

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 20th January 2021, commencing at 7.30pm
remotely via Zoom video conferencing**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllr Janet Foster (Chairman) Cllrs Tim Brake, John Davis, John Hammond, Bryan Timms, Mike Sanders, Simon Thomas and Anne Tomlinson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Goudie, Executive Officer (EO) Jo Tsigarides, AEO] District Councillor Ingrid Thomas District Councillor Diana Tennyson 4 members of the public
APOLOGIES:	Cllr Shaun McCarthy
ABSENT:	Cllr Neil Bonter

21.01 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed the Councillors, Officers and members of the public to the meeting, confirming current Government regulations allowing remote meetings.

21.02 OPEN SESSION - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman asked if there were any items to be raised under the open session.

Four members off the public attended at the invitation of the Parish Council to present their proposal for a Youth provision in Four Marks following discussion at the previous meeting. A brief overview was given, confirming that with assistance from Community First, the TBA ('Think, Believe, Achieve') group had now been granted charity status (CIC) enabling them to apply for suitable grants and support. In answer to questions posed, it was confirmed that the facility would be attended by youths not only from Four Marks but Alton and surrounding villages, however once established youths residing near to the Recreation Ground had also indicated their interest in attending. A breakdown of the proposed age groups and related activities was given, as previously requested. There was also the possibility of annual event could be organised. Councillors noted that their previous event had been a great success. They had not yet been unable to source a suitable venue for a youth club and asked if the Benians Pavilion could be used. Cllr Sanders suggested they make contact with Rotary, as there was a natural link for assistance there as well. Councillors were supportive of the proposal but would discuss it in more detail during the meeting. The members of TBA group were thanked for attending.

Cllr Brake asked the Council to consider changing the meeting time from 7.30pm to 7.00pm now that meetings were held remotely, and Councillors were more easily available earlier in the evening. With Councillors attending in agreement, the Chairman advised that meetings for the next Council year are to be discussed at next week's F&GP meeting and would incorporate this request into the discussions.

Two Councillors raised footpath/access concerns and the EO asked, in the interests of expediency, if these could be discussed under the Agenda item for Footpaths. The Chairman also reminded Councillors that footpath issues can easily be reported on the HCC website.

There were no further issues to raise, the Chairman closed the open session and opened the formal meeting at 8.00pm. Standing Orders were applied.

21.03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Shaun McCarthy.

An apology for absence had also been received from District Councillor May.

21.04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman reminded all Councillors of their obligation to declare any declarations of either pecuniary or personal interest in any Agenda items. There were no declarations of interest.

21.05 COUNCIL MINUTES

Following notification from Cllr Thomas with reference to Minute 20.171, an amendment had been made accordingly and the typo corrected. This was noted by the Council and subsequently RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the remote Full Council Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 16th December 2020 following proposal by Cllr Sanders and seconded by Cllr Davis and agreed by all Councillors as a true reflection of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman at the next available opportunity.

21.06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reminded Councillors to submit the appraisal forms for the EO and AEO by 24th January, as requested.

On behalf of District Cllr Thomas, but with her support, the Chairman had submitted a detailed and ongoing report with reference to the Five Lanes End flooding issue and sent to HCC. HCC would be sent an update and photographs every time the area floods, as requested, to be able to assess the situation and prepare proposals for resolution of this issue.

HCC had also sent a request for Parish Council support for work to improve the sightline on exiting Brislands Lane onto Lymington Bottom which had long been a difficult issue. In conjunction with the landowner, HCC are proposing to remove the trees and hedgerow and install a fence, set further back, in its place. Although the majority of Councillors agreed that this was necessary in the interests of safety, there was a different argument that, with a clearer sight of oncoming traffic, the current care taken to exit from Brislands Lane may not be as diligent. It was also noted that at the HCC meeting the EHDC representative commented that they would not be supportive of the removal of the hedgerow, which was received with surprise by Councillors due to the amount of hedgerow removal that had already taken place along Lymington Bottom to facilitate development. A suggestion had been made that the fence would be of post and rail style with a hedge planted behind to stop encroachment towards the road in the future. The overall majority agreed to support the initiative however, would like to see the proposals and layout prior to the project going ahead.

