Philip Stehr

A full list of Councillor responsibilities is attached to this report and can also be viewed on the Parish website at www.wellowparish.org.uk

Following the resignation of Cllr Aly Jones from the Parish Council last year, the Parish Council was advised by the electoral officer at Test Valley Borough Council that it could move to co-opt a replacement and Mike Simpson was selected in July 2020. In November 2020 Cllr Alan Clarke resigned from the Parish Council and on this occasion, following the triggering of a by-election, this vacancy will be filled at the local elections on 6th May 2021.

2. Parish Council Activities

Wellow Neighbourhood Plan

Even though it has not been possible to hold face to face meetings throughout 2020/2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic and restrictions, work has continued on the Neighbourhood Plan throughout the year with our dedicated team of volunteers and Councillors giving many hours of their time to make sure that progress on this initiative doesn't slow down.

Mike Freeman, who has been chairing the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, and Thelma, recently made the decision to stand down as members of the Group. The Council would like to thank Mike and Thelma for their non-stop hard work and support of the Neighbourhood Plan. Mike took over as interim Chair at very short notice for what he intended to be a temporary period but as often happens, ended up keeping the job! Mike's passion and drive cannot be underestimated and, together with the rest of the team, they have ensured that work on progressing the Plan has continued. I know they will be watching its progress with interest.

Hopefully it won't be too long before we can recommence with face to face meetings and seek to reschedule the planned community event, originally set for March 2020, which unfortunately had to be cancelled at short notice due to the pandemic.

Our grateful thanks go to everyone on the Working Group – it wouldn't be happening without you! If you want to find out more about the Neighbourhood Plan it has its own website and Facebook page – details below:

Web site <https://www.wellownhp.org.uk/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Wellowneighbourhoodplan/posts>

Re-design/renovation of Hatches Farm Sports Ground Car Park

Despite the pandemic the Parish Council was able to press ahead with the car park improvements at Hatches Farm Sports Ground during the Summer. The major renovation programme is complete although the contractors will be returning later in the Spring to level the car park and fill any areas that have suffered during the winter months.

I'm sure everyone can appreciate the improvements to the car park and also the increase in spaces which have already not only benefitted the Sports Clubs but also made it much safer for parents dropping off and collecting their children from Wellow School.

Although it was necessary to remove the apple trees on the top area of the car park, these have been replaced with new trees which will hopefully thrive in their new environment.

Floodlights were installed at the Tennis Club during August and as lockdown restrictions start to ease, we can already see tennis enthusiasts making use of the new facilities.

The new Petanque terrain was installed and proved to be very popular during the very limited time last year when it was able to be used. Because of this, further works are planned which include increasing its size and installing two new benches to provide a seating area for players and spectators.

The Parish Council would like to thank Test Valley Borough Council for their grant of £23,500 which went a long way towards making this whole project achievable and particular thanks to our two local Councillors, Nick Adams-King and Gordon Bailey for their support.

The final part of the overall project at Hatches Farm Sports Ground will be to deal with the drainage problems on the pitches themselves. This will be looked at in due course and is unfortunately dependent, as always, on funding.

Other Activities

Wellow Common SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)

Wellow Parish Council owns and is responsible for the management of Wellow Common which is part of the New Forest National Park and a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). The land was deeded to the Parish in the 1880's for the use and benefit of all Parishioners. A detailed Management Plan covering the years 2010 to 2019 was approved by Natural England and the grant we receive from them is approximately £18,000 per annum to implement it.

As the grant was EU funded there has been some uncertainty about whether it would continue following Brexit. However Natural England has confirmed continuation for a further year, to include 2021. What happens after this year is yet to be decided.

The last year has been an exceptional one for the Common. Due to the pandemic, we have seen unprecedented numbers of people coming to enjoy the open space where they could exercise safely and find relief from the restrictions that lockdown imposed, which was particularly important for everyone's health and well-being. However, this has led to a few problems, also experienced by other stakeholders across the New Forest. Verge parking, particularly at the weekends, became an issue when the Plantation Road car park was unable to cope. Unfortunately, this has resulted in extensive damage to the verges especially during the wet winter months and caused access difficulties. The Council has been working with Natural England and the New Forest National Park Authority to try and find appropriate solutions.

