

Bishop's Waltham *Parish Council*

Annual Report

2020 - 2021



Bishop's Waltham
Parish Council
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 Bishop's Waltham
Parish Council

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Parish Council Chairman

Welcome to this version of the Annual Meeting of the Parish. At the time of writing there is no confirmation that the actual meeting will be able to go ahead in its normal form. So, in its place, the Council has produced this new and attractive format of the Annual Report.



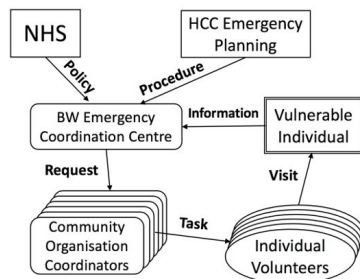
This has been a difficult year for all of us, and the Parish Council has tried to keep business as usual, but with all meetings being virtual. Planning applications have been reviewed, the Parish Council estate has been maintained and a number of projects have been pursued. You can read about them in this Report.

In 2019 Bishop's Waltham was nominated as the "Hampshire Village of the Year" and this was achieved largely due to the outstanding community spirit amongst our local residents and employees. This was very apparent during the Covid crisis in which so many people helped out. It has been a pleasure to serve in such a wonderful town.

Coping with Covid

The Emergency Plan

The first issue of the Bishop's Waltham Emergency Plan was in 2016 in which one of the highest risks was identified as a pandemic virus. The plan was regularly updated and tested. It was relatively easy, therefore, at the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, to prepare a supplementary plan to cover assistance to the elderly and vulnerable who were self-isolating. The Parish Council established a Coordination Centre to provide advice and also a network of about 50 volunteers who collected medications and shopping.



The High Street

The town centre shops re-opened in June after the first lockdown and measures were put in place to favour pedestrians over traffic.



Pavements were temporarily widened with cones and barriers to allow safe social distancing and over 20 street marshals provided advice and assistance. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and helped shape plans for the future configuration of the upper High Street. A joint initiative by the Town Team and the Parish Council provided hand sanitisers throughout the town centre.

Volunteer Support

Besides the volunteers who assisted with the Parish Council scheme for support to those in self-isolation in the early days, there was a number of local *ad hoc* groups set up to help neighbours. Two groups that provided outstanding support were the Care Group drivers taking patients to hospital, and the Community First Responders attending to medical emergencies. Both groups received Local Heroes Awards from the Mayor of Winchester, as did the Parish Council. The Mayor visited Bishop's Waltham twice in August to thank the volunteers of the Meon Valley Foodbank and then those others who had assisted during the first lockdown.



The Shops

Some of the independent shops in Bishop's Waltham were able to stay open throughout the lockdowns, not only serving customers, but also arranging deliveries. Restaurants and food outlets quickly adapted to provide takeaway food. Click and collect rapidly became a routine method of shopping, preserving the economic viability of the town centre.

Virtual Working

Parish Council meetings have been conducted virtually during the year with very little impact on business. Members of the public have been able to attend the meetings and address issues to councillors.

Planning

Latest News on Developments

The housing developments at Coppice Hill, Martin Street, Tangier Lane and Albany farm have been progressing rapidly. All are in accordance with the Bishop's Waltham Development Plan and the Design Statement, drawn up locally under Parish Council sponsorship.

The Parish Council have worked with developers to ensure any disruption caused during construction is minimised. Residents who have moved into the completed homes seem very satisfied with the developments.



Malt Lane Development

The site between St George's Square and Sainsbury's has long been an eyesore on the approaches to the town. The youth hall, physiotherapy centre and Fox's Garden Machinery were bought up by Country Homes Ltd who consulted with the Parish Council and the public about a number of proposed designs for the redevelopment. The resultant planning application for 24 residential units and a replacement youth hall has an over-riding amount of local support, although the restricted number of parking spaces is highlighted as a problem by some objectors.

Planning Applications

56 planning applications have been considered during the year, 20% of them from the National Park.



