

EASTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Annual Report 2020/2021

WHAT A YEAR!

March 2020 saw the first lockdown as the Covid infection spread through the country. It was a very frightening time – panic buying in the shops and empty shelves and then some glorious weather when people rediscovered walking, gardening and other homebased activities. Then came the summer easing of restrictions to be followed by another lockdown and now the vaccine.

The year ended badly for Easton when on 23rd December ten houses flooded as a result of continuous rainfall on saturated ground. What was impressive was the way that so many people helped others whose properties had suffered, reflecting the great community spirit which exists here. Many people worked through the night helping to bale out water from flooded houses.

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 third year now.

Sadly, the Trussells are leaving the village to live in Shelton in Bedfordshire. Phil has been a very interested and proactive member of the Parish Council and his links with Anglian Water have often helped us! Thanks go to him and our best wishes for the family's life in Shelton.

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.

The roads and verges are in a poor state and the very wet conditions this year have not helped. The road opposite Carrock Cottage has almost collapsed and urgent repairs are needed.

The new signage at the William's haulage yard on the A14 has certainly helped to reduce 'lost lorries' coming into the village.

The A14

Despite lockdowns the new road has increased the traffic flow and getting on or off at the Easton junction is increasingly difficult. The local MP has organised a meeting later this month with the Highways Agency and I hope that something positive will emerge from this.

Parking outside the Church

We are putting in a drain in April and then we hope to get some plastic 'box' work done on the grass areas to harden them up.

Footpaths

After many years of complaints, the County Council have resurfaced almost all of Hartham Street (the by-way between our village and Grafham). It is a pleasure to walk down there without stumbling over massive ruts.

Flooding

Ten houses were flooded on the 23rd December and this has inevitably caused much hardship and distress. We thank the Drainage Board for having cleared out the main brook in the summer and in some places deepened it. Without this maintenance things could have been much worse. There are plans to improve our defences both behind the houses on Church Road and in Stonely Road and the Parish Council are keen that ditches should be cleared out and drain away surface water efficiently. So many ditches have been neglected and have become blocked, so it will be a major job improving them.

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.

The Playing Field

We renewed the soft bark surface in the area around the play equipment and despite some of it 'floating' off during the great flood, we recovered most of it. We have planted five new fruit trees at the edge where elms had died – hopefully we will live long enough to enjoy them!

We have replaced some broken play equipment and are keen to keep it all safe for users.

The Village Pump

This has been very professionally refurbished by Geoff Messenger and it now looks very impressive.

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.

Residents

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 enjoyable social events on Zoom. The organisation of these takes time and commitment from many people but they certainly provide great entertainment and promote great community spirit. We have all missed the "Big Breakfast".

The Church Council continues to maintain our beautiful Church and to look after the churchyard as well as organising events.

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 individual 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 2021