

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 23rd June 2021, commencing at 7.00pm
At Four Marks Village Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllr Janet Foster (Chairman) Cllrs Neil Bonter, John Davis, John Hammond, Kellie Knight, Shaun McCarthy, Reg Pullen, Bryan Timms, Mike Sanders, and Anne Tomlinson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Goudie, Executive Officer (EO) Jo Tsigarides (AEO) District Councillor Ingrid Thomas 3 members of the public
APOLOGIES:	No apologies for absence

21.106 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the first face to face Council meeting in over a year and reminded all attendees of the current guidance on use of the facilities in the Village Hall.

21.107 APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

There were no apologies for absence.

21.108 OPEN SESSION - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman then asked if there were any items to be raised under the Open Session,

A member of the public in attendance raised a number of issues with reference to wider publicity of Council meetings to gain a better attendance at meetings. They also questioned the proposed rise in Precept to be discussed later in the meeting and why it was less than suggested in the survey and should the 'Question and Answer' document from the Annual Parish Meeting be changed to reflect those changes, and whether the confidential documents to Councillors would be published.

These items were all noted for response for further discussion in due course.

21.109 COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION

Following the resignation of Simon Thomas, and with no call for a by-election, the vacant post had been advertised. One candidate had applied for the vacancy, and as that candidate had already been favourably considered by the Council at the previous meeting, the Council had no further questions to ask. Therefore, following proposal by Cllr McCarthy, which was seconded by Cllr Hammond, with all in favour it was unanimously RESOLVED to co-opt Reg Pullen to the Council.

21.110 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Cllr Kellie Knight following her co-option last month, and Cllr Reg Pullen signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting. The new Councillors were welcomed to the Council.

21.111 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.

21.112 COUNCIL MINUTES

It was RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the remote Annual Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 5th May 2021 following proposal by Cllr Timms and seconded by Cllr Davis and agreed by all Councillors as a true reflection of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman. **Cllr Timms raised whether the unsuccessful candidate should have been named, to which the EO replied not ordinarily, although this was now irrelevant as the unsuccessful candidate had since been co-opted following a second vacancy.**

With reference to the requested letter to the local MP and the MCHLG which had been raised last month, the EO confirmed that this letter had been drafted, but had deemed it not prudent to send at this juncture. The EO confirmed, however, that the Government were being lobbied hard from many directions about the enforced restrictions in democracy within Parish and Town Councils, and it was hoped that this may have the desired effect in due course.

21.113 COMMITTEE MINUTES

21.113.1 PLANNING

The newly elected Chairman, Cllr Sanders, confirmed there was nothing further to report on the Minutes as circulated, there were no additional comments. Cllr Sanders was thanked for taking on the role of Chairman.

21.113.1.1 Terms of Reference

The Committee had approved their Terms of Reference for the next year as circulated. Following proposal by Cllr Sanders, seconded by Cllr McCarthy, and agreed by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference as proposed.

21.113.1.2 Planning Application Reference: 55422/001
Location: 1A Oak Green Parade, Winchester Road, Four Marks, GU34 5HQ
Proposal: New escape stairway and walkway

The Council had no objection in principle to this application, however permission would need to be sought directly from the Parish Council, with liability assurance in place, as the proposed escape stairway is to be constructed on land belonging to the Parish Council.

21.113.1.3 Planning Application Reference: 55275/013
Location: Land East of Kitwood Place, Lyeway Road, Ropley
Proposal: Deed of variation of S106 agreement dated 17th July 2020 relating to applications 55275/11 and 55275/012 (employment contribution)

No objection.

21.113.1.4 Planning Application Reference: 57749/007 Pre-decision amendment
Location: 5 Cotswold Close, Four Marks, GU34 5JZ
Proposal: Retrospective application for planning permission for an outbuilding (home office, playroom and gym) used incidental to the dwelling house.

The Parish Council note the tree survey and assurance that the root protection system has not been affected by the construction and defer to the Arboricultural Officer's comment on this aspect, and have no additional comments to add.

Cllr Hammond reminded Councillors of the discussion that took place at the meeting with reference to home offices and outbuildings as these were now likely to become more popular, and that a set of criteria should be established for these buildings, for example dimensions, design and materials, and it was agreed that the Council should work with the planning officers at EHDC in this regard.