From postings on social media and reports directly to the Council the number of dog related incidents has increased. The Council is a member of the NFNPA Dog Forum which works to encourage responsible dog walking, reduce disturbance to ground nesting birds and engage with commercial dog walkers. It is hoped that this work will

help to improve responsible behaviour, avoid conflict and reduce the number of incidents. The ground nesting bird season is March to July and the main danger is that these ground nesting birds can easily be frightened away, leaving eggs and young vulnerable to cold and predators. Everyone walking on the Common can help by keeping both themselves and their dogs on the main tracks and avoiding the open heathland.

Over the last year work has continued controlling the bracken growth at the northern area of the Common and the gorse was cut back over an extensive area around the Plantation Road car park. The work was done in accordance with Natural England recommended practices, outside the bird nesting season and is required to maintain the designation of the Common as lowland heathland.

Other projects on the Common included the replacement of the gate at the Plantation Road car park which had been damaged beyond repair by a reversing vehicle, the levelling and compacting of the track leading from the A36 to the monkey jump car park and ragwort pulling during the summer months.

Footpaths

Wellow is extremely lucky to have numerous Footpaths in and around the Parish and for most of this last year, they have been thoroughly used and enjoyed by more people than ever. Whilst it is obviously good that they are being discovered and appreciated by so many, the flip side to this is that they have shown more signs of wear and tear than usual, especially as the weather during Winter and early Spring was extremely wet. Never have Wellington boots been needed so much!

A few of the most popular Footpaths, namely No. 7 (Foxes Lane to St Margaret's) and No. 16 (Romsey Road to Hackleys Lane) have really suffered through increased footfall and turned into a quagmire at times. However, the drier weather and winds have greatly helped to improve the situation and these paths are already almost back to normal, and so easier and more pleasant to use.

Another favourite of locals, Footpath 22 (Foxes Lane to Scallows Lane) has unfortunately been closed for some considerable time, due to the unsafe condition of the boardwalk section. Despite the various notices clearly placed at either end of the path stating its poor condition and closure, it has disappointingly continued to be used by many. Planned repair work, delayed due to Covid restrictions and inclement weather, is due to be carried out by Hampshire County Council (HCC) before the end of September 2021. Like residents who enjoy using this popular route, the Parish Council is hopeful that HCC will find an opportunity to carry out the work as soon as is practicable, now that the access area is drying out, allowing the necessary equipment to be taken onsite.

Maintenance work has been carried out on Footpaths 17 and 18 (Gazing Lane to Romsey Road and Buttons Lane) as and when needed, by both Councillors and our Lengthsman.

Last year the Council intended to resurrect the "Wellow Ways" event which gives people the chance to enjoy the Footpaths around the Parish, whilst trimming back any wayward branches etc with a pair of secateurs. Obviously, this proved impossible due to Covid 19 restrictions, but with any luck, if we keep heading in the 'right direction' we can seek to hold this event as soon as it is safe to do so.

Parish Council Finances 2020/20201

Wellow Parish Council's financial position as at the end of March 2021 is presented in the attached Income and Expenditure Statement (Appendix 1) and Balance Sheet (Appendix 2). It should be noted that these reports are based on draft figures, subject to final inspection by the internal auditor. Figures to the end of September have already been audited and the remaining accounts to year end are due to be inspected in May 2021.

The Balance Sheet as at 1st April 2021 shows that Wellow Parish Council has total Assets, less Current Liabilities of £131,933, a decrease of £35,600 compared to the previous year. This includes the general reserve which stands at £55,363, increased by approximately £9,200 compared to last year.

The overall balance of earmarked reserves has reduced by a net total of £44,800, due to the completion of the improvement works at Hatches Farm Sports Ground and a decrease in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. CIL money was used to offset the cost replacing the safety surfacing in the play area at the Recreation Ground at Lower Common Road as well installing new showers at the Hatches Farm Sports Pavilion.

