

**LITTLETON & HARESTOCK PARISH COUNCIL (LHPC)**  
**ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY (ONLINE) 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021**  
**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019 - 2021**

## **Introduction**

This Chairman's Report unusually covers two years, from June 2019 to May 2021. Therefore, this summary report is a bit longer than usual.

During the first Pandemic lockdown, several Parish Council members were 'shielding', but we were able to continue routine council business using the Internet. Then we were given official permission to hold Parish Council meetings online, with our first Zoom Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020. Since then, we have held ten Parish Council Meetings online, although this approved use of the Internet must stop by 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 because the Government will not pass any legislation to extend its use.

As part of the pandemic lockdown requirements, we were required to close the Parish Office, playgrounds, sports facilities, and the Adult Outdoor Gym, although we managed to keep the Recreation Ground open. As you know, facilities opened again in Summer 2020, but later in the year Sports Facilities and Adult Outdoor Gym were closed again, but playgrounds remained open.

We look forward to returning to 'business as usual' with face-to-face Parish Council Meetings starting again on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 in the Millennium Hall. Future public meetings will be conducted according to health and safety rules issued by the Hampshire Association of Parish Councils (HALC).

## **Recreation Grounds and Playgrounds**

A major part of the Parish Council's funding, gathered through the Community Charge, is used to maintain Littleton and Harestock playgrounds, sports facilities and pitches. These Parish assets are highly valued and cherished by all residents. We are pleased to see the sports clubs back in operation.

During these two years, the main events were:

- The Parish Council entered into a leasing agreement with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for public recreational use of the 1-hectare sports field located on the Harestock Road. This is a registered green open space and is marked up as a Football Pitch and has been a valuable facility during the Pandemic. We thank the MOD for allowing us to lease this land until 2023 when new arrangements associated with the redevelopment of Sir John Moore Barracks are likely to take effect.
- Since March 2020, sports use in the Littleton Recreation Ground has been subject to Pandemic restrictions. However, while the schools have been closed, there has been a massive increase in visitors using the Recreation Ground. In August and October 2020, there was heavy above-average winter rainfall. There has been a chafer bug infestation in the Cricket area, bird damage to the ground surface, increased footfall along the paths, use by bikes and vehicles, hedges broken down and damage to playground equipment. Therefore, the Recreation Ground is now showing signs of much wear and tear. Parts of the Recreation Ground were closed to preserve them. It will take many months for the Recreation Ground to recuperate, perhaps even until Summer 2023.
- Meanwhile, our contractor (Green Smile) continues to maintain the surfaces and hedges. The grass has been cut a bit longer than usual not to rip up the ground surface. We have entered a replacement maintenance contract with Green Smile until 2023 with no price rises. Ground's maintenance is a significant expenditure for the Parish Council, shared with the Sports Club.
- The Parish Council installed a climbing frame (a Parkour), designed to be used by older children, and a small netball court in the lower field in the Littleton Recreation Ground in February 2020. The Parkour was part-funded by Winchester City Council using the Community Infrastructure Levy. We thank ex Councillors Hillary Saunders and Anita Neilson for their work to install these new items.
- Before we reopened the playgrounds in September 2020, the equipment received a deep clean and was cleaned weekly for several months. The Playgrounds have been used heavily during 2020-21. This continues to take a toll on the playground infrastructure. All the surfaces such as grass, soft wet pour, bonded rubber, and rubber

matting are getting very worn. These surfaces are expensive to maintain. Therefore, the 2021-2022 period is likely to see more focus on equipment and surface maintenance rather than the purchase of new equipment.