Abbey Mill

Since Sainsbury's decided not to pursue its planning application for a superstore by the South Pond, the site has lain dormant. Beechcroft Developments Ltd prepared designs for a care home, 39 assisted living units and 31 other homes. In response to local representations, the Abbey Mill building would be retained and its character replicated in an adjacent building. Beechcroft are now engaging with Winchester City Council over the submission of a formal planning application.

Winchester Local Plan - 2036

Work has started on the Winchester Local Plan looking forward to 2036. There is a large focus on carbon neutrality and the environment. It is unlikely that there will be a further large influx of developments in Bishop's Waltham. The Strategic issues and Priorities for the Plan are out for consultation. Landowners have offered up sites for development (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment - SHELAA). The Parish Council will be considering options for development within a 15-minute walking distance of the town centre and offering these for public consultation later in the year.



The Parish Council Estate



Jubilee Hall Car Park

The project to provide additional car parking in the town was finally completed in 2020. Season tickets have been made available for neighbouring residents and shop owners. This should create more spaces for visitors in the central car park, aiming to bring in greater trade to Bishop's Waltham.

The Parish Council have also included two electric charging points and a host of additional planting to ensure environmental balance.



Play Areas

Annual budget plans always allow for maintenance of the seven play parks in Bishop's Waltham. This year the Parish Council upgraded worn surfacing at three parks, replaced a swing set at Claylands Road park, painted eight pieces of equipment and renewed seven park gates.

Skate Park

The annual health and safety inspection highlighted essential repairs needed at the facility. A professional skate park company also recommended a complete upgrade. The ramps at the park were removed in December 2020 to ensure health and safety compliance at the site. Plans currently under consideration include securing sources of funding for a new facility and planning a new design.

Community Buildings

The Jubilee Hall has been regularly serviced ready for action when it reopens later in 2021. It has also been enhanced with new automatically opening front and internal doors. These address a need for easier access to the building. Priory Park Clubhouse has had a new boiler installed for more reliable hot water and heating provision. Hoe Road Pavilion continues to be a thriving centre for a local Pre-School.

Parkland

The Parish Council grounds team worked hard in 2020, even during lockdown, to keep our parklands cut and mown at Priory Park, Priory Meadow, Hoe Road Recreation Ground, Victoria Road green space and our play parks. The Parish Council know how important this was for residents during their valued daily exercise. Priory Meadow continues to mature into a peaceful haven. The planted trees and wildflower area are highlights as walkers benefit from a circular path, linked to the local footpath network. Fritillary bulbs were planted in the meadow in October 2020, to reintroduce this native flower to our meadowland.



Highways & Byways

Parking Restrictions

The Parish Council has been working with Winchester City Council to address the hazards caused by the thoughtless roadside parking in Shore Lane and Free Street. A public consultation on proposals for yellow lines in both roads has now taken place and the final decision is expected in 2021.



Upper High Street

The Parish Council is conducting a survey of residents and businesses to seek views on improvements required to reduce traffic congestion and increase pedestrian safety in just the upper High Street as a first phase. Options for future traffic management include pedestrianisation, timed access, marked road bays and pavement widening. You can access the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Q86CWKQ> or complete the survey insert enclosed and leave it in the box available in the Post Office or the Newtown Stores. Closing date: 31st May 2021.

The Footpath Network

There are 54 public footpaths and bridleways in Bishop's Waltham parish. They have been much used over the past year during lockdown and consequently the surfaces of some have deteriorated, especially in poor weather. The Parish Footpath Warden, with her small team of assistants, keeps a constant check to ensure the routes are maintained and signage replaced. Three stiles have been replaced with kissing gates this year. The local walks leaflets, available at the Basingwell Street car park, have been especially popular.



Bishop's Waltham to Botley Bridleway

The project to open up the route of the old railway-line to Botley had been managed for over 10 years though, during last year, progress has stalled. The focus remains on securing land ownership or the rights to use it. Efforts continue to get the proposed bridleway into all local authority plans. The Bishop's Waltham section from Station Roundabout to the parish boundary at Park Lug has been confirmed by the Parish Council as being feasible and most of the funding is allocated. It will still be many years, however, until one can walk or ride the route!



