

EAST WOODHAY PARISH COUNCIL - COUNCIL STATEMENT 2018-19

QUICK SUMMARY OF YEAR- Chairman Mitchell

Good evening Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen and thank-you for coming tonight to support the Parish council and other local organisations, at the Annual General Meeting of the East Woodhay Parish Council (EWPC).

I am pleased to also welcome our B&D Ward Councillor Clive Sanders, Councillor Tom Thacker from Hampshire County Council, Mark Rand, Chairman of the East Woodhay Society, and our vicar Christine Dale who is representing the East Woodhay Charities.

The formal part of this evening will take about 1 hour, post which we will have a brief Q&A and then at the end of the meeting there will be refreshments over which further discussion can take place with your parish councillors and our visitors.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all 8 councillors who have worked hard in their spare time for the community. These roles are voluntary and at time the councillors have to engage in tasks that require the full resolve of a volunteer and for that I thank them for their hard work, dedication and thick skin. The PC is 2 members short and as such other who care for the Parish and the working of the Parish are very welcome to be put their names forwarded to be co-opted. I would also like to thank our excellent new paid clerk Amy White and our litter warden Patricia Barnes. Amy started as new Clerk to the Parish Council in September last year and she has brought energy and vigour to the role, learning fast the duties of the Clerk and also the nuances in the parish. We are very lucky to have a clerk of such competence. Amy had a very tough start to the role with an FOI request landing on her desk almost immediately. I would like to publicly thank Amy for her diligent hard work that she has put in to a) learning fast how to manage FOI request and b) her diligence in working with the councillors and external parties to respond professionally to the FOI. Thank-you Amy. The FOI request whilst enormously time consuming has had some excellent spin off benefit is changes to process and tools in the PC and thus making this voluntarily manned organisation more professional and robust. However the trade off to this has been the enormous amount of time it has consumed from councillors and the clerk, time which could have been invested into other valuable community beneficial projects.

2018-19 has been a solid year for the East Woodhay Parish Council. Completing and participating in many projects. Each Council member will now give an update from their area of responsibility.

AMENITIES – Cllr Rand

The Parish Lengthsman continues to undertake maintenance work across the parish. In addition, the Parish Council has a contract with an independent supplier for regular tasks in the Parish owned areas including both the Woolton Hill and Heath End recreation grounds. In addition to cutting of hedges, clearing of leaves etc., this has included repairs to the Woolton Hill playground with the purchase of a replacement swing, tennis court equipment and posts at East End and 'Brownies Corner'.

One ongoing issue which is being worked on by our contractor is the state of the ground at the Woolton Hill recreation ground where moles are causing damage. A large pot hole was also repaired at the Woolton Hill recreation ground car park.

Comments were raised that some people were walking along the permissive path across the Parish Field without having the dogs on leads and consequently dogs were running across the field. This is both a health hazard and is against the condition of being able to open up the Parish Field;

consequently, notices have been erected requesting that dogs are on leads and we request that this is respected.

Extra posts have been placed along one side the small green triangle outside the Woolton Hill Church Hall to prevent cars from parking there. There is a fire hydrant in the middle which must be kept clear at all times and cars parking on that grass cause a danger to children and prevent other road users having visibility of other cars. The council will be completing the triangle of posts on this grass soon.

The Parish Council is working with the community and East Woodhay Society on the use of S106 amenity monies including benches, table tennis equipment and fitness equipment. The details of the equipment have not been finalised but progress is being made and the decision of which equipment to be purchased will be added to the relevant minutes on the website.

UTILITIES- Cllr Jarvis

Well this event has come round very quickly as it seems only yesterday I was writing the last annual report. There have been a couple of items of interest in this last year that involve utilities. These being refuse collection and electricity supply.

Refuse : Last summer our refuse collections became somewhat unreliable and this was largely due to a change in the contractual contract. As the contract period drew towards its close the contractor had more problems with equipment and staff. The new contractors who took over in the Autumn have happily resumed the good level of service we had come to expect and I have had no reports of further problems.

Electricity : This has been a major problem in particular for the Ball Hill residents who after having lost power for Christmas 2017 were then plagued with numerous outages throughout the year.

Some residents were already putting pressure on SSE who own the network and the Parish Council agreed to add its weight to the pressure.

