

BURITON PARISH COUNCIL

During the year 2019/20 the Parish Council has:

- Welcomed Heidi Coates, Matt Marriott, Samantha Rossiter and Sarah Stevens as new Councillors following the election process in May 2019 which had seen the Council having to operate for a period of time with only six Councillors
- Improved the Council's financial status (re-establishing levels of reserves recommended by auditors to deal with unforeseen circumstances) by obtaining over £20,000 of income due, some of it dating back to 2015/16
- Responded to the rapid spread of ash die back disease by obtaining professional examinations of trees on or near Council-owned land and agreeing to unforeseen expenditure to remove some (which could have potentially become dangerous in the future) in this financial year and some during 2020/21
- Drew the attention of parishioners to this serious disease, as many trees affected are on private land, and provided contact details for sources of help and advice
- Drew the attention of the County Council, Network Rail and Electricity Company to diseased trees on their land, encouraging them to take all appropriate actions
- Responded swiftly and thoroughly to the Coronavirus pandemic by establishing a coordinated approach from the outset with representatives of Neighbourcare Buriton and St Mary's Church: within hours of the Prime Minister's statement on 16 March parish councillors delivered two leaflets to every household in the parish: one requesting new volunteers to join the Neighbourcare team and the other offering help to anyone needing shopping / chemists / urgent supplies or any other assistance
- Welcomed the swift response of about fifty new volunteers, noted that all requests for shopping and prescription runs were subsequently handled successfully and placed thanks on record to all involved: most particularly to Peter and J-M Nixon for coordinating requests for the service
- Created a special COVID-19 part of the community website with local and national advice and information; supported by e-mail circulations to alert parishioners to a range of issues including scams from fraudsters, requests from the Petersfield Foodbank and appeals for equipment being sought for NHS workers
- Adopted alternative ways of working in order to continue with Parish Council business whilst upholding democratic principles and compliance with public health guidance
- Studied all planning applications in the parish and submitted comments to the planning authorities, drawing upon the Buriton Village Design Statement, which continues to help to deter out-of-character development proposals
- Continued to try to protect the Dark Night Skies via representations on planning applications
- Welcomed the adoption of the new South Downs Local Plan, replacing all the policies in the East Hampshire District Plan and the Joint Core Strategy
- Ensured that the Buriton Village Design Statement was swiftly re-adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority as being in conformity with its new Local Plan
- Provided help to other Parish Councils, most recently Upham PC, with the production of Village Design Statements
- Obtained support and assistance from Conservation Officers at the South Downs National Park Authority and from the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust to make a submission for Listed Building status for the historic lime kilns in the Butser Hill Lime Works so as to try to ensure longer term protection of the features with a view to them becoming part of an educational resource when the site is restored
- Worked successfully with the planning authority to replace large intrusive signs at the TJ Butser Quarry site with a smaller number of signs in more appropriate sizes, colours and positioning
- Reported instances of unauthorised work at Monks Walk prior to Planning Conditions being discharged, leading to action from the Planning Authority's Enforcement Officers: issues raised had included drainage, landscaping, external lighting, low transmittance glass, ecological and archaeological issues and adherence to the construction management plan