- In the Littleton Playground:
  - The rusty Multiplay unit and its crawl tube (which does not meet current regulations) will be replaced on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
  - The Crow's Nest has been so severely damaged, it has been taken out of use, but we hope to replace this with a new climbing unit perhaps later this year.
- The Harestock Playground has had swing barriers installed. The Playground is in overall better condition, although there is more maintenance work to carry out.
- The two playgrounds are usually inspected weekly by Special Maintenance Officers from Winchester City Council to ensure all equipment is safe and in good working order and discharge our Duty of Care. Once a year, all playground, teen and adult equipment is inspected independently, which results in a detailed assessment of risks and recommendations to improve safety. During the first lockdown period, it was challenging to obtain any contractor support for maintenance, and only recently have we been able to carry out some outstanding work.
- The Recreation Ground car park and playground fences have been renovated, repaired, or replaced. The Car park has been fitted with security telescopic bollards at the main entrance, and this now allows us to close the car park in emergencies or during periods of anti-social behaviour. The speed bump at the car park entrance has been repositioned, but some speeding is still taking place. The access to the overflow car park has been improved and the potholes filled.
  - The Sports Pavilion and the Tennis Cabin, owned and maintained by the Parish Council, have been subject to major electrical refurbishment, with the replacement of all the emergency lighting. The Pavilion has a new clock and a weathervane. Metal handrails have been fitted to the Pavilion steps and a new metal exterior fire escape staircase has been erected. A new fire alarm system will be installed shortly.
  - My sincere thanks go to the small group of parish councillors known as the 'Estate Working Group', who have maintained the Recreation Ground during the last 18 months. I thank Councillor Peter Highfield as the lead councillor and John Biddlecombe for the time and energy he has spent organising much of the maintenance work on the Pavilion, the car park and the new Grounds Maintenance Contract.

## Planning and Development

We continue to receive around 2-3 residential planning applications for Littleton and Harestock per month. The Parish Council considers these planning applications from the perspective of the current Winchester District Local Plan and the Village Design Statement for Littleton. For many applications, the Parish Council does not object. However, several planning applications have required investigation and discussion by parish councillors, leading to written objections, which may or may not be upheld by Winchester Planning Officers. Occasionally applicants modify or withdraw their plans because of Parish Council Objections. Planning is an important aspect of Parish Council work, and I thank the parish councillors who investigate and comment on planning applications.

In the last two years, the Parish Council has made two major planning objections and has participated in two large scale public consultations:

- **Firstly and secondly, Two Aggregate Recycling County Level Planning Applications.** In 2020, the Parish Council presented detailed objections to two large planning proposals made to Hampshire County Council. The applications were for inert aggregate crushing recycling facilities to be located near Three Maids Hill. There were strong arguments for accepting the proposals as environmentally sound opportunities to provide urgently needed recycling facilities in the County close to excellent transport links. The Parish Council presented robust challenges to both these proposals linked to over 200 other objections. Both planning applications had ignored the proximity to the multi-million pound business of the Littleton Stud. The Parish Council requested that the Hampshire County Council Regulatory Committee needed to consider the second proposal. Despite Pandemic restrictions, this County Committee did discuss the second proposal in detail at two meetings and made a virtual visit to the site. The Parish Council made two online deputations. The Hampshire County Council Regulatory

Committee rejected the proposal. The other proposal at Down's Farm on the other side of the A34 remains dormant and unapproved. We thank our County Councillor Jan Warwick for her robust support and her persuasive policy-based arguments to reject the proposal. What happens next, if anything, is unclear.

- **Thirdly, Redevelopment of Sir John Moore Barracks.** During the Autumn 2020 the Ministry of Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) confirmed that Sir John Moore Barracks would be closed in 2025 and the Flowerdown Estate redeveloped.
  - The DIO aimed to submit a Planning Application in late Spring 2021. In general terms, the plan is to build around 1,000 homes, increasing the population of Littleton by about 300% - perhaps more in the period 2025-30.
  - The DIO carried out an initial public consultation in December 2020, and the Parish Council has had meetings with the DIO and its commercial consultants. The Parish Council Chairman is also a member of the Development Strategic Stakeholder Board. The Parish Council also has a small working group of parish councillors who manage responses to large-scale proposals. In January 2021, the Parish Council submitted a detailed reply as part of the public consultation exercise and comprehensive responses to the questionnaire. One major concern is the potential Winchester Park & Ride (North), which is proposed near Three Maids Hill on pristine relict grassland. Winchester City Council seems to be keen on this proposal, but the Parish Council is likely to object on environmental grounds. So far, we have had only one additional short meeting with the DIO. A more detailed meeting arranged for April was cancelled due to DIO concerns about discussions during the current political 'purdah' period.
  - The Parish Council understands the presentation of more detailed plans, and the Public Consultation Phase 2 will now take place during the early summer. The submission of any Planning Application has now slipped, and we have no date yet.
- **Fourthly, Winchester District Local Plan 2039 (Strategic Priorities and Issues) (April 2021).** Winchester City Council is assembling a new District Local Plan 2038. A paper on the strategic priorities and issues was subject to public consultation, which ended on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The Paper outlined strategies for District housing numbers based on current Government targets. However, the main thrust of the Paper was to cover environmentalist approaches to Carbon reduction and sustainability. The Parish Council provided a detailed reply as part of the public consultation exercise and comprehensive responses to the associated questionnaire.