Southern Cycleway & Footpath

Most of the new housing developments are to the south of Newtown. The proposed southern cycleway & footpath will provide residents with a safe and quiet route to the town centre. It will start at the Albany Farm development and finish on the railway footpath. Each developer is contributing part of the route. There are sections across Parish Council land at the top of the allotments and the top of Priory Park. A request for quotations from potential contractors has been prepared and the funding will be sourced from the Community Infrastructure Levy on developers.



Our Community

VE Day Event (Victory in Europe 75th Commemorations)

A town gathering in the Jubilee Hall was planned for this event, as well as street parties encouraged, but the pandemic halted this idea. However, residents did still manage socially distanced street parties, sitting on driveways, enjoying a sunny afternoon tea in remembrance of this special occasion 75 years ago. The Parish Council also laid wreaths at the War memorial on VJ Day in August.



Remembrance Day

The usual activities surrounding Remembrance Day were still upheld, although undertaken with social distancing. The Dedication of the Garden of Remembrance saw crosses placed in the church yard with the iconic 'Tommy' metal figure looking on. Wreaths were laid on the Sunday, and on the 11th November the air raid siren sounded in the High Street at 11am.



The Environment

The Parish Council is committed to playing its part in tackling Climate Change. To this end the Parish Council have set up an Environmental working group with an ongoing brief to look at all areas of our work with the aim to reducing Bishop's Waltham's carbon footprint. The Parish Council have already positioned electric car charging points in the Jubilee Hall car park, planted bulbs and sited an insect hotel created by the Mens Shed in Priory Meadow, and also planted trees on the green area at the junction of Morley Drive and Langton Road.



Parish Council Grants

The Parish Council offers grants to local community groups who apply for specific funding to aid the people of our town. Applications for consideration can be made twice yearly – in April and September. In 2020 Grants were awarded to Bishop's Waltham in Bloom and St Peter's PCC.

Red Telephone Box Project

The red kiosk in Hoe Road has been adopted by the Parish Council. Plans are underway to refurbish and relocate it centrally in town as an information point, so that residents and visitors alike can further enjoy this iconic British facility.



Communications

The Parish Council continues to provide updates on all its activities using the bi-monthly newsletters as well as regular posts on Facebook, Instagram and the website. There are four noticeboards positioned around town with weekly agendas for meetings and as key information points for the community. This year has been enormously affected by the pandemic but monthly 'surgeries' are usually held in the High Street.

Clean Up Bishop's Waltham – Litter Picking

The annual 'Clean Up' event was postponed from its usual March spring clean, to a September date. Volunteers still came ready to help and made a real difference to the approaches of the town – keeping them clean and green!