A meeting was arranged at SSE in Theale where the nature of the problems (multiple) were discussed in full and the SSE remedies were outlined. In essence this amounted to a major upgrading of the network which dated from the 1960's and was no longer up to the job.

Three phases of the work were outlined for completion during the current financial year. The first phase was the burying of the main feeder cable in Knights Lane and this has been completed already. The second phase involved re-routing high tension lines from overhead unshielded wires to an underground cable to the "Burlyns" substation. This work is about to start. The final stage of upgrading the overhead high tension feeder to the West of Ball Hill is awaiting the final permissions from landowners and other stakeholders and will be under way as soon as possible.

Telecoms : Local broadband issues have been largely dealt with but mobile 'phone coverage remains a problem in a few places.

Water/Sewage : A few local problems throughout the year but generally dealt with very promptly without council involvement.

FOOTPATHS- Cllr Teece

Boardwalk off Trade Street, Woolton Hill

In November of last year, a section of boardwalk extension was added at the Fullers Lane end of this footpath to make it easier for walkers to use in inclement weather.

The broken wooden gate on the boardwalk was recently replaced by HCC with a very sturdy new gate. Due to heavy rains during last year and probably slight movements of the ground, some of the wooden boards of the boardwalk began to break and had to be replaced. The contractor who originally constructed the boardwalk did a survey of this section and suggested to replace eight boards which should be done in the near future. All this work will be done with pressure treated wood as before. Some more repairs may have to be done in future as and when necessary.

The Parish Council is still offering landowners the chance to convert stiles into gates at no charge whatsoever to the landowner. We have an agreement with the owner of Rookery Farm in Hollington to replace the stiles in the near future and, once the building project at Breezehurst in Gore End Road, Ball Hall, is completed, a new gate will be built there. This will mean that using the footpath through the Charities field starting at Ball Hill Road, walkers can use footpaths all the way to Hazelwood Stud North End, with just one stile at the end (nothing is ever quite perfect).

One landowner who did not want to convert his stiles to gates did upgrade all the stiles on his property so that they are now solid and safe to use.

The Parish Council is grateful to all landowners who look after their footpaths and ditches and keep them in good order for walkers to use.

THE PC WILL CONTINUE TO PAY FOR ANY STILE CONVERSION TO KISSING GATES, all the landowner has to do is agree to allow the council to make the change. The PC will pay for the labour and materials and the new gates. The goal is to have the countryside paths accessible to EVERYBODY in the community.

EMERGENCY PLAN – Cllr Jarvis

The Emergency plan was updated and re-submitted to Basingstoke & Dean Borough Council.

The purpose of the plan is to identify the most likely risks to our communities (e.g. the impact of severe weather). It also identifies the most vulnerable groups within our area and determines how any risk might be managed using our local resources, should it arise.

The plan is owned and maintained by assigned members of the three councils and has been distributed to Hampshire CC, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire Service and Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council where it forms part of a larger County wide plan.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Cllr Mitchell

Summary:

	Actual		Budget	
Income	£	40,730	£	35,705 114%
Expense	£	41,696	£	36,287 115%
Variance	-£	966		

General Comment on Finances

The PC income and expense variance was slightly over budget for the year £966. This was intentional to continue the goal of reducing the cash held on account, to spend this money on the parish. As can be seen from the expenditure report there has been some significant overspend in areas. This is down to the completion of one-off projects like the extension to the Trade Street-Fuller Lane board walk, the purchasing of 4 kissing gates for footpaths and building new bridges for 2 footpaths, and the hiring of external consultancy skills to assist in concluding the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council

continues its policy to gain grants where ever it can to support one-off projects, for example it received grants for footpath maintenance and enhancement. The council can report it is strong financial health and a good amount has been achieved with great use of external funding. Hence the PC bank account credit is slightly higher than at this time last year.

Income: In 2018/19, The precept was £28,634. Other income from B&D and local rental income was £3,171 (reduced from FY17/18 £4,739) owing to reduced B&D allowance that was signalled and actioned in the Austerity period. Litter warden grant from B&D was £4,071. The PC also recovered £1,541 on VAT expenditure in the year – some of this relating to VAT paid on projects in the previous financial year.

