

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Held virtually via Zoom on Monday 26th April 2021

PRESENT:

Councillors: Mike Brown (Chair), Ian Venables, Keith Venables, Rex Jones, Tracey Willetts and Clerk Nerine Chalmers and 1 member of the public

- 1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Frances Christensen, Jane Oram (Essendon Society) and Nicki Whitelaw (Tennis Club)
- 2 The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2019 were approved
- 2 Annual Reports were presented as follows:

a. Chairman's report (Mike Brown)

The Annual Parish Meeting is our regular opportunity to hear from the Borough Councillors and many of the local institutions, community groups and businesses that are at the heart of this wonderful village. I say regular but, of course, due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, there was no APM in 2020 and this one is having to be held virtually.

The various lockdowns have had a severe impact on many aspects of village life with many events, such as our regular August Bank Holiday Village Day and the special VE75 celebrations planned for May 2020 having to be called off. Similarly, I know the network of regular clubs and meetings across village life have been significantly disrupted and it may take some time after the restrictions are finally lifted (we hope in June) before village life can get back to normal.

The Parish Council is conscious that for some in isolation, this has been a very difficult year. We supported the village food bank to address the initial problems being faced by some and applaud the Village Volunteers network that has done so much to help and support local residents in need. Now, loneliness and mental health issues are becoming increasingly important, particularly with the absence of the regular networks of our clubs and societies. While on-line bridge appears to have taken off, we all miss the ordinary social contacts and shared interests. The Parish Council is open to suggestions from residents and societies as to how we can speedily restore the rich fabric of social life in Essendon and help ease any loneliness or isolation some may be suffering.

The Parish Council has met digitally over the last year; our last face-to-face meeting was on the 16 March 2020. During this time, and with reduced social and business contacts within the village, our agenda has mostly been focussed on those matters we can progress on-line. Various playground repairs and notices have been done along with a frustratingly high number of repairs to the street scene, together with the day-to-day management and maintenance of village assets – for example the playing field. The Village Hall Management Committee has been busy, despite the Hall being closed for much of the year, with its refurbishment and repair. We are indebted to the committee members for their excellent efforts.

Traffic was very quiet during the first lockdown but has grown again to be a nuisance. We have ordered a second Speed Indicator Device so both directions of traffic can be monitored and we have inputted into various parking issues proposed by WHBC and HCC.

The Parish Council successfully applied to WHBC to renew the listing of the Rose and Crown PH as an Asset of Community Value in October 2020 (the first listing lapsing after 5 years). As you may know the owners appealed against this and, regrettably, officers of WHBC in February overturned the decision to list. The Parish Council has formally complained to WHBC about this reversal and the secret way it was taken and are presently waiting for a response to our second (and final) stage complaints.

May I thank my fellow councillors for their Trojan efforts over the last year to support the Parish Council and the village during a very serious and trying time.

Finally, I'm sure all of my colleagues would want to take this opportunity to thank our clerk Nerine Chalmers without whose stoic and meticulous work we would have found the above challenges almost impossible.

I close with a cautious note of optimism. We are a small village but have a huge heart. As we emerge from what we all hope is the last lockdown and life begins to finally return to normal, let us give thanks for all our efforts to support one another and to stick together as a community such that when we look back on this dreadful year we can take some pride in who we are and what we have done together.

Cllr Mike Brown

- b. Accounts for the year ended 31/3/2021 are with the internal auditors and will be published in due course.

Balances as of 31 March 2021 are as follows:

Business Premium Account (Reserve account)	£2,176.55
Hall Replacement Fund	£25,100.00
Community Account	£15,277.04

c. St Mary's Church (Reverend Theresa Musiwacho)

Reverend Theresa thanked the Essendon Community for its support during the pandemic. Throughout the lockdowns, the church continued to hold services remotely – a zoom service every Sunday, and a phone service every Wednesday. The church was very involved in the community, with everyone looking after each other. Many prayers were offered.

During December, the church at Brickendon was opened but the other churches remained closed. During this time, it was a joy to be able to offer two platforms, with one of the churches open for services, while continuing with remote services. More people were reached through the zoom services than had been attending church previously.

Reverend Theresa continued her ministry to Essendon School by offering video and audio communal worship services.

As restrictions have been lifted the churches are reopening, with the former pattern of services being resumed, and people being encouraged back to church. Details are available on the website. Reverend Theresa thanked the people of Essendon, and the church wardens, Anne Mitcheson and Paul Wombwell.

d. Village Hall Committee (Chris Papalexandrakos)

Pre-Covid the use of the Hall was the healthiest it has been in recent times and we are pleased that it is used by local residents and groups within the village, as well as external hirers too. In March 2020 the Hall was hired out for 48 different events. Up to 23rd it had been in use every day. As a result of the Covid pandemic we closed the Hall from 23rd March – 16th September.

During this period, we have undertaken some useful and necessary improvements to the hall including the following: -

- In the main Hall the wooden floor has been restored and the Hall chairs steam cleaned.
- The old tiling flooring from the kitchen and Committee room and the green carpet tiles from the lobby has been removed. A damp proof membrane was applied and the floor levelled before a new Kardean floor was laid in the lobby, through to the kitchen and Committee room.
- The old kitchen was dismantled and disposed and a new fitted kitchen installed. Worktop space has been maximised. There is a new large Bosch fridge freezer. The kitchen has been finished off with wall tiles and neutral light grey paint.
- The basin from the Committee Room has been removed and a fresh lick of paint applied
- The telephone line has been reconnected and Broadband/Wi-Fi is now available throughout the Hall, as well as a music/sound system.

We re-opened the main Hall subject to strict Covid rules compliance for our regular hirers on 16th September. Unfortunately, continued spread of Covid led to the introduction of “Tier” regulations which has meant we have had to close our doors since 5th November 2020.

At our AGM in November, Chris Papalexandrakos was elected our new Chair. Paul Plail was elected Secretary and Rupert Priestnall Treasurer. They continue to be supported by Alexa Papalexandrakou, Keith Venables, Rex Jones, Paul Wombwell and new member Cas Blackman.

Subject to regulations, we plan to re-open the Hall on 17th May for our regular hirers and then for all hirers on 21st June. We hope new connections can be made for the village and continue to support the local community.

Some future planned improvements are noted below: -

- Replacement of the flat part of the roof
- Installation of a Smart NEST heating control system
- Renewal of the toilet flooring
- Replacement of the doors

Thanks to all Committee members and all those who have given their time and efforts in support of our Hall. A special mention to Mick Davenport who after many, many years of voluntary support has stepped back from the Committee.

3 AOB

No matters raised.

4 There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7:40 pm.