Accounts will be finalised in time for submission to the External Auditor by the end of June 2021, to meet with statutory requirements. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) is published on the website and from 1st July 2021 onwards any person interested has the right to inspect the accounts and all related documents. Details of the period for public inspection of the accounts (Exercise of Public Rights) will be published on our website in due course.

Grants

Each year, the Parish Council sets aside a small budget to award grants to local organisations who operate in support of Parish residents. During 2020/2021 the Parish

Council awarded small grants to Wellow Village Hall, Wellow School Association, Victim Support and Wellow & Plaitford Cricket Club.

See the website for the Parish Council's grant funding policy and application form. Alternatively, contact the Clerk.

And thank you.....

Finally, I would like to thank the following for their hard work, commitment and enthusiasm during the past year(s):

My fellow Councillors – it is very easy to forget that they are ALL unpaid volunteers who claim no expenses whatsoever whilst carrying out Council business. Their enthusiasm and willingness to take on so many projects and their can-do attitude makes all the difference when it comes to achieving outcomes for the village. We don't always get it right (as often observed on the various social media outlets) but we do always try!

Huge thanks to Sharon and Karen who keep the office running so well – not always an easy task!

Once again, a massive thank you to the Neighbourhood Plan team for their ongoing work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Wellow. The work is extremely complex and often frustrating. They are all volunteers who give many hours of their personal time to this project for the future benefit of Wellow and its residents.

I would also like to thank our Borough Councillors, Nick Adams-King and Gordon Bailey for all their ongoing hard work and commitment to Wellow, whose support is invaluable and goes a long way towards making the work of the Parish Council easier.

In particular, and on behalf of all Councillors, I would like to wish our County Councillor, Cllr Roy Perry a very long and happy retirement and to thank him for his unstinting support over many years.

Finally, thank you to all of you for your input. As always, it is helpful to hear your views and to get a better understanding of how you feel about the village and what can be done to improve it.

Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Chair
Wellow Parish Council

3. Representation on External Committees and Bodies

Wellow Primary School	Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Test Valley Association of Parish Councils	Chris Craig
Village Hall Committee	Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Roke Manor & Squabb Wood Liaison Panels	Mike Jones/Sue Jones
New Forest Association/North East Quadrant	Charles Payne
New Forest Consultative Panel	Charles Payne

4. Parish Council Members and Officers

4.1 Parish Council Members' Responsibilities 2020/2021

Please see attached Appendix 3.

4.2 Parish Council Officers

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: Mrs Sharon Whitehouse

Parish Office, Wellow Village Hall, Buttons Lane, West Wellow, SO51 6BR

Tel: 01794 323275

Email: clerk@wellowparish.org.uk

Reports from Wellow Sports Clubs

The Coronavirus pandemic and the introduction of Covid regulations has meant that very little organised community/grass roots sport has taken place during the last year. Therefore, no reports are included from our local sports clubs in this annual parish report – we look forward to 2022 when hopefully things will be back to 'normal'.

Wellow Parish Council Current Year

APPENDIX 1

Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31st March 2021

31st March 2020		31st March 2021
	Income Summary	
67,626	Precept	68,978
1,916	Interest	1,287
<u>69,542</u>	Sub Total	<u>70,265</u>
	Operating Income	
973	Administration	34,959
41,216	Grants and Projects	30,036
3,179	Lower Common Rd Rec Ground	1,531
2,737	Hatches Farm Sports Field	330
17,808	West Wellow Common - HLS Agree	17,808
12,970	Burial Ground	5,599
<u>148,425</u>	Total Income	<u>160,528</u>
	Running Costs	
18,133	Administration	13,005
25,986	Employees	26,813
10,938	Grants and Projects	5,194
8,923	Capital Schemes/Asset Man	102,553
8,954	Lower Common Rd Rec Ground	16,090
34,745	Hatches Farm Sports Field	7,619
6,119	Environmental Schemes	6,639
1,931	Highways	1,751
50	War Memorial	50
0	West Wellow Common	59
17,654	West Wellow Common - HLS Agree	14,793
3,169	Burial Ground	1,515
<u>136,602</u>	Total Expenditure	<u>196,080</u>
	General Fund Analysis	
27,664	Opening Balance	46,147
148,425	Plus : Income for Year	160,528
<u>176,089</u>		<u>206,675</u>
136,602	Less : Expenditure for Year	196,080
<u>39,487</u>		<u>10,595</u>
(6,659)	Transfers TO / FROM Reserves	(44,768)
<u>46,146</u>	Closing Balance	<u>55,363</u>