Expense: Expense for the year have been as follows:

1. Clerks Costs £8,609 (LY £8,329) (Salary £8,200)
2. Litter Warden Costs £4,791 (LY £4,043)
3. Admin courses £610 (LY £813)
4. Insurance & Audit £1,875 (LY £1,316)
5. Subscriptions £631 (LY £999)
6. Annual maintenance payment £3,180 (LY £2,335)
7. Misc. maintenance £5,129 (LY £1,625)
8. Footpaths work £8,662 (LY £7,791) 4 new kissing gates and new bridges
9. Expenditure on CCTV annual contract £1,250 (LY £1,370)
10. Donations £575 (LY £510)
11. Parish Plan £3,888 (LY £2,950)

Current Account: The PC current account at the end of the financial year stands at £46,704 (LY £46,166) (31st March 2019)

S106 Monies

See S106 report section.

The PC has also had to pay overtime to the Clerk this year owing to increase in work that the Clerk has had to undertake to address the FOI request that the PC received.

PC CHARITY DONATIONS IN FY18/19

In the last financial year the PC spent £575 on donations (FY17/18 £760) which under spent the budget by 62%, to the following local organisations:

The Poppy Appeal (wreaths on behalf of EWPC)	£35
St Thomas Church for Remembrance event	£40
Woolton Hill Argyle FC Goalposts	£500

The PC always welcome requests from local voluntary groups and charitable initiatives.

POLICE UPDATE- Cllr Hurst

This report will mainly focus on traffic safety.

Speedwatch : After 4 years of Speedwatch, Cllr Paul Hurst, recommended to disband it and move forward with fixed devices in a number of key road locations. This recommendation was accepted by EWPC in January of this year.

In summary the reason for this recommendation was as follows:

EWPC shared the mobile Speedwatch device with Highclere PC. The device no longer functioned and a decision needed to be made on funding a replacement.

The Speedwatch team was established over 4 years ago and had given good insights into traffic issues and confirmed the key “hot spots” in the Parish, especially in Woolton Hill. However, it had limited success in reducing speeding.

Over time the number of volunteers had diminished and was below a sustainable level. After a year of trying to get new volunteers, no new people had come forward.

In parallel we worked with Highclere PC on their usage of a fixed device and they shared their learnings and results. These give feedback to motorists on their speed and Highclere felt that the majority of motorists adjusted their speed. The devices also record speed statistics (eg number of cars speeding), giving good information on issues and where to focus community education. The devices also can be placed in areas that Speedwatch cannot be put in place, ie areas over 30mph. So for our Parish it would allow deployment in areas with speed limits above 30 mph, that have reported issues (eg Station Rd).

From the above it was decided to disband Speedwatch (with no further volunteers it was effectively disbanded) and not purchase a new mobile device but to put in place a fixed device (potentially a number of devices in key areas). The placement of these devices requires approval from HCC.

So this year it is planned to review the types of device available and to put forward a recommendation on purchase and where they should be sited. Full communication to the community will take place before installation.

Other Traffic Issues : A community team has recently been established in Woolton Hill to focus on helping to tackle traffic issues. One of the key lessons learned from Speedwatch was that to make any impact on traffic issues it was essential to be factual and capture supporting evidence.

For example, much emotion has been raised in the community on the congestion outside the schools at drop off and pick up time. Therefore, the team recently spent a period of time monitoring this issue and recording the facts. These were captured and formally fed back to EWPC in a report (EWPC minutes Feb 2019).

This factually confirmed many of the issues people had raised and the precise timings of the traffic congestion. We also interviewed the “Lollipop Lady”, Liz Putney, who gave good insights into the issues.

Where possible we will start to use the information captured to tackle some of the issues seen - however, many of the parking and congestion issues have no quick fixes. But some of the issues can start to be tackled, for example.....

- Preventing parking on the grass outside Woolton Hill Church Hall. This has become the norm for cars to park there at pick up time, covering a fire hydrant and blocking the view coming out of Church Road. Wooden posts have now been installed to prevent parking.
- EWPC have already used the information to ask BDBC to place restrictions on building contractors along Woolton Hill Road (parking and deliveries) for a specific planning applications. Likewise, this information has been recorded in the Neighbourhood Plan for future planning consideration.