21.113.1.5 Planning Application Reference: 27256/007 Pre-decision amendment
Location: Farringdon Common Semaphore, 87 Telegraph Lane, Four Marks, GU34 5AW

Proposal: Remove existing entry driveway gate, replaced by mature native hedging and create two new access entry points further down along Telegraph Lane (as amplified and amended by details received 27 May 2021 and amended plans received 7 June 2021)

The Parish Council noted the amended details and comment as follows.

The tree survey was noted and the Council are happy to defer to the Arboricultural Officer's judgement that the proposed new access and car parking area will not affect the root structure of the tree as previously stated.

With reference to the new proposal for a new single vehicular access, the Design and Access Statement should perhaps be updated to reflect the amended application. The Council have no objection to the design of the proposed gates, or height of, but are concerned over the proposed height of the brick pillars at 2.4m, and would like to see them reduced to 2m make them less dominant and more in keeping with the rural location.

21.113.2 OPEN SPACES

Cllr Tomlinson, the re-elected Chairman, gave a brief report on the meeting held on Wednesday 19th May 2021, as follows.

The Committee agreed to increase the delegated authority to the EO within their Terms of Reference, following recommendation by the Internal Auditor, from £500 to £1000, with the Committee having a delegated authority to spend up to £5,000.

Confirmation had been received of a formal re-route of Footpath 13 at Headmore Farm. Also on Footpaths, the Committee are aware of the rapid growth along the footpaths and strimming is scheduled to take place in the next couple of weeks.

21.113.2.1 Terms of Reference

The Committee had approved their Terms of Reference for the next year as circulated. Following proposal by Cllr Foster, seconded by Cllr Davis, and agreed by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference as proposed.

21.114 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman thanked Simon Thomas for his support and tireless work carried out in his role as Councillor and wished him all the best for the future.

21.115 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

This month's District Councillor report is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 1.

Cllr Thomas, in attendance, wished to update the Council on a couple of additional issues.

She confirmed that although she had now moved to Farringdon, she was still very much operational with her duties as District Councillor to the residents within the Four Marks, Medstead and Chawton Ward.

There is about to be a major update on the Local Plan Spatial Strategy and is an Agenda item for next week's Planning Policy meeting with hopefully a large step forward.

Cllr Foster confirmed that she and Cllr Sanders had been invited by EHDC to join a district meeting on planning policy in July.

Cllr Sanders asked Cllr Thomas what effect the threatened planning changes are likely to have on Neighbourhood Plans, Cllr Thomas responded, although could not answer that question, that no-one at EHDC was in favour of the proposed changes and MPs are being lobbied to get the proposals 'thrown out' as the changes would be very detrimental to planning in the future.

21.115 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

21.115.1 Late correspondence and any matters arising.

There were no comments on the list of circulated correspondence.

The EO wished to raise a late item of correspondence which was a request for the fair to return to the Recreation Ground. It was agreed that the Council should be supportive of the request, however the dates proposed were likely to cause some conflict with other events already taking place. There was also concern that their food outlets operated in direct competition with the local businesses and whether they could be asked not to provide take away foods, and ensure that the hours are restricted so as not to interfere with local residents.

The meeting was closed briefly to allow a member of the public to speak with reference to booked activities, the meeting then re-opened.

21.115.2 Annual Parish Meeting – Draft Minutes

It was RESOLVED to approve in principle the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 28th April 2021. The Minutes would be formally adopted at the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting but uploaded as draft onto the website.

21.115.3 Grant Request – Village Hall Committee

After a short discussion and three different proposals following a vote, it was RESOLVED to award £2,500 now, with any surplus budget at the end of the year to be given the Committee to make up their initial request, following proposal by Cllr Tomlinson, seconded by Cllr McCarthy and passed by 5 votes to 2.

Cllr Reg Pullen being a member of the Village Hall Committee took no part in the vote or discussion.

21.115.4 Applications to use the Recreation Ground

The EO advised of the amendments to the original applications, as circulated. The WI had cancelled their event until August following the delay in the lifting of restrictions, however there were no objections to the use of the ground for their event.

The Scouts have also had to curtail their events but sought Council approval for the cub group to have a small real fire to give the feel of a real camp, and permission for a larger event, with a barbecue, in the future.

There were no objections providing the event was fully risk assessed with a copy to be sent to the Parish Council.