The Chairman concluded with the news that the Community Cupboard was operating now in a Covid secure environment by bagging the provisions for either collection or delivery, in accordance with current guidance, and some 30 families were now benefitting from this initiative.

21.07 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

District Councillor Thomas had submitted a monthly report which had been circulated and attached to the Minutes as Appendix 1.

In attendance, District Cllr Thomas advised that there were no further updates, but added, in response to the Chairman's report that, she believed that the recent liaison meeting with HCC had been very positive and thanked Cllr Foster for compiling the flooding issue report.

There were no additional questions.

21.08 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

21.08.1 Report update and late correspondence

The EO's report had been circulated, together the current correspondence list, with the Council paperwork, the report is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 2.

The EO advised that from now on any Councillor specific emails, such as bulletins from HCC, EHDC and HALC would be circulated as a matter of course, now the amount had reduced, as there was detailed, and informative information, contained within the bulletins.

There were no queries on the report as circulated, however the Chairman added that she hoped that all Councillors read the monthly reports, which contain useful information, but also reiterated the points made within this month's report specifically about using Council emails and not contacting EHDC Planning Officers directly.

In addition to the circulated correspondence, the EO advised the meeting of late correspondence, as follows:

- Cynthia Haveron, Democratic Services Officer at EHDC had now retired and had sent an email of thanks to the Council, to which the EO had responded on the Council's behalf thanking her for her assistance over the years and wishing her an enjoyable retirement. It was suggested that, following Medstead PC's lead, contacting her replacement to pursue Councillor training, and raise concerns that the EHDC Code of Conduct had been updated without notification to local parishes.
- The schedule for the 2021/2022 meetings, usually circulated at this time, would be discussed at the following weeks F&GP meeting, for circulation at the February meeting.
- Medstead Parish Council are changing their email addresses and have a new website, from the same provider as Four Marks Parish Council's.
- An email had been received with reference to HCC's new local transport plan and engagement survey, deadline for submissions, 28th February. The Chairman suggested circulating the email to all Councillors for response.

21.08.2 To approve annual grant to HomeStart

The grant application and associated documents had been circulated with the meeting paperwork. The EO had recommended that the Council consider paying the requested amount of £500, the previous year the grant had been £250, following an unprecedented year for all support organisations, confirming that there was still £1500 remaining in the budget. After a brief discussion, Cllr Thomas asked for an amendment to the recommendation and proposed increasing the grant to £750, taking into consideration the current difficulties local families are experiencing, Cllr Timms seconded the amended proposal, which was unanimously agreed by all Councillors and therefore RESOLVED.

21.09 OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Tomlinson, Chair of the Open Spaces Committee, gave a brief report of the meeting held on 6th January 2021, following the circulation of the Minutes.

The fencing around the cricket square, following a battering during the inclement weather, the EO had been tasked to seek advice as to whether it was necessary. A response had been received in the affirmative, and consequently had been secured. Further work would be carried out in the Spring to reduce the moss.

The Four Marks footpath map was now nearing completion and ready to go to print, and in the last couple of hours the artwork for the VE Commemorative plaque had been approved.

Cllr Thomas raised an issue with reference to the access onto the field at Barn Lane from the Recreation Ground, and the current crop damage due to the walkers attempting to avoid the mud and moving further into the crop field. Although acknowledging that despite several attempts by the landowner to close off the gap,

they had all be removed/destroyed by residents insisting they have a right of access. However, acknowledging that this is a serious issue, it was agreed to add it to the Agenda for the next Open Spaces meeting.

21.10 PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Thomas, as Chair of the Committee, gave a brief report following the meeting held on Wednesday 6th January 2021, as per the Minutes, as circulated.