The interview with Liz Putney has been published in Spectrum and copied to the schools. A key message from her to motorists travelling along Woolton Hill Rd at drop off (8:15am to 9:00am) and pick up (3pm to 4pm) was “SLOW DOWN, SHOW CONSIDERATION, BE PATIENT”. The feedback from Liz will continue to be used this year to help publicise and educate the community on the issues.

So this year we will use the community team to put forward recommendations to help to positively impact some of the traffic problems. It is planned to work with the schools and PCSO to tackle some of the issues. Especially we wish to actively communicate to the wider community the facts relating to the traffic issues across the Parish and to gain their support and ideas in tackling some of these problems.

S106 FUNDS – Cllr Hurst

Meadowbrook Housing Development (previously known as Harwood Paddock).

The housing development at Meadowbrook has been finished for some time but unfortunately remedial landscape planting remains to be completed by Bloor Homes. A final inspection by BDBC was due in April, but they found that Bloor homes had not completed all the replanting of the site. Therefore, BDBC have not signed off the site and are now progressing options to push Bloor to complete the landscaping to specification. At present no clear timescale to completion has been communicated.

Impact on Community Land: The commencement of the legal process to handover the area of this development that has been designated community land is triggered by the final site sign off. Therefore, the lack of sign off of the site continues to delay the handover of the community land to the Parish (for the proposed orchard). Understanding the delay the BDBC spend manager has worked closely with EWPC to look at alternative processes to progress the handover of the land. However, these have been unsuccessful and we remain legally bound to the handover being linked to the overall sign off the development.

The overall site remains owned and maintained by Bloor Homes and its contractors. BDBC and ourselves are therefore not allowed to make changes to the site.

S106 Funds: As a result of the construction of Meadowbrook, Bloor Homes had to pay a specific amount of money towards improving local infrastructure. This is the S106 funding. The specific areas of expenditure are determined by the original S106 contract signed in 2014. In determining projects to be funded by S106 it has been important to follow the original contract, with any variation requiring legal approval by Bloor Homes. The money for our projects is owned by BDBC and is allocated to their specific spend managers.

Over the last year EWPC has spent time in building good relationships with the spend managers and in understanding the processes we need to follow to approve and spend the money and any associated restrictions. EWPC and the community requesting spend have followed closely the processes governing spend stipulated by the BDBC spend managers. Not to follow the original contract and the BDBC processes creates a risk of the developer legally challenging the spend.

Working with the community and spend managers we have made great progress in agreeing and specifying the projects and the approval of the spend. The following are the projects being progressed.....

Facilities Refurbishment

Total spend requested and now fully approved, £92,828

Agreed split:

East Woodhay Village Hall, £65,000

Project manager: Peter Stanley

Woolton Hill Church Hall, £27,828

Project manager: John Angle

The project managers can provide details of the refurbishments if more information is required - these were submitted to BDBC as part of the approval process.

For East Woodhay Village Hall, the removal of the stage was contentious, and objections raised by some of the users of the Hall. However, after detailed consultation between the project manager and the user groups, the EWWH Committee agreed the removal of the stage. On this recommendation EWPC and the Ward Councillor agreed with the stage removal. This was communicated to the BDBC spend manager, who has approved the spend to remove the stage.

Sports Clubs

Total fund available £40,895

The spend managers have visited Woolton Hill and have spent time with the tennis and cricket clubs. They have also reviewed all the proposed projects from our clubs and they have now been submitted for approval. The projects are as follows:

Tennis Club, £18,000 requested for replacement lights for floodlights.

Cricket Club, £10,000 requested for practice nets.

Football Club, £10,000 requested for aeration machine for pitch maintenance.

Please note for the Football and Cricket Clubs, as they have leased land, restrictions apply on the amount of S106 that can be allocated. As they both have 10 year leases, a maximum of £10,000 each can be allocated.

Bowls Club, £2,895 requested for a mat and mobile storage and handling trolley.

Play Areas

A fund of £28,246 is available for play areas in Woolton Hill.

EWPC will work with East Woodhay Soc. to specify the projects and request funding.

Allotments

Within the S106 contract, funding of £9,580 was allocated to support allotments. EWPC have ensured this funding remains protected and available to any group moving forward with allotments.

Towards the end of last year a group interested in allotments in Woolton Hill was established. They have been trying to find any potential land, but so far have been unsuccessful. However, they would be interested in talking to any land owner that could potentially provide land.

Local Highways.