21.116 FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING REPORTS

21.116.1 To receive and approve the April trial balance and bank reconciliations, deferred from May meeting.

It was RESOLVED to approve the April Trial Balance and Bank Reconciliations as circulated, deferred from the previous meeting, following proposal by Cllr Tomlinson, seconded by Cllr Sanders, and agreed by all Councillors.

21.116.2 To receive and authorise May 2021 payments as circulated.

The EO confirmed £6733.16 had been paid in addition to the payments authorised in May, including staff costs. Cllr Pullen questioned the credit card payment and that it was not detailed as to what is actually spent on the credit card. The EO confirmed that this was a separate cash book and only those signing the invoices see the breakdown but suggested that the Credit Card cash book could be circulated if required. The Finance & General Purposes Committee would review this.

With no further comment, it was RESOLVED TO approve the May 2021 payments, as circulated and as detailed below, following proposal by Cllr Tomlinson, seconded by Cllr Davis and agreed by all Councillors.

List of Payments made between 01/05/2021 and 31/05/2021

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Authorized Ref</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
06/05/2021	Baudelaire Ltd	BACS	10,815.37		Electrical Installation work
06/05/2021	Baudelaire Ltd	BACS	2,364.11		Floodlighting, MUGA

06/05/2021	CPRE	BACS	50.00	CPRE Annual Membership
06/05/2021	HALC	BACS	36.00	HALC Training SG
06/05/2021	HALC	BACS	408.00	HALC Training JT (Cilca)
06/05/2021	Talk Talk Business	DD	33.54	Telephone/Broadband
10/05/2021	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	116.39	Credit Card Payment
18/05/2021	British Gas	DD	90.88	April gas a/c Pavilion
20/05/2021	Wildflowers Favours	BACS	34.08	Wildflower seeds prizes
20/05/2021	Eddie Hodkin	BACS	315.00	Open Spaces Maintenance
20/05/2021	John Watson (JMKW)	BACS	400.00	Project consultancy work
20/05/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	46.78	Qtr electric, Bowls Club
20/05/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	93.82	Pavilion electric April
20/05/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	47.63	Qtr Electric - Oak Green
20/05/2021	Semrah Landscape Management	BACS	1,164.00	Open Spaces Maintenance
28/05/2021	Lightatouch	BACS	375.00	Completion of Internal Audit
28/05/2021	Reg Pullen	BACS	23.80	Travel Expenses - SLRs
28/05/2021	Playsafety Limited	BACS	174.60	Annual play area inspection
28/05/2021	Treloar Print	BACS	20.00	10k flyers
28/05/2021	Staff Costs	BACS	4038.45	May staff costs
Total Payments			20,647.45	

21.116.3 To receive and approve the bank reconciliations and trial balance as at 31st May 2021

It was RESOLVED to approve the May Trial Balance and Bank Reconciliations, following proposal by Cllr Foster, seconded by Cllr Sanders, and agreed by all Councillors.

21.116.4 To receive and authorise the June payments

The EO had previously circulated the June payments, but due to further payments requiring authorisation, the list had been updated and circulated to Councillors at the meeting.

Cllr Knight queried the Biffa charge and advised that there are much more competitive options available, the EO asked the AEO to liaise with Cllr Knight to investigate other options.

It was RESOLVED to authorise the June payments as presented, following proposal by Cllr Pullen, seconded by Cllr Knight, and agreed by all Councillors.

List of Payments made between 01/06/2021 and 30/06/2021

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Authorized Ref</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
04/06/2021	WEL Medical Ltd	BACS	1,142.82		Batteries for Defibrillators
04/06/2021	Hampshire Woodlands Ltd	BACS	360.00		Tree work - storm damage
04/06/2021	Cato Computers	BACS	78.97		Printer Ink Cartridges
04/06/2021	M Welby Ltd	BACS	432.00		Tree survey (CP)
05/06/2021	Talk Talk Business	DD	36.10		May phone/b/band
09/06/2021	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	116.39		Credit Card Payment
20/06/2021	Biffa Waste Services	DD	194.06		Pavilion waste collection
21/06/2021	British Gas	DD	63.95		Gas account Pavilion
24/06/2021	Eurofire Protection Ltd	BACS	99.00		Annual Fire equip. inspection
24/06/2021	Vesper Conservation & Ecology	BACS	840.00		Ecology report – (CP)
24/06/2021	Merritt Tree Specialists Ltd	BACS	5,940.00	Minute 21.47.1	Removal of diseased Ash
24/06/2021	David Ogilvie Engineering	BACS	1,106.40		Decorative bench
24/06/2021	Medstead Parish Council	BACS	647.16		50% share - notice board
24/06/2021	Eddie Hodkin	BACS	300.00		Open Spaces maint.
24/06/2021	Semrah Landscape Management	BACS	1,266.00		Open Spaces maint.
24/06/2021	East Hants District Council	BACS	230.00		Rates - Benians Pavilion
24/06/2021	Acorn Office Supplies	BACS	137.67		Stationery provisions
24/06/2021	Glasdon UK Limited	BACS	64.93		Bin liner - skate park