Cllr Thomas added that, since the circulation of the Minutes, three applications had been refused, including a permission in principle application for a dwelling to the rear of Melrose in Alton Lane, and two for the same site at 102 Telegraph Lane. Notification had also been received on the dismissal of Appeal for a three storey block of flats at 68 Lymington Bottom Road, which the Council had objected to, wholly in support of Medstead Parish Council and policies contained with the Medstead and Four Marks Neighbourhood Plan.

There was a further development on the EHDC Local Plan, in that at a recent cabinet meeting, they had voted for the proposed Option 4, which was to progress the Local Plan review despite the current Government planning review. Although not known at this stage how long it would take to get the next stage, Regulation 19, and subsequent examination, it was crucial to continue with the review in a bid to prevent speculative development and thanked the District Councillors for their support.

21.11 FINANCIAL REPORTS

21.11.1 To receive and approve the payments, bank reconciliations and trial balance as at 31st December 2020

Following circulation, with proposal by Cllr Davis, seconded by Cllr Tomlinson and agreed by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED, to approve the payments (as detailed below), bank reconciliations and trial balance as at the third quarter ending 31st December 2020, as authorised at the meeting on 16th December 2020, with the following additions under delegated approval of quarterly waste collection charges from Idverde of £1029.60, monthly staff costs of £3267.79, the grant to Citizens Advice of £1,000 as approved and additional bank charges of £3.

List of Payments made between 01/12/2020 and 31/12/2020

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
06/12/2020	Talk Talk Business	DD	32.34		Monthly phone/b/band Nov
10/12/2020	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	64.93		Credit card payment
17/12/2020	SLCC	BACS	90.00		Training - JT
17/12/2020	SLCC	BACS	90.00		Training - SG
17/12/2020	Hampshire Woodlands Ltd	BACS	936.00		Tree maint. works
17/12/2020	Acorn Office Supplies	BACS	97.14		Stationery supplies
17/12/2020	John Watson	BACS	382.40		Consultancy fee - Facil proj.
17/12/2020	Eddie Hodkin	BACS	300.00		Open Spaces maint.
17/12/2020	Parish Online	BACS	211.20		Parish online subscription
17/12/2020	British Gas	DD	113.98		Monthly gas bill BP
17/12/2020	Petersfield Town Council	BACS	624.00		Footpath surfacing
17/12/2020	CPC UK Ltd	BACS	21.13		Office sundries
17/12/2020	Peter A. Housden & Sons	BACS	1,680.00		Peter A. Housden & Sons
20/12/2020	Biffa Waste Services	DD	194.06		Waste collection - Pavilion
31/12/2020	Unity Trust Bank	BANK	28.65		Quarterly bank charge
31/12/2020	Unity Trust Bank	BANK	3.00		Qtr Cheque charges
31/12/2020	Idverde Limited	BACS	1,029.60		Oct-Dec bin emptying
31/12/2020	Hampshire Woodlands Ltd	BACS	384.00		VE Day Commem. Tree
31/12/2020	LexisNexis	BACS	119.99		12th Ed Arnold Baker LCA
31/12/2020	Citizens Advice East Hampshire	BACS	1,000.00	Minute 20.169.2.1	Annual Grant
31/12/2020	Staff costs	BACS	3,267.79		December
		Total Payments	10,670.21		

21.11.2 To receive and authorise January 2021 payments

Subsequent to the circulation of supplementary papers, it was RESOLVED to authorise the January 2021 payments, as presented, following proposal by Cllr Davis, which was seconded by Cllr Tomlinson and approved by all Councillors.