£285,000 allocated to HCC.

EWPC has taken action to ensure the funds are spent locally. Awaiting progress from HCC.

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 2018-19- Cllr Lambert

The Planning Committee has considered a number of applications throughout the year applicable to the parish of varying degrees of complexity, with many having the potential to impact on others in the community.

The Planning Committee's remit is that of consideration and comment with regard to planning applications from the perspective of appropriateness of design and impact on the local community and environment; we do not however have any powers of enforcement. We also seek to assist where possible as a voice of representation of Parishioners in a variety of planning related matters as applications are submitted to the planning process.

The Planning Committee has maintained a team of four councillors from this time last year. Particular thanks go to the committee's secretary, Susan Cooper, who spends a considerable amount of time behind the scenes administering all the comments from the committee to the Borough Council, plus ensuring our responses are published on the Parish Council website by means of the Committees minutes.

Meetings are held approximately every two weeks and are open to parishioners should they wish to seek guidance or support on any planning matters. For those who do not wish to attend a meeting in person, planning and related matters are now readily accessible via the web, with all applications on the BDBC Planning Portal and the EWPC responses to applications available on the Parish website shortly after each meeting. There is a useful page on the Parish Council website identified as 'Planning Tracker' that identifies the planning applications for the Parish, with the full details being available via a link directly to the B&DBC website.

We would stress however that we are not planning experts and always suggest that individuals make their own submissions as they carry equal weight to those of the Parish Council.

Neighbourhood Plan

As reported at last year's Annual Meeting, a Neighbourhood Plan draft document was nearing completion. This was submitted to BDBC last year and they highlighted many areas that required revision. Unfortunately at this key time, a number of members of the team moved on. This left the team without some key knowledge to be able to complete the revision of the document.

At the end of last year EWPC reviewed the status of the project and reconfirmed our commitment to creating a Neighbourhood Plan. We believed it was as important as ever to create a Neighbourhood Plan that established a vision and objectives for planning across the Parish. This we still felt was key to the long term preservation of our largely rural community. As a reminder, once "made" the Neighbourhood Plan will be a statutory document that will be incorporated into the planning frameworks of BDBC and used by EWPC for planning applications.

To move the project forward new members were added to the steering group and a new chairman put in place - councillor Paul Hurst.

A new experienced consultant was engaged to acquire the knowledge needed for completion. A grant of £3185 was successfully applied for to support the funding of the consultant. Lessons were also learned from Kingsclere PC, who have recently successfully completed their NP and these have been applied to the project.

Using the consultant, great progress has been made and a new draft document established. The steering group have been performing the final detailed edit of this document to ensure its accuracy (especially to planning legislation), gaining input from and building relationships with BDBC planning officers and ensuring it is a close fit to the needs of the Parish. One of the lessons learned from Kingsclere was this part of the process would be intensive and require much time. The team can very much confirm this and have spent over 25 hours locked away in Woolton Hill Church Hall, in the last month alone, to complete the edit. I would like to give my thanks to the whole team, who it must be remembered, are all volunteers.

The edit is now nearing completion. The full draft document is planned to be communicated for comment by the Parish Council in July. A discussion with BDBC is also planned - it is important to remember that a key part of this process will be in building relationships with BDBC. A new Local Plan will start to be generated next year and the NP steering group feel it is essential the views of the Parish are well understood by BDBC, through the discussion of the NP.

After the discussion with BDBC, a full public consultation will commence. As stated above, the document will be widely distributed for feedback.

HIGHWAYS STATEMENT – Cllr Murdoch

Highways repair and maintenance: Hampshire County Council is the responsible authority for the maintenance of our local highways. Despite obvious budgetary restraints improvements have been made in the response time dealing with potholes. As you are no doubt aware this is a national problem not limited to Hampshire, so it is good to see some improvement locally. However potholes will not be dealt with quickly if they are not reported. The reporting process is easy and takes just a few minutes

by telephoning HCC, or better still by reporting them on the HCC website www.hants.gov.uk. Just go to 'Roads & road maintenance' and then 'Report a pothole'.

The parish council continues to lobby for something to be done about the road subsidence on Woolton Hill Road outside the tennis club but HCC advise that this is not serious enough to warrant expenditure.