30/06/2021	Unity Trust Bank	BANK	28.80	Quarterly bank charges
30/06/2021	Unity Trust Bank	BANK	1.80	Service charge -cheques
30/06/2021	Staff Costs	BACS	4025.30	June Staff Costs
Total Payments			17,111.35	

21.116.5 To acknowledge the Internal Auditors report and submission of the AGAR to external auditor

The EO gave a brief report on the audit and highlighted that the auditor had noted a rounding discrepancy on the AGAR which meant that the supplementary paperwork attached to AGAR showed a different figure by £1. This was the result of two versions of the same software. The EO had changed the rounding so all documents were now in alignment and, with the Council in agreement, the Chairman initialled and re-signed the AGAR, which would be submitted to the External Auditors this week prior to the deadline of 30th June 2021.

The Audit report was noted and the EO was once again complimented on a successful audit.

The meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes, and reconvened prior to the next item being discussed.

21.117 COMMUNITY FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

A report on the progress to date had been circulated prior to the meeting, including a summary of the next Agenda item.

Cllr McCarthy expanded on the update report and gave a further overview for the benefit of the new Councillors and members of public in attendance, and then responded to the various queries raised with reference to the next Agenda item, prior to Council deliberation.

- With reference to the proposed funding, on the assumption that both the CIL Infrastructure application and the request to the PWLB, what would happen if the project exceeded the funds held?

The proposal is that this would be a fixed cost project with a Quantity Surveyor which would avoid any hidden surprises. The concept is modular to allow for the reduction in size if there is a shortfall in funding, but with the services and structure in place to allow for expansion in the future.

In addition, Cllr McCarthy added that the tender for the building project will be outsourced, with maybe a 'one stop shop' option. This is not something the team can do, and this will be contained with the architects' proposals at the meeting when the quotations are presented to Council for approval.

- The PWLB request that planning permission is in place prior to the application being submitted, does the extant planning application not count?

No, it needs to be a valid planning application, although they will accept the application to secure the funding without it, it needs to be confirmed as soon as it has been granted.

- Who will be responsible if, for any reason, the Parish Council are not able to meet the repayments?

In the event of the Parish Council not being able to function, the District Council takes over until such time as measures are put in place to allow it to continue. It is assumed that this would mean financially as well, however, the EO agreed to check legislation for reassurance.

- Will individual Councillors be responsible for any financial shortfall, and will the Council be fully indemnified against any liability should the project encounter any unforeseen problems.

The EO confirmed that no individuals would be responsible, the Council is insured as a body, although prior to the commencement of the project the EO will ensure that any issues related to the project are fully covered. Once the building commences, the contractor will have their own insurance cover.

- 50 years is a long time and this Council is making a decision that most are unlikely to see out, how will our predecessors view this, are we happy to commit the future Council to this amount of debt?

In response, Cllr Davis advised that the repayments of £34,500 in 40-50 years' time will not have the same value as it does now. Cllr McCarthy added that it is a fixed rate loan, so the repayments will not increase, and there is also an option for early repayment, so the full 50 years borrowing period may not be used.

- How will community become involved in the project moving forward? There has been little communication thus far?

Once funding is in place, and the planning application is submitted, all potential user groups will be consulted, there will be public consultations on the design and facilities at various stages to ensure that they will fit the need. The project team were keen to secure funding first, as they did not want to promise what they could not deliver. Regular press releases and updates will be circulated as the project moves forward. Certain information has had to be withheld due to its sensitive and commercial nature, but as the project moves forward all documents will be available on the website once they are no longer of a confidential nature.

- The proposed 25% rise of the Precept does not make it clear whether it is 25% each year or a one off, can this be better explained?

