

EASTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Annual Report 2019/2020

Our Role - on the Parish Council is to look after the interests of the village as a whole, to maintain certain services for the benefit of the community, as well as representing the village to outside agencies.

The Parish Councillors - the Parish Council election took place in May 2018. The councillors are Richard Burton, Steve Thomason, Phil Trussell, Clive Wood and myself. We are elected for a period of four years and complete our second year now.

I have been impressed by the commitment of the local councillors – I think we have a very good team of people, who have a genuine concern about the village and a willingness to help in many different ways.

The Roads

We continue to press the County Council to repair pot holes in the roads and they do get repaired in time.

We continue to be concerned about the increasing number of HGVs going through the village. Many of these are carrying aggregates and are very heavy. Mick George agreed to route all of his vehicles accessing the gas pumping station, to use the Spaldwick and Stow Longa route, but despite this, we continue to get vehicles coming through, for which our roads are totally inappropriate. Williams have put up new signage, to encourage haulage vehicles not to “overshoot” the turn and come into the village. We are discussing the possibility of a new large sign on the west bound carriageway, making clear the haulage yard turn and the Easton turn.

The A14

The completion of the new A14 at the Ellington end has caused mayhem with a large number of local village roads. When the Brampton Hunt roundabout is closed at a weekend, then all sorts of vehicles use minor roads and destroy the verges – this has been a problem in Easton, but other villages like Woolley and Barham have had their verges destroyed.

As was predicted, getting onto the A14 at the Easton junction is now more difficult. I went to a meeting with the Highways Agency, which involved all the parishes along the Brampton to Thrapston section. There is no money for improvements until 2025 at the earliest. One interesting suggestion at the meeting was to impose a 50mph speed limit along the whole section to indicate to road users that there are dangerous junctions along this section. There are however no plans at present to do this.

Parking outside the Church

We are going to put in a drain this summer - the building work at the Church prohibited this happening in the Autumn.

Footpaths

The closure order preventing motorised vehicles using Hartham Street (the by-way between our village and Grafham) remained in force for the whole year. Sadly the current state of this restricted by-way is very poor and we will be pressing to keep it closed to motorised traffic again this year. Other local paths are in a reasonable state.

Flood Prevention

The Alconbury and Ellington Drainage Board cleared the brook again in the summer and dug a ditch a bit deeper than usual. Following complaints they came back and rectified most of the problems and next year are going to do a 'light touch' job. Flooding is a real risk to several homes in the village, so it is important that the water can flow through the village quickly.

Grass Cutting

We are grateful to Anthony Abbs for his maintenance of village verges and to Derek Jolly who has cut the grass on the Playing Field.

Planning Matters

We continue to be consulted by the District Council on planning matters and we do our best to look carefully at all planning applications and to represent the views of people in the village as best we can. We only have the power to comment and do not have a "final say" on planning matters – that power is reserved to the District Council.

Last year I reported our concerns about the planning application for two new dwellings on Stonely Road, next to the pumping station, which we unanimously opposed. The District Council approved it, despite it being in contravention of all their rules about not building in the open countryside. It is now clear that the District Council gave permission because they had not adopted their Local Plan promptly and many other unusual applications were granted in the area. In our own village an application was made on land South of Belmont. I am glad to report that by the time this came to the District Council Planning Committee their new Local Plan was in place and it was turned down.

We did approve an application for a house of modern design between The House and No. 1 Easton Road, after consulting all the immediate neighbours.

Residents

We have lost four residents who made a significant contribution to village life over a number of years. Ray Ellis who was born in the village and died here in the early summer, was a familiar sight as he did his bird watching with his binoculars around his neck. Alasdair Graham did immense work on the Charities over many years and was a fund of good ideas around the village. Terry Hayward lived his life a great deal outside the village, but designed an extension to his house so that his son and family could live here. Ed Sloper was the architect of the great Jubilee event at the playing field and was supportive to so many village events.

They will all be sadly missed.

Once again I would like to thank all of those who either individually or in groups make a contribution to the appearance and to the social life of the village.

The Easton Fund and Social Committee have again organised a number of well attended and enjoyable social events. The organisation of these takes time and commitment from many people but they certainly provide great entertainment and promote great community spirit.

The reputation of the Easton "Big Breakfast" has certainly put this village on the map and has attracted large numbers every second month on a Saturday morning. These are great community events and bring people together, both from inside and outside the village. They are greatly enjoyed but do involve much work – thanks to all who work so hard to make them possible.

The Church Council continues to maintain our beautiful Church and to look after the churchyard as well as organising events such as the quiz evening in February.

The Trustees of the Easton United Charities work hard to look after the assets of the Charities and distribute money within the village.

Anthea Beer is a very able and competent Parish Clerk, dealing most efficiently with correspondence, communications and the organisation of our council meetings. Brian Davis is the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator and again keeps us well informed about crime and policing concerns in the area. Jenny Hyde types and maintains the excellent monthly newsletter, which is delivered by the Brand family

My particular thanks go to many individuals who help to make the village look attractive by picking up litter dropped by passing motorists. We do have some litter pickers and are always looking for volunteers!

So to all the organisations and individuals who are involved in the village I say "Thank You" and I know that the whole village community appreciates all the work you do. The efforts you make continue to make Easton a very attractive village in which to live!

Mike Baker

March 2020