- Met with Southern Water (and liaised with EHDC Drainage officers) to discuss concerns about the adequacy of the foul water sewerage arrangements for Monks Walk, Old Spot Cottage, the church and other nearby properties
- Continued to point out the unsatisfactory outcome of the planning situation at Monks Walk where it was felt that the Planning Authority was putting the onus to resolve a number of difficult issues onto the Parish Council: parishioners feel that, whilst admitting that the presence of rows of refuse bins waiting to be collected will have visual impacts on the Conservation Area (and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings), the National Park Authority has left the Parish Council to take the blame for this blight in this very sensitive setting
- Attempted to get the estate agents, Wilson Hill, to draw some important planning matters to the attention of any prospective purchasers of the Monks Walk properties but were informed that their “client had always said they will communicate the information directly with the purchasers, so all we have done is simply pass the letters on to the client and left them to deal with them”
- Moved swiftly to try to help new residents in Monks Walk (including medics dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic) obtain adequate phone coverage: including meetings with BT to agree suitable routes for underground cabling which had been left unresolved
- Discussed improvements to the Pond Car Park with residents at Old Spot Cottage and Monks Walk with a view to obtaining small annual financial contributions to provide for an adequate ‘sinking fund’ for maintenance repairs
- Asked the National Park’s Planning Department if the parish could be considered as a pilot area to use Article 4 Directions to help control light pollution in the International Dark Skies Reserve and were disappointed when the Park Authority dismissed the suggestion
- Contacted Forestry England (and Planning Enforcement Officers) about unsightly engineering operations supporting widespread tree felling in parts of the parish, asking whether Planning Permissions should have been sought, requesting that hillsides should be graded back after completion of the operations and seeking information about re-planting plans
- Noted continuing interest in Buriton’s innovative traffic calming and de-cluttering work (undertaken over ten years ago) with visits to the village by other communities and the publication of a summary of the scheme as a ‘Good Practice Case Study’ by the South Downs National Park Authority
- Continued to liaise with Hampshire County Highways and the Queen Elizabeth Country Park about occasional parking problems outside the Halls Hill car park, including measures to help protect the green triangle
- Pressed Highways England to cut back vegetation to improve sight-lines on the northbound slip-road onto the A3, reminding them that this needs to be done every year
- Drawn the attention of the County Council to the overgrown state of the Greenway Lane roundabout, resulting in it being cut and tidied
- Taken actions to alleviate occasional instances of parking problems in the High Street which have been due to events in the village hall, school or church – obtaining agreement from each organisation
- Arranged for HCC’s Highways Department to re-paint the H-bar road markings and the school’s Keep-Clear road markings in the High Street to reinforce these parking prohibition measures
- Welcomed the new signage on Kiln Lane, requested by the Parish Council to try to deter speeding traffic down the hill including cyclists
- Continued to employ the services of the parish lengthman (in conjunction with other Parish Councils), carrying out a programme of minor works on highways and footpaths
- Worked closely with residents in Weston about highways and Rights of Way matters
- Reported problems on Rights of Way via the County Council’s online reporting system, resolved minor issues with landowners and submitted cutting priorities to HCC
- Arranged for a team of HCC’s Rights of Way volunteers to spend a day in October re-establishing the route of the Public Footpath along The Links, with a follow-up visit scheduled for May 2020
- Asked a landowner in Weston to consider replacing the one remaining stile on Footpath 34 with a kissing gate so as to make things easier for elderly people, those with mobility problems and young families (with the Parish Council willing to cover all the costs) – being disappointed when the landowner refused, explaining that he had erected a pole by the stile to help