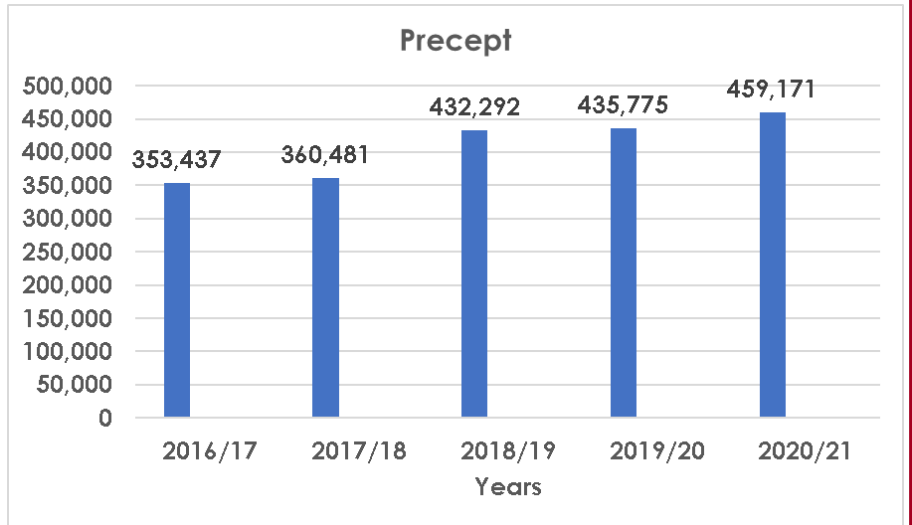
Local Groups

The Parish Council works closely with local organisations with the aim to support and encourage a cohesive approach to community living in Bishop's Waltham. The Parish Council have links with the Town Team, Chamber of Trade, Museum Trust, and the Youth Club, amongst many others. The Parish Council has representatives on local group committees and work closely with many others.

The Money

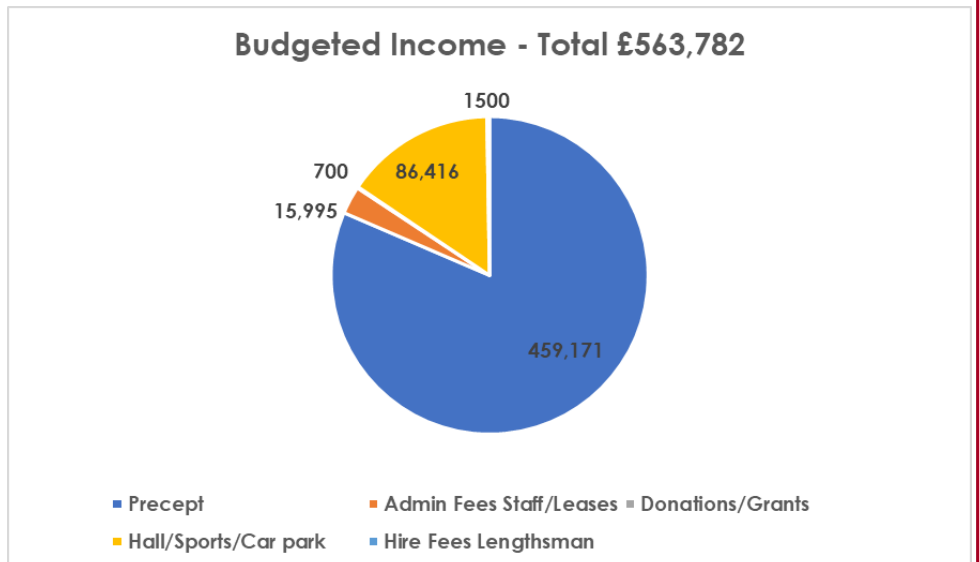
The Precept

The precept for 2020/21 was £459,171. This was an increase of 2.8% on the previous year. The precept is the Parish Council's share of the council tax. The precept demand goes to the billing authority – Winchester City Council - which collects the tax for the Parish Council. The 'Precept' is converted into an amount per Council Tax Band that is added onto the Council Tax bill.



