

Easton Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report 2022/2023

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 councillors are elected for a period of four years and we completed our fourth year last year. As there were no more than 5 nominations for the Parish Council, no election took place and all the councillors agreed to stand for a further term. The councillors are; Richard Burton, Steve Thomason, Pam Bell, Clive Wood, and myself. We continue to have a good team of people, who have a genuine concern about the village and contribute in many different ways.

The Roads

The damage to the road opposite Carrock Cottage reported last year had recently been repaired, but the quality of the repair leaves a lot to be desired and may need attention again soon. We regularly report and urge the County Council to repair potholes in the roads and they do get repaired in time.

We have had few if any reports of 'lost lorries' coming into the village since the new signage at the Williams Haulage Yard on the A14 has been installed so that seems to be working well.

The roadside drain on the double bend outside Crown Cottage had finally been cleared out following a number of reports by the Parish council. However, this appears to be blocked again and so will need following up.

Speedwatch

I need to say thank you again to all those who had been trained and assisted with the Community Speedwatch earlier last year. Pam Bell is leading on this for us, and wishes to restart these activities again this spring. However, as mentioned in the Newsletter, we are currently struggling to find volunteers to assist, so any offers of help would be gratefully received.

Our application for an interactive 30mph speed sign awaits the decision on our application for the 20mph restriction.

Possible 20mph Speed limit for the Village

We have recently been informed that an initiative to apply for a 20mph speed limit has just been opened, and we have the ability to submit a request for funding to achieve this. This will depend on their being general support for this in the village.

The A14

Unfortunately, all the good intentions flagged at the start of last year by Alan Trille, the Highways England route Manager, have struggled to deliver any significant improvements. Although he was fully aware of our concerns and the dangers of the junction, he has been constrained by the lack of funding available to him. Several dates have come and gone for the resurfacing of the central reservation, and the latest date we have been given is now after April this year.

Alan will be building a long term proposal for the junction, and should be sharing this with the village in the next 12 months. Thank you to Clive and Pam who attended a recent Highways meeting and continued to press our case for action.

Parking outside the church

Following the recent site meetings with contractors and County Council Highways officers we finally obtained a quote from our contractor to carry out the work to improve the parking arrangements that was explained in last year's summary. The Parish Council has collated all the detail necessary to submit a grant application to the WindFarm Trust which will be completed in the next few weeks.

Footpaths

The resurfacing of Hartham Street reported last year, seems to be holding up, and continues to be a significant amenity for the village. There had been a few fallen trees which were taken care of, and after negotiation with the local Byways office, we now hold a key for this end of the route, and Grafham Parish Council hold a key for the gate at the Grafham end. If we detect any serious damage taking place to the surface of Hartham Street, we have authority to lock the gates to prevent access to 4 wheel traffic.

Flood Prevention

Since the new drainage ditch has been dug to divert excess water and feed directly into the brook east of Crown Cottage, bypassing the village, we are very fortunate not to have had any sustained heavy rainfall. With the benefit of this new ditch and other recent improvements, we hope it puts us in a better position to cope with such quantities of rain in future.

The Easton Wildlife Initiative and the Queens Green Canopy

We had a number of activities at the start of last year planting a good number of trees as well as hedges, but we could not have foreseen the record temperatures and drought conditions that were experienced last summer. We have already had to replace a couple of dead young trees alongside the brook. I hope all those who took advantage of our 'free tree' offer for households in Easton, managed to keep their trees watered and healthy over summer.

As we had been unable to obtain the access to the footpath at the back of Townsend farm for further tree planting, more trees were planted along Stonely Road just before Shepherd's Close in December.

Following a suggestion made in last year's Annual Meeting we purchased a Tawny Owl nesting box, and this has been put in position just outside the village. A recent wildlife camera monitored activity at the nest, but did not pick up any owls. Tawny Owls are known to frequent the area so we will let you know if we have any success.

Grass Cutting

We are grateful to Anthony Abbs for his maintenance of the village verges and to Derek Jolly who continues to cut the grass on the playing field. Also thanks to Richard who keeps many of the hedges trimmed in the village.

The Playing Field

We have replaced some broken play equipment and are keen to keep it safe for all users. We will also be replacing the bark and the wooden edging this year.

Planning Matters

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

Residents

Once again I would like to thank all 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 both face to face and on Zoom. The organisation of these takes time and commitment from many people but they certainly provide great entertainment and promote great community spirit. The Big Breakfast continues to great acclaim from within and outside of the village.

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 effectively with correspondence, communications, and the organisation of our council meetings. Many thanks to Brian Davis who stepped down after many years as our Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator. The reins have been taken over by Dave Hindmarsh keeping us informed about crime and policing concerns in the area.

Janet Thomason continues to produce our small but perfectly formed Easton Newsletter. It obviously relies on contributions from all of us, so please if you have any interesting articles, stories, or photographs please consider sending these to Janet. Many thanks to Angie who distributes this to everyone.

My particular thanks go to those who help to make the village look attractive by picking up litter from our roadsides and footpaths. 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 2023