All recent Parish Council responses to the major planning applications and public consultations are available on the LHPC Website.

### Highways and Traffic

The Parish Council is concerned about traffic safety issues in certain areas. These issues are potentially expensive and technically challenging to fix. We are aware of traffic safety issues at the sharp turn in Bradley Road, Harestock, near the Playground. There are three major road safety risk areas identified in the revised but unpublished Littleton Village Design Statement (2021). Road traffic risks have increased during the Pandemic. Many residents now walk along Main Road to Stockbridge Road and from the Running Horse Pub to the older part of Littleton Village.

The DIO has indicated that it is unlikely to propose a general traffic exit from the Flowerdown development onto Kennel Lane. However, there may be increased traffic through Littleton Village moving towards a Park & Ride (North).

As you may be aware, Littleton and Harestock Parish Council has withdrawn from the local Parish Councils Speed Indicator Device Sharing Scheme. Hampshire County Council has licenced us to operate our own speed indicator devices at eight sites in Harestock (Bradley Road and Priors Dene Road), along the Harestock Road and in Main Road, Littleton. These speed indicator devices have been placed in trouble spots for speeding. One advantage of these new devices is they collect traffic movement and speed data which can be downloaded to provide helpful pattern information. For example, it appears speeding is less prevalent along the Harestock Road than we thought. It will take a few months after the Pandemic lockdown ends to collect enough routine information to understand traffic speeding behaviour in the Parish.

You may also have noticed long-overdue repairs by Hampshire County Council to Littleton's pavements.

I thank Cllr John Biddlecombe for his work to procure and implement these speed indicator devices and engage with our County Councillor Jan Warwick about Hampshire County Council pavement repairs.

## **Flooding**

Littleton can suffer from Groundwater flooding eastwards along an axis from South Drive to Pitter Close. We are fortunate to have an Environment Agency Borehole at the corner of Main Road/Stockbridge Road (the Harestock Corner Borehole), which provides the Parish Council with an early warning of flooding. In early 2020 there was an alarming rise in the groundwater level. This rise triggered the Parish Council Emergency Plan arrangements. We must thank our member of Parliament (Steve Brine) for arranging for 200 sandbags to be issued by Winchester City Council in February 2020. Fortunately, the groundwater level subsided, but it did not return to average levels until October 2020. This year there has been a relatively low risk of groundwater flooding.

In the Autumn of 2020, following a period of heavy rain, there was a flash flood at the Bradley Road and Priors Dean Road junction. A large soakaway has now been installed in that area. However, Littleton and Harestock sit in a rolling chalk landscape, and with predicted environmental changes, we are all at risk of future unexpected flooding events.

I mention this because we had been included in Hampshire County Council studies for Flood Alleviation from Littleton to the River Itchen. Despite these studies, Hampshire Council has no current plans to include Littleton and Harestock in any flood alleviation scheme. It appears Littleton flood relief is too difficult to engineer, particularly when water management arrangements for the Sir John Moore Barracks (Flowerdown) redevelopment downstream are not yet known.

