

## **Burley Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report for Remote Annual Assembly on 3rd May 2021**

### Introduction

Since the last Annual Assembly on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019, we have all been coping with the COVID pandemic. Last year in 2020 we had to cancel our regular Assembly and this year we are holding a virtual meeting by remote video (Zoom). This will be in the form of a remote "Question and Answer" session with this Annual Report as the basis. This report will have been posted on our notice boards and on our Council web site.

### Objectives

The report will describe the Parish Council's activities since 2019 with reference to our objectives; these are to continue to improve the village environment and amenities, to carry out our statutory duties as regards Planning and safeguarding the use of public money by pursuing prudent expenditure policies.

### Report

In order to be concise, the report will be somewhat shorter than normal but items can be expanded at the remote Annual Meeting.

Actions to improve the village environment have included: regular work by the Lengthsman in ditch clearance, litter picking and general maintenance, continuing our policy of replacing benches with good oak ones, maintaining the guarded new young trees in Pound Lane which are flourishing, getting prompt action from Hampshire Highways to maintain our paths and roads, fill potholes and cut back intruding vegetation, and monitoring and influencing large cycle events. The Parish Council continues to work with Hampshire County Council in respect to the new road bridge to be installed at Holmsley, and the new 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan'. The Council is working with SSE in respect to improvements to the Burley landscape by putting overhead electrical cables underground.

The village faces a challenge to preserve long term its beautiful forest setting with its lovely old trees. Various Authorities, notably Natural England and Forest England insist that only natural regeneration can take place, but we all know that with Forest animals freely roaming any tree replanting will need guards. We succeeded in Pound Lane but for example, regeneration of Beechwood Lane will be a challenge which the Council is determined to take up!

We have not succeeded in finding a suitable place for a Council-sponsored play area but are pleased that Shappen Stores will be providing a play area for our young people as part of their extension plans. We are helping to advise the Stores on suitable equipment.

Last year our Emergency Plan came into its own with over 40 volunteers working in collaboration with Burley Good Neighbours to make medical and grocery deliveries for those shielding during the pandemic. We are grateful to all those volunteers for their commitment in this service to our community. The Parish Council also made significant

grants to Burley Charities who also did sterling service. The Council in conjunction with local residents have established a 'Burley Watch' scheme and have been liaising with local Police on safety and security issues.

'The Community Fibre Partnership scheme' headed by the Parish Council is making good progress, working with Openreach the objective is to get fibre to individual properties (FTTP). There are sixteen area co-ordinators across the village helping householders with advice and information and offering assistance to make their "pledges" for the government (DCMS) grants. There should be no extra cost to householders, but a commitment is required to agree a 12-month contract with a supplier of their choice for a speed (Mbps) at least double that currently being supplied to a customer.

The Council continues to badger the New Forest Park Authority to get 2 substantial affordable homes built on a piece of land adjacent to the village car park. This project has taken some time but the Council is reliant on others to deliver. Equally the possibility of an Heritage Centre at this location is not clear.

The Parish Council is pleased that Hampshire County Council has agreed in principle to our plan to move Little Deers Day Nursery to the village Primary School site. The present LDDN hut (owned by the Parish Council) is now past repairing on a medium to long term basis. A sum of up to £500,000 has been allocated by HCC for this potential move. The future use of the LDDN site which also includes the former Red Cross hut, that currently houses the Burley archives, will be resolved in due course.

Our planning work for the village, in support of the Park Authority, continues to be a busy activity particularly with "Working from Home" producing applications for new building or extensions. It is noticeable that owners of holiday homes or new purchases by relocating individuals who have been living nearer to London are proposing quite significant alterations to their acquisitions.

Finally, the Parish Council has managed to finance its activities within the precept (our small share of the Council tax) without, we believe, any detriment to our desired expenditure. Indeed we have not increased the village precept since 2016.

From June we will have to resume "face to face" Council meetings, on instruction from Central Government. These will be held according to the Covid regulations at the time.

Philip Daubeney  
Chairman Burley Parish Council