Harwood Paddock S106 Transport Contribution: Regretfully, we have to report that although the Harwood Paddock S106 Transport Contribution of £246,849 has been received by Hampshire County Council the agreed and listed local highway improvements have once again not been included in the 2019/20 study programme. EWPC are lobbying at the highest level for this to be addressed.

Verges & Street Signs: Your parish council is concerned that, despite bollards clearly installed to obstruct vehicle entry, vehicles are frequently being parked on verges bordering the highway. Vehicles parked on verges can obstruct pedestrian and other vehicle sightlines thus creating a safety hazard. Also some verges contain fire hydrants – obstructing them with a vehicle is more than just thoughtless! EWPC is in the process of replacing and installing additional verge bollards where necessary.

Vehicles parked half on the highway and half on the pavement is also an issue. Forcing pedestrians to walk on the highway to pass the offending vehicle is unacceptable. EWPC asks residents and their visitors to take more care when parking.

EWPC has requested replacements for the missing street name signs in Fullers Lane and Trade Street.

Our request for HCC to replace the stolen Hampshire border sign on the A343 at Wash Water has elicited no action to date. Three such signs have 'gone missing' in the last three years!

You may have noticed that many of the local traffic signs are looking very clean. Amy, our Parish Clerk took it on herself to go on a cleaning spree and I understand our Chairman also participated. Thanks to both.

PERMISSIVE FOOTPATH ON PARISH FIELD - Cllr Murdoch

The Permissive Footpath across the Parish Field is now in constant use.

The Parish Council is embarking on a project to make this path more user friendly in all condition as it is being used every day to make school pupil walk to school safer than using the lanes. The council are planning on placing a hogging path. The council have investigated the planning requirements and B&D have confirmed there are none. So when the funds are in place then the council will appoint a contractor to complete the job, hopefully before winter 2019.

The Parish Council reminds users that the use of the path is subject to restrictions and these are posted at each entrance.

DITCHES

The winter of 2018/19 was not a particularly harsh one. However with the Parish Council's persistence and focus on the problem of ditches and the land owners' and home owners' continued support, the parish ditches are getting more and more functional. As such the flooding issues locally were not as severe as 4 years ago.

The general maintenance work that we have encouraged to happen across Parish certainly is paying off. There are several land owners / householders who have worked hard to ensure their ditches are in good working order and the Parish Council, on behalf of the residents of East Woodhay thank them for this diligence. As always there are some landowners who do nothing.

The PC remind the community of the following rules around ditches and water flow:

1. Every land owner has to accept water from higher land
2. Every land owner is responsible for the passing of water across their property
3. Every land owner is responsible for the ditches and culverts that are on or adjoin their property

Land owners and householders who have not maintained their ditches despite PC requests continue to be socially irresponsible. The PC's view on poor ditch management in a community is the perpetrators are extremely anti-social and their lack of action causes unnecessary harm and is potentially dangerous to their fellow parishioners. The PC we will continue to work on this topic.

IT and Administrative Processes: Cllr Hurst

Over the year EWPC have supported improved efficiency and transparency of the council by focusing on improving IT and administrative processes. This focus was brought about due to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request and a parallel initiative within the council to improve the transparency and speed of information.

During the year EWPC received its first FOI request from a parishioner. Pulling the information together to respond to the FOI had a significant impact especially on the clerk's time and also individual councillors.

In parallel EWPC was reviewing its IT and administrative processes by a comparison with best practice for similar sized councils.

Using the lessons learned from the FOI and the input from the best practice review, a number of changes have been implemented to enhance efficiency of the administrative processes and transparency of council policies and decisions. These include:

IT Changes

Move to a new email system for all EWPC, so that personal email is no longer used and therefore no information is lost when a councillor leaves.

Wider use of electronic storage, Dropbox, to ensure retention and more efficient access to information.

A new EWPC website, to support improved communication and transparency to the wider community.

All the above have been implemented at a minimum cost to the Parish, utilising the IT experience of some of our councillors.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Review of council's policies and procedures and publication of these updated documents onto the new website, supporting greater transparency.

Recommendation of best practice document retention and disposal for EWPC. This will be implemented in the coming year and published on the website.

A change to the capturing of council minutes, to be more concise, focusing on actions and decisions. This is allied with councillor reports being captured in a more complete manner, as an appendix to the minutes.

