

# ESSENDON PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

### 26 APRIL 2021

Welcome everybody to this Annual Parish Meeting. For those who don't know me, I am Mike Brown and Chairman of the Parish Council. This 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 were unfortunately called off. Similarly, I know the network of regular clubs and meetings across village life have been significantly disrupted over the last 12 months 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 of which you will hear more later. 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