

East Meon Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2015/16

The parish council year is from April to March, so this report spans the past twelve months.

Finances

Despite cuts in public services and grants being harder to get, our parish finances continue to be solid, and although this has involved some pragmatic choices we still expect to end the year close to our budget of £23,690. However if we are to maintain the present level of upkeep, and especially grass mowing in public areas, then for the coming year the parish precept (collected through your council tax) has been set at £24,400 which is an increase of £610 (3%). Full accounts will be available at the Annual Parish Assembly on the 27th April.

Maintenance

A big slice of the parish budget is the maintenance and upkeep of parish land/facilities and we're fortunate that all of this work can be carried out by local residents & arborists – this involves grass cutting of all public areas, strimming verges/hedges, tree lopping, general repairs, litter clearing and caretaking.

Savings were made thanks to a group of volunteers who spent many hours painting the sports pavilion at no cost to the parish, other than the paint (Meon Matters, Dec 2015). In the past year, Hampshire County Council has replaced all of East Meon's street lighting with more energy efficient ones. The ten lights within the village conservation area & Frogmore were replaced by the more appropriate heritage models. Although these lights are automatically dimmed at dusk and again at midnight, there are still some issues with brightness affecting a few houses and we continue to pursue a solution.

Recreation

The new U9s children's play was opened in the summer with new equipment and layouts which have proven popular with the younger children.

The all-weather court is also well used for mini football, basketball and tennis after the installation of a new tennis net, posts & winding handles.

The joint arrangement with Clanfield Football Club U12 sides continues to operate well and the hope is that more of East Meon's youngsters will get involved; the contacts are on the notice boards.

As ever the cricket club goes from strength to strength attracting players and supporters of all age groups from right across our community.

Highways/Road Safety

After winter there are even more potholes on minor roads and lanes which need attention and as soon as one is reported, another appears – the list is endless. Residents can also report potholes and other traffic issues at; www.hants.gov.uk/roads/roadworks

Small incremental traffic calming measures within the village have also been agreed with HCC Roads and are scheduled. Although there is no one solution, hopefully these will contribute to driver awareness and reduce speeding.

2.

EAST MEON RIVER RESTORATION

The River running through the village is now a better home for plants, birds fish and invertebrates thanks to the initial project to improve its flow by promoting a 'naturalised' channel. The landscape and village setting has been improved also.

The project was carefully modelled and designed to ensure that there is no increased flood risks associated with the work. This involved bonding over 400 stones to the concrete bed with short steel pegs drilled into the stones and the concrete to form the low flow channel. The pockets, or berms created by the stones were then filled by hand with 18 tonnes of river gravels and planted. All of the work was carried out by hand by two conservation officers from the Wild Trout Trust, supported by a team from South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Local resident and River Meon champion Nigel Brooks was instrumental in helping the project to get off the ground as well as physically rolling up his sleeves and helping with the project delivery.

This initial section has held up well after peak winter flows in 2015 and now plans are being made to address the upper section. Community involvement and promotion of the project has been essential, particularly as minds have been focused on flooding in the past few years.

Now that a methodology has been found it is hoped that the community especially children from the school could be involved in the next phases.

Through the good offices of Rob Mocatta, our EHDC councillor, we were able to secure a grant for £800 which the parish will contribute to the project. There are also plan to refurbish some of the nearby benches along this section of the river.

Policing

We're still fortunate to be a very low crime area, with low (but still unacceptable) anti-social behaviour and a few incidents of criminal damage

Area coverage now provided by PCSO Tria Gibbs and her team who have been quite visible and responsive to any issues or concerns. If you are concerned about crime or anti-social behaviour, remember the number to call is 101 (or 999 in an emergency). Her mobile telephone contact is also listed in Meon Matters,

Finally, my thanks for the support of Sarah Cowlrick our financial officer and parish clerk whose professionalism and financial acumen ensures the effective operation of the council.

Alan Redpath
March 2016