List of Payments made between 01/01/2021 and 21/01/2021

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Authorized Ref</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
05/01/2021	Talk Talk Business	DD	34.33		Monthly phone/b/band
12/01/2021	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	35.31		Credit card payment
14/01/2021	Howard Carpenter	BACS	313.15		Allotment expenses
14/01/2021	John Watson	BACS	162.50		Consultancy fee - comm/proj
14/01/2021	Acorn Office Supplies	BACS	3.71		Stationery
14/01/2021	Brunel Engraving Company	BACS	177.60		Memorial plaque VE 75
14/01/2021	Southern Ground Care	BACS	330.00		Cricket square maint.
14/01/2021	Vision ICT	BACS	259.20		Annual email host fee
14/01/2021	Semrah Landscape Management	BACS	1,104.00		Open Spaces maint.
14/01/2021	Right Action	BACS	930.00		Fire proof storage safe
20/01/2021	British Gas	DD	223.22		Monthly gas a/c - pavilion
21/01/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	353.91		Pavilion Electric Oct-Dec
21/01/2021	Eddie Hodkin	BACS	315.00		Open Spaces maint.
21/01/2021	Veolia Environmental Services	BACS	627.62		Progrow - Allotments
		Total Payments	4,869.55		

21.12 COMMUNITY FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

In Cllr McCarthy's absence, Cllr Thomas updated Council on the progress to date.

- The project team are making good advances on the Project Initiation Document (PID), which is being carried out professionally and thoroughly to ensure it has a sound basis, and of course, financially viable, which it needs to be for such a big investment.
- A detailed business case is being put together for funding applications, including CIL applications and Government funding, with a deliverability plan for each phase, from pre-application to build.
- Following information received that, to enable applications from CIL infrastructure funding, the project needs to be in the EHDC Infrastructure and Delivery Plan. This had been picked up by District Councillor Thomas and Cllr McCarthy and the EO have been invited to attend a meeting next week with the Planning Policy team at EHDC.
- Designs together with cost estimates in rough order of magnitude will be prepared, initially for a pre-application meeting followed by submission of an outline planning application, moving to the more detailed stage and full planning and the tendering process with the hope to be ready to build by the beginning of 2022, with the hope that the building will be ready for a topping out ceremony in time for the Queens platinum jubilee in June 2022, then looking at completion end 2022, early 2023.
- The Parish Council will be consulted prior to any applications or financial decisions, in accordance with Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations, Full Council meetings have been factored into the timetable.
- The public will be consulted at various stages as appropriate.

Cllr Tomlinson asked when the Council will be able to see the document and initial designs, to which Cllr Thomas responded, hopefully at the February meeting. He did confirm that the PID is a complex document and still very much in a draft format, but once completed would be shared.

Cllr Timms was pleased to note that good progress had been made despite the current restrictions.

The Chairman thanked the team for all the time and work they had carried out to date.

21.13 YOUTH PROVISION IN FOUR MARKS

Following a presentation in the Open Session, Councillors discussed the proposals and points raised and all were in full agreement that this was an excellent opportunity as it has always been difficult to support youth groups due to lack of volunteers. It was agreed that the Benians Pavilion would be an ideal location, with access to all the outside recreational activities, and the EO agreed to approach the Benians Committee. Concern was expressed over the use of a licensed venue, however Cllr Thomas confirmed that this should not be an issue, stating that local rugby club bars were open with all ages in attendance.

With reference to offering funding from the ear marked reserve, the EO reminded Councillors that approval would need to be sought from the founding members of the original Four Marks Youth Club, as agreed, when the funds were given to the Parish Council. One Councillor raised concern over giving the funding until the Youth Club was up and running and proving successful, however it was suggested that only a small amount would be offered initially.

21.14 ALTON MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY

Following deferral of discussion from the Planning Committee due to the amount of material to be considered, Cllr Thomas advised that the closing date for the submission of comments on the additional documentation under Regulation 25 had been extended to 15th February, allowing extra time for perusal of the documents and liaison with affected parishes, Alton Town Council, EHDC and the local MP. It was suggested, and agreed, that this would now be discussed at the Planning Committee meeting on 3rd February, although Cllr Foster was keen that all Councillors would be able to have their say and invited those not on the Planning Committee to make any comments, however at this stage none wished to.