The Precept will need to be raised by 25% to ensure that the annual repayments can be made, however this is a one-off increase and although the Precept is likely to fluctuate due to changes in the housing tax base, it is only likely to increase minimally for inflation purposes only in the future. It was agreed that this should be marketed in the context of 31pence per week, the equivalent of half a packet of biscuits, and a reminder that the Parish Council precept is only a very small percentage of the Council Tax bill.

- The survey suggested that the Precept would be raised by up to £52 per annum for a Band D property, why has this changed?

The EO confirmed that this was a guesstimate based on the government figures at the time the survey was carried out, although it has only changed marginally, the EO confirmed that she had made it clear that the figures were approximate and will only be confirmed when the money is secured and released to the Council. The Council do not want to increase the Precept any more than is necessary but at today's figures and the current budget indicate that an increase of 25% will be enough to ensure that the payments can be made annually without a reduction in the provision of services provided by the Council.

- If it transpires we need to borrow more than £1,000,000, are we able to apply for subsequent PWLB loan?

HALC advice confirms that a new loan could be applied for, but it may be more prudent to look elsewhere for additional funding.

- Is the Reserve figure shown in the report correct?

The reserve figure was based on 2019/2020 not 2020/2021, so yes it was correct, and although reserves at 2020/2021 were at just under 8 months, this is now not the case, but it is only to demonstrate that the Council holds 3-6 months as per best practice.

Prior to the meeting there were several comments on the draft application form, to which the EO confirmed that the form had been sent to highlight the detail that needs to be submitted, and acknowledged that the information on it was incomplete, but would be corrected and checked, prior to submission. There was also a question on

the detail contained within Appendix 2 and Appendix 4, both had been amended to better reflect the information provided and re-circulated.

Cllr McCarthy wished to thank the EO for all the additional work that she had undertaken in her own time and preparation work on the various applications and reports.

Cllr Knight commenting on all the work that had been carried out to date by both the existing and current project teams, felt the community should be informed on just how much work had been carried out by community volunteers and ensure they are given deserved recognition.

The Chairman also wished to emphasise her thanks to the EO and the Project Team knowing how hard they have been working to get to this point, and as there were no further questions moved forward to the proposed motion in the next Agenda item.

21.118 MOTION TO SEEK APPROVAL OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO BORROW BY WAY OF A PWLB LOAN OF £1,000,000 OVER THE BORROWING TERM OF 50 YEARS AT A FIXED RATE FOR THE BUILDING OF A NEW COMMUNITY BUILDING AND RECREATIONAL HUB AND INCREASE PRECEPT BY 25% FOR THE LOAN REPAYMENTS

The motion was deliberated in detail, and with no further questions, the Chairman put the motion as worded above to the Council.

Following proposal by Cllr Timms, seconded by Cllr Foster, it was agreed unanimously and therefore RESOLVED to pass the motion and seek approval from the MCHLG for the request to borrow £1,000,000 and increase this Precept for 2022/2023 by 25% to cover the cost for the repayments for the duration of the loan. It was noted that the Precept would fluctuate and may have to be increased marginally in the years to come, but the 25% increase was for next year's precept request only.

The EO would issue a Press Release as soon after the meeting as possible to detail the resolution passed by the Council.

21.119 EXTERNAL COMMITTEE AND AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

21.119.1 Allotments.

Nothing to report.

21.119.2 Benians Pavilion.

The AGM is scheduled for 29th July, although there is some discrepancy over the date, so currently awaiting confirmation. The proposal is to open the Pavilion the first weekend in August.

21.119.3 Oak Green.

The fly tipping beneath the stairs at Oak Green had not been removed and it was agreed that this should be reported to EHDC and the removal carried out as soon as possible. Although as this is Parish Council owned land, it may be that the Council has to pay for its removal but would await EHDC advice.

21.119.4 Village Hall.

The small hall roof was being replaced in the Summer, and a new boiler had been fitted in the large hall, although they were still waiting some parts. The current committee appointments remained the same at the AGM and the Committee would be redecorating the hall and the fence to the side was to be repaired.

21.120 ONGOING PROJECTS

The AEO confirmed that local groups had been approached on celebrations for the Queens platinum jubilee next year, and once they all responded, the AEO would co-ordinate a working group and update the Council in due course.