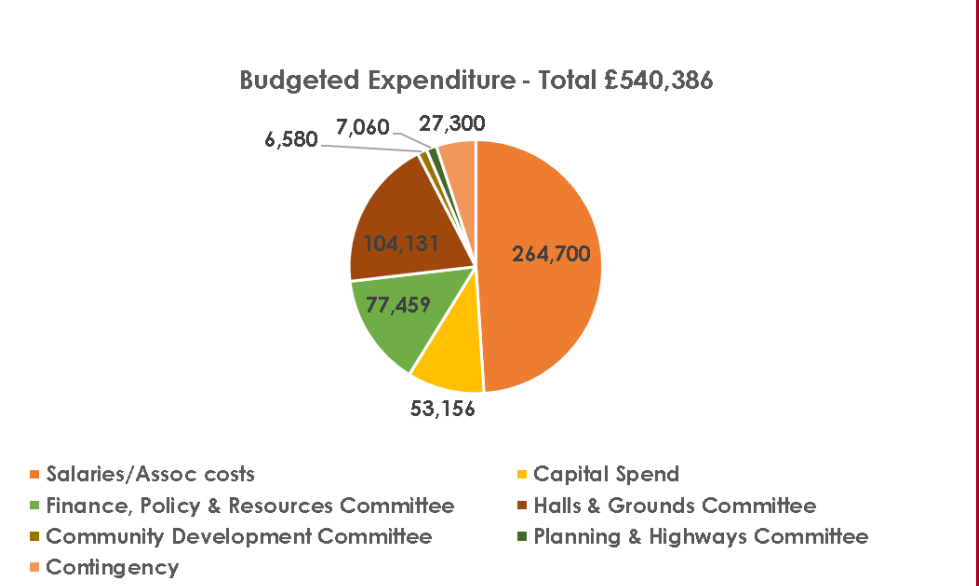
Where the money comes from

The Parish Council receives the main part of its income from the precept. Income also comes from the hire of Parish Council facilities such as the community halls and the sports amenities. Income for 2020/21 was severely impacted by the pandemic due to the halls and the sports pitches being closed. The Parish Council has monitored this impact closely over the year and has taken action to address any short fall. Sadly, this has meant some projects due to take place in 2021 will be deferred until future years.



Where the money goes

The Parish Council budgets for spending on staff, maintenance of community facilities such as the halls, sports pitches and playgrounds, community events etc. The budgeted expenditure for 2020/21 was £540,386. As mentioned above the pandemic will have an impact on this figure due to the proposed deferral of some projects. The Council office has been closed since March 2020 and the administration staff working from home, resulting in a reduction in office costs.



Forward Plan

The Parish Council is now 2 years into its Forward Plan which was presented in 2019 having been compiled from community surveys into what should be done. The 9 Strategic Objectives and 68 Actions are reviewed every month. Despite the difficulties over the past year, progress has been good and many of the achievements are recorded in this Report. Copies of the Plan are available from the Parish Council office or it can be viewed on the website under 'strategic documents'. It is anticipated that nearly all the actions in the Forward Plan will have been achieved by 2023, with only a few of the more aspirational targets being carried forward to the next Plan.



The Parish Council

Councillors

Chairman - Cllr Terry Wilson
Cllr Linda Clarke
Cllr Donald Iro
Cllr Kevin Jones
Cllr Lynn Thompson
Cllr George Westcombe
Cllr Josie Wood

Vice Chairman - Cllr Judy Marsh
Cllr Kris Ford
Cllr Edward Jelf
Cllr Barry Nicholson
Cllr Andy Webb
Cllr Patricia Wilson

Full contact and committee details for all Councillors are available on the Council website or from the office

Council staff

Mrs Lindsay Edge	Executive Officer
Mrs Emma McKenzie	Deputy Executive Officer
Mr John Storry	Responsible Finance Officer
Mrs Hannah Fisher	Senior Administration Officer (Finance)
Mrs Alison Trott	Administration Assistant (Halls)
Mr Matthew Wanstall	Halls Manager
Mrs Gloria Stratton	Caretaker
Mr Richard Stratton	Caretaker
Mr Trevor Veck	Senior Groundsman
Mr James Rushton	Groundsman
Mr Kevin Wyatt	Groundsman
Mr Peter Wall	Parish Lengthsman
Mr Ben Partridge	Community Support Officer

Meeting Dates

Finance, Policy & Resources Committee	First Tuesday of the month
Parish Council	Second Tuesday of the month
Halls & Grounds Committee	Third Tuesday of the month
Community Development Committee	Fourth Monday of the month
Planning & Highways Committee	Fourth Tuesday of the month
West Hoe Cemetery Management Committee	Meetings arranged as required

Full details can be found on the Council website or from the office

Feedback

If you have any feedback on this Report or any other Parish Council matters, please contact Mrs Lindsay Edge, Executive Officer. - Telephone: 01489 892323 or email: parishclerk@bishopswaltham-pc.gov.uk