Cllr Thomas reminded Councillors that only comments on the documents submitted under Regulation 25 should be made and not go back over the previous issues raised, although Four Marks are only on the periphery, would be affected by the additional traffic and potential pollution.

The EO suggested that, if those Councillors not on the Planning Committee wished to comment having had time to read the appropriate submissions, they could attend the Planning Committee meeting, although not eligible to vote on that Committee, any appropriate comments they wish to make could be included.

Cllr Hammond asked how to identify the new documents available for comment, Cllr Thomas advised that they are under the EIA tab with the date 14/12/20 in brackets.

21.15 SPEEDING WITHIN THE VILLAGE

Following the issue raised at the last meeting, Cllr Brake in conjunction with the Speedwatch co-ordinator had confirmed that due to the current restrictions, the Speedwatch team were 'stood down'. However, an area had been identified in Blackberry Lane where one of the SLR signs could be attached to an existing 30mph post, although it would require re-sighting away from the fence. As any work to enable the accommodation of the repeater sign is likely to encounter a cost, this would need approval from the Parish Council before permission is sought from HCC, who would need to carry out a sight audit.

Although there was some concern raised firstly over priorities of speed reducing initiatives, and why other areas were not being considered, the EO referred to the previous Minutes, and that complaints had been received by residents with reference to the speeding in Blackberry Lane specifically, and other speed deterrents, such as humps, had been discounted at the previous meeting. The other issue under discussion is the pedestrian safety in Brislands Lane which was already being actioned separately.

The Council were in agreement to seek permission from HCC to carry out a sight audit for a suitable location in Blackberry Lane and it was suggested that, as there is currently a hold on applying for developers' contributions that maybe County Councillor Mark Kemp Gee would have some grant money available, and the EO agreed to contact him.

21.16 EXTERNAL COMMITTEE AND AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

21.16.1 Allotments. Nothing of note to report. Cllr Davis was asked to pass on the Council's thanks to the Allotment holders for the provision of food to the Community Cupboard.

21.16.2 Benians Pavilion. There are no plans to open the Pavilion until the Summer but that an AGM would be organised soon. An amended contract from April 2021 needs to be prepared as the Sport England restriction is no longer applicable, and appropriate changes would need to be made.

21.16.3 Footpaths. Two issues had been raised in the open session, one with reference to FP4 from Telegraph Lane and the increasingly muddy surface and a request made as to whether the Parish Council could lay some scalplings. Cllr Foster advised that the Council does not have that kind of material, although referring to the hard surface laid on FP2, although carried out for a different reason, had not effectively resolved that situation. It was suggested that the Ramblers were contacted to see if they could offer any advice or alternatively report it on the HCC portal.

The other issue raised was with reference to people cutting the corner at the top of Blackberry Lane by the power station and churning up the grass rather than walk on the pavement, and whether this area could have some hard standing laid. However, Councillors did not seem hopeful that HCC would be receptive to this proposal, and therefore it was suggested that Cllr Kemp Gee was approached for assistance.

Cllr Timms asked the AEO whether there had been any response with reference to the fence issue along FP6, which was confirmed as no. Cllr Timms agreed to pass the AEO a contact number.

The EO also advised the Council that the laurel obstruction on FP2 from Fairfield Green to Blackberry Lane had not been attended to as previously advised and the AEO was currently chasing Rights of Way for action.

21.16.4 Oak Green. Nothing of note to report.

21.16.5 Village Hall. Nothing of note to report.

21.17 ONGOING PROJECTS

21.17.1 Festival Committee projects.

Cllr Hammond advised that, due to furloughed staff, there had been no further progress.

21.17.2 Village Footpath map and signage

The EO presented the final version of the Four Marks Footpath Map which was now about to be sent to the printers. Approval was still awaited from the Watercress Line to erect the sign on the station wall however Hampshire Print had given approval, responding favourably on its design, but had picked up three small issues that needed adjustment, although the amended map had not been sent in time for this meeting. The EO also confirmed that HCC had been asked for permission to install the lectern style on the green space opposite the School, and in case the Watercress Line refused permission, the small area of open space on Station Approach outside the station.