21.121 NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 28th July 2021 at the Village Hall, at 7.00pm.

21.122 The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.10pm.

APPENDIX 1

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT – JUNE 2021

District Councillor's Report: July 2021

Petersfield Community Hospital: We have received some very good news that the hospital has been working to re-focus the minor injuries unit as an Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC). This will enable the hospital to provide a wider range of urgent care services, delivering both minor injury and illness services with 'additional diagnostic capabilities to treat a wider range of conditions'. This will reduce the pressure on the Emergency Department, etc., at the QA Hospital at Portsmouth which will ensure that only the 'most serious and life threatening conditions' are treated there. It will also mean that we have the option to go to the Petersfield Community Hospital rather driving to the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital.

Climate Change Panel EHDC: We have had several very productive meetings this year. Cllr. Robert Mocatta became the new Chairman, and I became part of a sub-group for the 'natural environment' working closely with Cllrs. Chris Hatter and Paul Wigman. This works well with my role as a tree warden co-ordinator and eleven tree wardens in four villages are now connected. The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow has inspired a local 'Community COP26' event. This will help raise awareness and focus on practical, local actions and work with local groups. I am a member of Alton Climate and Action for Nature (ACAN) and work with this group to preserve and protect our trees and green spaces, etc.

Willowfield 'woodland': We were delighted to hear that following a blanket TPO for this woodland, the arboricultural officer has now managed to protect several very important mature trees adjacent to Holland Drive (Azalea estate), Medstead. I would have preferred the woodland, i.e. its collective value to have been protected, but other trees did not meet the criteria to be afforded a tree protection order. With this in mind, we now hold the view, that Government guidance needs to be altered, especially as woodland is so important for the future of our planet. It absorbs rainwater, provides shade and an essential habitat to countless numbers of insects and other wildlife. I am contacting the Tree Council and other charities in order to move this forward.

Verges: As most of us are aware, verges are the wildflower meadows of the future. Over 97 per cent of flower rich grassland has been lost since the 1930s. Permission has now been given for Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) to connect with the Alton Natural History Society (ANHS) so the information for rare plants and other species identified by local experts can be shared.

Wildflower verges: These rural verges are marked with white posts in Four Marks and Chawton, denote wildflower verges for rare orchids, and are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). They are also known as Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEIs). We understand that urban verges in Alton can be similarly protected once rare plants have been identified. However, other verges in our villages where some beautiful wildflowers have appeared this year remain unprotected.

Stewardship Programme: The Council has put together a stewardship programme in order for a licence to be granted to a group of three or more people (at separate addresses) to become involved in planting and protecting a verge or other green, open space. This has worked well in Alton for the Community Garden at The Butts, planted up by AVLAN, part of ACAN. Several people have participated and planted flowers for pollinators, a blossom tree and other plants, and tend the plot regularly.

However, the stewardship programme has proved to be rather complicated due to the criteria, and it is difficult to find a sufficient number of residents to participate, and sign up to a legal document. One way to help resolve the situation might be to erect signs for grasscutters with a request, 'Please do not Mow. Area managed for nature to thrive' or 'Do not cut yet. Verge managed for wildlife'. I am presently sourcing some of these signs, and will deliver them to residents who need them as soon as they become available.

Sadly, some residents still prefer a neat a tidy verge outside their properties and continue to cut the grass, although almost all verges are owned by Highways. We continue to try and help residents understand how important it is to leave verges in tact, especially between June and September, so that insects are able to benefit.

The Plantlife charity encouraged residents with gardens to leave the mower in the shed in May and not to mow their lawns, the 'no mow May' campaign. Some of us were surprised by the number of primroses and cowslips that appeared on our lawns.

Tree and hedge planting: Hedges as well as trees are important as they prevent erosion, hold moisture which is important during droughts in April this year, and in May, 2020. Hedges are also beneficial for wildlife, small mammals and insects. Boggy areas, ponds and ditches are also of value. Most are owned by the Council, parish councils, wildlife conservation charities (Deadwater Valley Trust) and the National Trust. Our tree warden group is presently providing information for new woodland to be planted up near Chawton this year.

Amphibian Migration: Frogs and toads migrate every February and March, and this year I became involved with the Toad Patrollers in Newton Valence. Due to a large amphibian population it became crucial to arrange to close a road, a sunken lane, in the village for six weeks, so that the patrollers and amphibians could be sufficiently protected. Over 500 hundred frogs and toads were safely moved across the road.