31st March 2020

31st March 2021

31st March 2020		31st March 2021	
Current Assets			
225	Debtors	33	
5,775	VAT Control	3,448	
42	Prepayments	0	
17,313	Current Bank A/c	14,767	
104,951	Deposit Bank A/c	72,290	
50,008	Fixed Deposit A/c	50,008	
178,315		140,546	
178,315	Total Assets	140,546	
Current Liabilities			
7,067	Creditors	4,274	
3,762	Lengthsman Scheme	4,339	
10,829		8,613	
167,486	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	131,933	
Represented By			
46,147	General Reserves	55,363	
26,809	EMR HLS	32,317	
7,000	EMR Youth Facilities	7,000	
4,357	Election Costs	6,879	
10,582	EMR Neighbourhood Plan	9,138	
40,943	EMR Hatches Farm	0	
31,648	EMR CIL funds	21,237	
167,486		131,933	

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 1st April 2021 and reflects its Income and Expenditure during the year.

Signed :
Chairman

Date : _____

Signed :
Responsible
Financial
Officer

Date : _____

Members' Responsibilities

APPENDIX 3

Reviewed at the Full Council Meeting on 07.12.2020

Chair	Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Vice-Chair	Mike Jones
Clerk/Parish Council Officer	Sharon Whitehouse
Environmental Working Group	
➤ Common Management/Buxton Land/Trees/Commoners Defence	Charles Payne/Mike Jones/Sue Jones
➤ Flooding	
➤ Minerals & Waste Plan - Roke	Mike Jones/Sue Jones
➤ Burial Ground	Ed Chesterton-Kay
Communication Working Group	
➤ Newsletter	Christopher Craig/Richard Light
➤ Website/Social Media	Clerk/Christopher Craig
➤ Community engagement	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Christopher Craig
Finance Working Group	
➤ Budget Management	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/ Ed Chesterton-Kay/Rich Millard/ Phil Stehr/Sue Jones
➤ Grants	
Hatches Farm Working Group	
➤ Sports Pavilion/Football Pitches & surrounding areas/Trim trail	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Ed Chesterton-Kay/ Richard Light/Rich Millard
Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)	Christopher Craig
Highways Working Group	
➤ Footpaths and Licensed sites	Mike Jones/Sue Jones /Charles Payne Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Christopher Craig/Charles Payne/ Phil Stehr Charles Payne
➤ Public transport	
➤ Highways Issues/Infrastructure	
➤ Lengthsman Scheme	
Lower Common Road Recreation Ground Working Group	
➤ Recreation Ground/Pavilion	Mike Jones
➤ Play Area	Mike Simpson
Neighbourhood Plan	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Charles Payne/Rich Millard/ Christopher Craig
Planning & General Purposes Committee	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Ed Chesterton-Kay/Christopher Craig/Mike Jones/Sue Jones/Rich Millard/Charles Payne/Phil Stehr
Staffing Working Group	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/ Mike Jones/Sue Jones/Phil Stehr
New Forest Association	Charles Payne
New Forest North East Quadrant	
New Forest Consultative Panel	
Test Valley Assoc of Parish Councils (TVAPC)	Christopher Craig
Village Hall PC representative	Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Wellow School PC representative	Gaye Chesterton-Kay
Gypsy & Traveller Liaison	Christopher Craig
Community Engagements (with voluntary support) to be allocated as and when	
➤ Litter Picking	Christopher Craig
➤ Maintenance of Community Garden & Sounding Arch	Gaye Chesterton-Kay/Ed Chesterton-Kay/Mike Jones/ Sue Jones
➤ Remembrance Sunday	