More rapid publication of both draft and finalised minutes from EWPC meetings and committees.

EAST WOODHAY SOCIETY- Mark Rand

We were delighted to be able to raise £750 last year for our nominated charity The Rosemary Appeal. This has also been matched with a donation by the Greenham Trust thus raising £1500 in total. Thank you to everyone who supported the society in 2018 and thereby helping to raise money for this excellent local cause. The Rosemary Appeal was raising money for a new centre at West Berkshire Community Hospital, providing essential facilities, including day therapy, chemotherapy, renal dialysis, IV therapies and a CT Scanner.

This year East Woodhay Society's chosen charity for 2019 is Young People and Children First – a small, local charity, supporting care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness. As well as raising money for them we were pleased to join up with them for our annual Crafty Craft race along the Kennet Canal between Kintbury and Newbury. By working with them on the day they would have gained a lot around teamwork and practical life skills. It was good too that they could take the winning trophy and I know it will proudly sit in one of their two houses as recognition of what they help achieve.

Exercise is great for general well-being and mental health. We are very fortunate to live in an area of wonderful natural beauty and a good network of footpaths. The Friday morning Walking for Health often attracts around 20 people and it has also been a good way of meeting people. We are very pleased the Parish Council has supported the approach on changing stiles to gates, which further opens up the countryside for people who struggle with access via stiles. Further stile replacements are planned in 2019.

During the year, especially in winter, the Permissive Path across the Parish Field can be difficult to use as it becomes muddy and difficult to walk across after periods of rain and adverse weather. The path is also uneven which makes it difficult for those who are unsteady on their feet and is not able to be used by wheelchairs and those wishing to push buggies, which is important for those wishing to go from the Copnor corner to the schools or the other direction towards the Surgery. The Parish Council has gained approval from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for a change of the path to Fittleworth stone and the East Woodhay Society is taking ownership on obtaining a grant and will then work to make this change.

On 27th December, approximately 280 from Highclere, Woolton Hill and the surrounding villages met up at The Highclere Red House for the 34th Annual Village Christmas Walk. This year the weather was very kind and a superb total of over £900 was raised via donations made on the walk for the Ark Cancer Centre Charity.

We have undertaken several community events during the past year including a Barn Dance in September, The Wine Quiz in November and a fun quiz and curry evening at the Rampant Cat in January. All were popular and raised money for the charity.

The society also held the first of what is hoped to be a regular January feature aligning with the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and produced an analysis of birds which feature in gardens in our area. Yes, we do have a different 'most popular' bird (which is a blue tit) than the country as a whole or indeed Hampshire.

To highlight the good things happening within the community the society undertook some features which were included in Spectrum. These included: Patricia Barnes, our 'Litter Warden'; Liz Pudney, our 'Lollipop Lady'; Gainsborough Stud and The Chase with those volunteering.

The WooltonHill.Com website is being handed over to the East Woodhay Society as the previous owner Helen Carlile has moved out of the area. We would like to thank the Parish Council for a donation to help with this. More news on progress of this as we modernise the site will be made during the coming months.

We have around 130 members but we would really like to have additional people join the society and help work with us to continue to improve the quality of life in the area.

OUR GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR ARE 2019/20 – Chairman Mitchell

- Recruit 2 Councillors into the free 9th & 10th seat
- continue to work with the community and BDBC, ensuring official S106 approval procedures are followed, to deliver the desired spending, by the community, of S106 monies.
- continue to work with BDBC to gain final sign off of the Meadowbrook development and in holding Bloor Homes accountable for the delivery of the required remedial changes, ensuring residents are informed of progress.
- work with BDBC, to help define and follow a legal process to deliver the community land at Meadowbrook, to Parish ownership and then kick off the community orchard project.
- Continue to work with land owners and house owner to ensure there is awareness on ditch maintenance
- Continue to work with landowners to make countryside more accessible to all by removing stiles and replacing at the PC's costs the stiles with gates
- complete the Neighbourhood Plan project through delivery to referendum by the community
- work with the community traffic safety team, to bring forward recommended projects to improve road safety in the Parish.
- Lay a hogging path across the parish field
- Build some extra facilities for exercise and recreation at Woolton Hill recreation ground
- Work with the local police and with their focus to reinvigorate the local Neighbourhood watch and Cold Calling Schemes

***** END *****