## **Parish Communication**

The Parish Council has used a website for several years as its primary vehicle for communication with residents regarding community and council matters. Following concern about the low numbers of residents accessing the Website, we created a new communications strategy. Since March 2020, we have introduced:

- Website accessibility changes and converted over 100 documents to meet legislative requirements.
- A paper-based and hand-delivered Parish Council Newsletter, but we will only deliver this 2-3 times per year.
- A specific Parish Council Internet domain name, which has enabled us to refine our presence on the Internet.
- A quality and topical monthly online eNewsletter.
- A free online subscription service, so the eNewsletter is now sent to nearly 250 Parish Council subscribers each month. We will attempt to increase the number of subscribers through an advert in the next hand-delivered paper newsletter.
- A way for residents to publish historical material on the Community Side of the Parish Council Website.

While we occasionally monitor social media for local comment, the Parish Council does not have the capacity at this time to use social media for routine communication.

I thank Cllr George Sallis for his development work and for putting together the eNewsletters. I also thank Tamsin Sallis (Our Webmaster) for the professional development, administration, and maintenance of the Parish Council Website.

## **The Parish Environment**

- **The Mini-Library.** The Parish Council maintains a community mini-library in the old Telephone Box in Littleton. This small book exchange has proven to be a massive hit with residents. Unfortunately, we were required to close the mini-library during the first pandemic lockdown, but it has been open again since last summer. Recently the Telephone Box has been refurbished, and its 'crowns' picked out with gold paint. We thank our contractor for the excellent work.
- **Night Bus.** The Night Bus has continued to run from the City to Harestock. The Parish Council has donated £500 to help maintain the service in 2020-21.

## **Climate Change**

In early 2020, a small working group was formed to coordinate the Parish Council activities associated with climate change in the context of Winchester City Council (the Greening Campaign) and broader Hampshire County Council initiatives. Although constrained during the Pandemic, I must thank Cllr David Tozer for maintaining this challenging work. Activities at Flowerdown Barrows and the Conservation Field have been considered. The Parish Council has joined the Tree Charter and is starting to consider a Tree Planting Plan. Registering and managing our open spaces has been a concern coupled with ideas about developing 'wilding' and 'biodiversity'. We also must not underestimate the effort and technical change required in the legacy communities of Littleton and Harestock to contribute to the major priorities and targets of Winchester City Council. The Parish Council will continue to provide a local contribution to climate change initiatives where we can.

### **Parish Council Precept**

The Parish Council precept for **2021/22** was set in January and sees the Parish Tax for a Littleton & Harestock Band D house set at **£74.69** for the year, which equates to **£1.44** per week. This is an increase of **3.5%**, which the Parish Council considers is reasonable over the longer term given that the rise in 2019/20 was 1.8%, and there was no increase in 2020/21.

The Parish Council is pleased that the Precept level in the Parish remains as one of the lowest in the Winchester District and is approximately 22% lower than the average precept, which is **£96.25**.

### **Miscellaneous**

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank a number of people for their hard work and support during the past two years:

- The volunteer who has looked after the Littleton Conservation Area for many years. He has now retired from this voluntary role.
- The Parish Council cleaner who looks after the Pavilion and Parish Council Office, who has had to maintain cleaning standards in the Pavilion to meet Pandemic sanitation requirements.
- The Regimental Sergeant Major at Sir John Moore Barracks, for her liaison with the Parish Council.
- Those Parish Councillors who have stood down from the Council since 2019.

Hillary Saunders,

Lesley Martin,

Peter Highfield.

- Our voluntary Parish councillors for attending council meetings and for their work in their areas of responsibility.
- Our County and District councillors who support the Parish by attending our meetings and helping us with actions.
- Those parishioners who attend meetings to make representations.

Finally, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, Mrs Lisa Fielding, for her outstanding and meticulous work during the last two years. She has kept our affairs, statutory responsibilities and working practices in good order.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank her for her support and professional guidance during the Pandemic period, where she often worked well beyond her contracted hours.

We now look forward to the end of Pandemic restrictions and to return to regular public Parish Council business with the first face to face meeting on 22nd June 2021 in the Millennium Hall.

Stephen Burgess

Chairman

Littleton & Harestock Parish Council

29<sup>th</sup> April 2021