However, when presented, concern was raised that the map only showed Four Marks footpaths, and none the other side of the railway line in Medstead, although the comment was made that the initial brief was just to show the footpaths in Four Marks, Councillors now decided that it would be prudent to change the map to show the footpaths the Medstead side of the station. In support, a comment was made that footpaths were shown

into the parish of Ropley and there should be a need for consistency, although noted these footpaths were a natural continuation of footpaths that started in Four Marks and crossed the boundary, the footpaths on the other side of the station did not link to any within Four Marks.

As the Council had agreed to make additional changes to the design, the EO advised that the project would have to be put on hold until the new changes made, and subsequently reissued for approvals as before.

21.17.3 Village Gateway signs.

The EO confirmed that there was no further update on this project to date, although had been advised that someone would be in contact early in the New Year.

21.18 NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 17th February 2021.

20.19 The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.50pm

APPENDIX 1

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT – DECEMBER

District Councillor report 12th January 2021

I hope that the beginning of the new year has been kind to you all and that things improve as we go through the year. I know many of our residents have now had the covid vaccination and hopefully before too long this will become the majority so that we can begin to return to a more normal way of life again.

East Hampshire council officers have been actively involved in many covid related activities, they are doing the data input for the vaccination centres, making contact and offering help to vulnerable people whilst managing to keep up the normal council functions. The covid marshalls that are to be found in our town centres have been redeployed from other jobs. Their numbers fluctuate depending on need and they work in pairs. They are focused on the town centres and are checking in with businesses, answering questions and offering advice when needed. They are being interactive with residents too but do not have any enforcement powers. If there is a situation where crowd dispersal for example is needed, they would need to call the police, they also pass on information to the police.

Please for the sake of our whole community abide by the current rules and act responsibly so that infection rates can be brought under control.

I together with Janet Foster and others attended a highways meeting where the major subject of discussion was the junction at 5 lanes and the flooding problems there together with school children crossing. We have all been aware for several years of the dire problems with flooding whenever there is heavy rain. Many thanks to the parents who have been trying to clear the drains and to our wonderful lollipop lady Anna. We are gathering information to try to get a permanent solution that works to stop the problem, if you have photographs to share please send them to myself or the parish office. We would ask anyone who has a drain or ditch in the vicinity to please keep it clear we need to stop as much water as possible from arriving at the crossroads. Take great care where you park too at school drop off and collection times so that you do not cause problems to others or damage the edges of ditches. There will be traffic officers issuing parking fines on a regular basis.

The parking problems at Medstead school were also discussed and further investigations into any possibility of creating a path along Roedowns road will be retried. The parking at both schools is such a major problem that any ideas you may have would be most welcome.

Over the new year period we were very disappointed by the vast number of trees that were destroyed. Trees absorb so much water and help to stop flooding taking decades to get to be mature, chopping them down takes such a short time and alters the environment for us all. Some trees were damaged in storms and needed to be made safe, but let's think about making them safe not killing them completely. I know Diana has been very active and will always be happy to offer advice.

The food cupboard has been a great success and I would like to thank Jonathan for being involved in setting it up, a very good use of his councillor grant money. Many people have benefitted and it's open to all as a way of preventing food from being wasted. Open on Thursday afternoon at 3.30 for about an hour. If you'd like a box contact the Four Marks community cupboard Facebook page and a names box will be put up for you to collect. When you arrive at cogs just say your name and the box will be put in front of you and the helper will step back. All free and open to all from our three villages.