- Pursued an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate about the County Council's decisions about BOATs 19 and 47 (trying to get HCC to alter their status to bridleways, citing grounds of public safety, public expenditure and environmental damage) but were ultimately unsuccessful in this attempt to get motorised vehicles removed from these popular Rights of Way
- Organised another successful 'community litter-picking' event with thanks to Adam and Hannah Griffiths for coordination
- Continued a campaign to try to reduce dog-fouling around the parish by asking children at Buriton School to draw posters for widespread display and by circulating details of fines / penalties provided by the District Council's Animal Welfare Team. But we were disappointed that there was no follow-up from McDonalds after a request for help with a litter pick and for them to use the children's litter posters at their premises
- Reported occasional incidents of fly-tipping to the District Council and arranged for them to take action to remove a number of abandoned cars in the parish
- Alerted parishioners to reports of minor crimes and suspicious vehicles in nearby parishes – and encouraged parishioners to make reports to the Police
- Obtained agreement from the Village Inn that it would be willing to host the provision of a defibrillator and, with help from Councillor Mocatta, explored potential funding sources
- Begun to explore the possibility of being a pilot area, with the County Council, for an innovative Pollinator Project: to explore low cost actions to improve conditions so as to retain the vital roles that they play in helping farmers produce crops
- Arranged for the memorial seat adjacent to the Chalk Pits pond to be repainted
- Coordinated arrangements for activities to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2 (both VE Day and VJ Day), including employing contractors to clean the war memorial
- Noted that the fund-raising target for the commemorative bench (to recognise the contributions made by a wide range of parishioners during international conflicts) had been reached and commissioned stonemasons to produce the agreed design
- Entered into discussions with Post Office officials to see if it may be possible for a van to make a weekly visit to Buriton whilst the church remains closed during the virus pandemic
- Complained to Network Rail about large-scale, noisy works undertaken during the Easter holiday period without any prior notification which: had adverse effects on wildlife during the bird nesting season; disturbed many villagers for a long period of time whilst families were locked down and working from home; and which saw vehicles, trailers and a block of portable toilets / canteen / shower room occupying our car park without any permissions being sought
- Continued a wide-ranging programme of maintenance and testing of equipment and facilities in the village hall including health and safety assessments
- Purchased enhancements to the sound system, new fire alarm call points, replacement external lighting in the car park and a new thermometer for the water tank
- Undertook a precautionary full inspection and cleaning of the water system (including cleaning and disinfection of tanks) to minimise risks of legionella, in addition to continuing to record monthly readings of water temperatures
- Noted the significant improvements (including cost reductions) brought about by the new boiler installed in the village hall
- Welcomed the opening of the new Dottie Tots nursery on 7 May and worked closely with the new team to try to help interest and support
- Initiated a review of insurance values for Parish Council buildings, to include coordination with the Asset Register, as this has not been done for some years
- Undertaken inspections, repairs and maintenance of the new playground facilities
- Renegotiated the cutting contract for the Recreation Ground
- Pressed Network Rail to address trees on their land which were damaging (and lowering) the fence along the edge of the recreation ground
- Pressed Network Rail to improve the condition of the fencing along the edge of the recreation ground after they had claimed that there were no issues needing attention
- Responded to a number of consultations, including an EHDC consultation about dog fouling
- Studied new Government Regulations for Public Bodies' websites with a view to making any changes required in time for the September 2020 deadline

- Planted a number of new trees on the Recreation Ground with a Copper Beech dedicated as a commemorative tree for VE Day and the creation of a new copse of Field Maples which should, in time, provide a new visual feature, a home for wildlife and, by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide, a small contribution towards tackling climate change
- Enabled councillors to attend training about financial responsibilities for parish councils
- Renegotiated its Insurance Policy, with advice from specialist Insurance Brokers, obtaining improved value for money
- Nominated Doug Jones for re-election to the South Downs National Park Authority for another four years and welcomed his appointment after a ballot in the District
- Pressed our bank to resolve long-standing problems with our arrangements
- Continued to provide small grants to St Mary's Church and to the Parish Magazine
- Thanked all the teams of volunteers who assist with community projects, including: those who work regularly in Local Nature Reserves; those who have recently volunteered to help obtain a defibrillator and those who planned all the activities to commemorate VE Day; the team who are coordinating the commemorative bench project; the parishioners who took part in the annual litter picking event; and, of particular importance at the end of this Council year, everyone who is helping with shopping, prescription collections and other tasks for households who are vulnerable and self-isolating during the Coronavirus pandemic
- Included a number of new initiatives in financial plans for 2020-21, with an emphasis on the environment and our community: some more ash trees will need to be felled but new trees will be planted and work is planned to further improve the energy efficiency of the village hall. There are also plans to enhance the adjacent car park with a permeable surface, tree protection measures and spaces for cycle parking – and the Annual Parish Meeting was due to focus on the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss (potentially with the involvement of the school). Unfortunately, due to the Government Restrictions on Public Meetings, this was not possible
- Recognised that it may be valuable to consider other priorities for the future (alongside challenges of climate change and the global ecological crisis) if local issues emerge from the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.