Children's Art Competition: This year the subject will be 'endangered species' and all school children (2 – 18 years) will be able to participate. Again the competition will help to connect children with Climate Change and what we need to do to help protect some species on our planet. An entry form and poster will shortly become available in local media.

Pictures from last year's 'tree competition' have been exhibited in the gallery at Gilbert White's House Museum (GWHM). On 11th July they will move to the Eco-Fair in Alton. The winning entries from this year's competition will also be displayed at GWHM during the Nature Festival. Sadly it was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, but the winners were eventually presented with their prizes in the garden at Jane Austen's House Museum in August last year.

Three district councillors represent Four Marks, Chawton and Medstead. We can all be contacted at our Email address on the EHDC website, as follows:-

Diana Tennyson, diana.tennyson@easthants.gov.uk , Ingrid Thomas, ingrid.thomas@easthants.gov.uk and Jonathan May, jonathan.may@easthants.gov.uk .

APPENDIX 2

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT – JUNE 2021

Covid 19 Update

As the Prime Minister has recently announced the delay in lifting of restrictions for a month, the Covid 19 business continuity plan remains in place. All meetings to date have been, and will continue to be, held under the current guidance.

Councillor Vacancy

The Council has another vacancy following the sad resignation of Simon Thomas earlier in the month. At the time of writing the report, I have yet to be notified whether any of the electorate have requested a by-election but, if not, we will have a casual vacancy to fill. The previously unsuccessful candidate has already come forward and indicated that they would still like to apply to become a member of the Council, however an advertisement does need to be placed to advertise the casual vacancy once the request for a by-election period ends. Although this is a very short period of time prior to this meeting, in agreement with the Chairman, an Agenda item has been included for the Co-Option process and candidates will be invited to apply up to the start time of the Council meeting.

At this meeting, the Council's newly co-opted Councillor will be signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, so the Council could be back up to 10 members this month.

Simon will be greatly missed, his depth of knowledge of the planning system, and outstanding contribution to the Community Project, has left the Council in good stead moving forward and I would like to wish him well in his retirement from Council life.

Additional items of note

Another retirement to note is that of PC Peter Kelly, who retired from the police force on 28th May 2021. I am sure all the Council and local community wish him well for his retirement and thank him for all his work within the village and look forward to meeting his replacement once they make contact.

With reference to this month's meeting, supporting documentation for Agenda items, where appropriate have been included within this document where possible. This month there are four planning applications that need consideration at this meeting, information on which will be attached separately, together with the link to each application. The first is for Oak Green, which involves Parish Council owned land, so therefore with Chairman's agreement, this will be discussed at this meeting. The three further applications to be considered are two pre-decision amendments and a Deed of Variation, the consultation periods for each all close prior to the next Planning Committee meeting. Please note that there will be no screen presentation on planning items at this meeting, so if you require additional information than that provided within the summary document, please visit the planning portal.

As there a high number of correspondence items on this month's list, the correspondence list is attached as a separate document, although the amount received has reduced slightly as two previous email addresses (sarah@fourmarkspc.co.uk and clerk@fourmarkspc.co.uk) are no longer being used. There is an auto response message on them, but unfortunately as both mailboxes are full, the email is not being received.,

however they are now starting to filter through on the correct email address. As always if there are any items that have not been previously forwarded that you would like, please let me know.

Additional correspondence items to note.

- A communication was received from a resident with reference to inconsiderate parking by the Speedwatch team at the top of Blackberry Lane. This has been addressed directly with Speedwatch.
- A notification, via the District Councillor, has been received with reference to nominations for National Honours from HM Lord Lieutenant. If you know of anyone locally who would be deserving of an award in next year's Honours List, then please let me know I will forward you the nomination forms.

Following an email from a resident in Kingswood Rise on the verge overgrowth, and a subsequent communication with the relevant department at EHDC, I have been informed that 'MyEHDC' is the most effective way to report issues on environmental concerns, such as open space maintenance and bin emptying. EHDC now only have a small team in house as everything has been diverted to Environmental Services at Havant Borough Council, and the services are now outsourced. By reporting these issues on-line they can be redirected to, and actioned by, the service responsible. There is also a telephone number 01730 234295 for those unable to use the internet.

Following the news that restrictions will now not be lifted on 21st June, the Benians Committee have arranged their AGM and committee meeting on 29th July 2021, with a view to re-opening the weekend of 7th August 2021. The updated Licence to Occupy will be signed at that meeting.