Take care and look after yourselves families and neighbours

Ingrid Thomas

ingrid.thomas@easthants.gov.uk

Diana Tennyson

Jonathan May

APPENDIX 2

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT FOR THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING ON 20th JANUARY 2021

COVID 19 Update

As we started back after the Christmas break, the country went back into lockdown, no sooner had the office re-opened, the decision was taken to, once again, close the office for the safety of the staff. Jo and I are now back working full time at home. Although we are both visiting the office from time to time to check the mail and ensure all is as it should be. The sports areas are, yet again, closed, but the children's play area remains open. Both the outdoor gym and skate ramps were taped off with signage, and photographed, however within one day someone had removed the tape to use the exercise equipment.

The website is continually being updated and information posted on social media as appropriate.

UPDATE

There is nothing further to report on any of the issues raised at last month's meeting.

GENERAL NEWS

We have now taken delivery of a 'fire proof' storage cabinet, which is to house the historic title deeds and burial records, all of which would be irreplaceable in case of a fire. This is something we had been considering for some time, but as the office has been so infrequently manned over this last year, it became a priority.

Thank you to District Councillor Thomas for a grant for a new bench at the A31/Telegraph Lane area of open space, which has just been received. The bench will be purchased and installed together with the new noticeboard with enclosed footpath map and a new litter bin, as this area has a high footfall with often people sat on the bench watching the world go by. Some wildflowers have also been planted here, so with everything crossed in the Spring this area will not only be an information stop but a nicer place to sit.

The footpath map is now on its final draft and awaiting approval from the Watercress Line for inclusion on a board at the station, we are also approaching HCC for approval to install a lectern style board by the School. Thank you to Jo for working so hard on all the relevant paperwork and grant applications, which are still ongoing.

The new parish on line mapping system is up and running and Jo has been busy adding various layers, which includes the footpath network, grit bins and parish assets. We are looking at adding more detailed information such as the Cemetery lay out and maybe even Allotment plots. Jo will be giving a demonstration at the Open spaces meeting next month. We now also have an interactive footpath map on the website.

The Open Spaces committee are working on various projects at the moment but in particular, planting new trees. There will be replacement trees being planted at Swelling Hill Pond, to compensate for the loss of the Ash trees. Thirty young saplings will be planted at Kingswood Copse, again to compensate for the loss of Ash, thanks to a grant from District Councillor Tennyson. The Copse is another very natural environment, in addition to the pond, where the replacement and additional planting will be allowed to grow unrestricted and enables the parish council to adhere to their policy of planting two trees for every one lost. There will also be a new line of trees planted on the cricket pitch boundary with the Barn Lane field. It is difficult to

find suitable locations for new planting as they need to be away from residential property and have no restrictions and be allowed to grow as nature intended. At the end of this planting season the Council will have planted in excess of 50 trees. As District Councillor Thomas alludes to in her report, trees play such a vital role both with natural drainage and combatting the detrimental effects of climate change and reminding us that unless a tree is causing damage to property or is a health and safety risk, pruning is always the better option. This Parish Council are keen to protect the environment for the future community and are pleased that our District Councillors are so supportive with this ongoing initiative, and with an active tree warden scheme in place, hopefully we can preserve as many of the village's existing trees as possible.

PROCEDURAL REMINDERS

Councillor emails.

This is just a reminder that Councillors, when communicating on Council business, must use their Council emails. A Freedom of Information request can ask for any Council business on personal emails as well, so it is far more judicious to use Council emails for Council business.

Planning applications.

The Parish Council is a formal consultee and as such, and unless previously agreed by Council, any comments or communication with reference to any Planning Applications that are due to be discussed, or have been discussed at, the Planning Committee or Council, must go through the Proper Officer (EO).

Any queries on any of the applications to be discussed should initially be made to the EO, and if the EO is unable to advise, then they will email the relevant case officer for a response. The EO is regularly in contact with case officers prior to meetings for clarification on various issues and apart from being procedurally correct it saves the case officer being inundated with the same queries.

Any Councillor can, of course, comment on any planning application as a private individual. Also, if you are directly affected by an application then you are perfectly within your rights to contact the case officer, but as a private individual, not as a Councillor, and declare an interest at the meeting if applicable.