



# EFFINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Chairman's Report 2013 - 2014

[www.effinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.effinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Without a doubt, the past year has been the most active & challenging for the Parish Council for many years. There have been successes & good progress made on a number of issues & initiatives but this has been balanced by external pressures which have needed very careful consideration & detailed consultations responses.

Our new Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer, Clare Ritchie, is now fully up to speed on all Parish matters following a seamless take over from Sue Morris to whom thanks are due for the support given, particularly during the handover. We also welcome our newly co-opted Parish Councillor, Dr David Martland, who joined the Council in January and is already making a significant contribution to our work.

**We still have one vacancy on the Parish Council. If you are interested in becoming a Councillor please contact the Chair or Clerk for more information**

### Financial

The Council is funded through Guildford Borough Council's (GBC) local taxation. This is known as the precept and Effingham will receive £55,450 for 2014-15. Although this is an increase of 1.9% on the housing Band D charge, it has resulted in almost no change from last year's budget of £55,369. Indeed, had we not increased the precept by this small percentage, there would have been a decrease in budget for the coming year.

### Guildford Borough Council Local Plan

GBC is developing a Local Plan that will set out the priorities & objectives for Borough housing & development for decades to come. The aim is to have a new plan in place by 2015. In November EPC provided a detailed reply to their *Local Plan Strategy & Sites, Issues & Options* consultation. We thank residents who provided input and sent in their own replies. The consultation was partly based on a consultant (Pegasus) report to GBC, the 'Green Belt and Countryside Study', which included a number of proposals that are of concern to Effingham. One such proposal was to "inset" Effingham, effectively taking us, along with 15 other villages, out of the Green Belt. The Parish Council felt this could be against the interests of maintaining the open village structure of the centre of Effingham and we responded accordingly. EPC also responded to the Borough's draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which concluded that there is a need to build 670-800 houses per annum in the Borough. These figures have been challenged by a number of groups & organisations and the SHMA is now being reconsidered by GBC. The next stage is for GBC to publish a draft Local Plan at which point we shall all have a further opportunity to input our views.

### Mole Valley Green Belt Review & Site Assessments

Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) has also been undertaking a review of the Green Belt. This included proposals to take out many sites from the Green Belt with a view to building homes on at least some of them. A significant number of these sites are in the Green Belt gap between Effingham and Little & Great Bookham,

which, if built on, would close the Green Belt gap between our villages. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) local District Councils are required to consult with each other where changes could have an impact across district borders. EPC supported the local Hands Off the Green Belt group's petition to GBC to ask them to ensure Effingham's interests were fully taken into account in these cross border discussions. (MVDC were also petitioned to ensure our interests were taken into account.) EPC submitted our views on the MVDC consultation and trust they will be properly considered in any decisions on changes to the Green Belt.

### **Howard of Effingham School & Berkley Homes Initiative**

Following the purchase of the Effingham Lodge Farm site by Berkeley Homes, Mrs Barnfield, Howard of Effingham, & Mr McPhillips, Berkley Homes, gave a presentation at a well attended Parish Council meeting in October 2013. Their proposed initiative is to rebuild the school on Effingham Lodge Farm, on the opposite side of Lower Road, and to fund the rebuilding through "enabling" housing development on three sites including the current school site. They recently attended the February 2014 EPC meeting to give an update on progress and answer questions from Councillors and residents.

The Council has been disappointed with the communication process on this proposal to date, with delays and cancellations to meetings, and a lack of firm information and proposals. This has left both councillors and residents with concerns on how a process to reach an acceptable solution that meets the needs of both the school and the village will be achieved. EPC hope that more formal discussion events and communications will lead to more meaningful consultations.

Berkeley Homes will be hosting a drop in exhibition session on Saturday 26 April, 10.00am-3.00pm at the KGV Hall, Browns Lane, Effingham. Berkeley Homes will be available to discuss plans for the sites and information will be available on indicative proposals. Residents are encouraged to come along & get involved in what will be the start of a consultation process.

### **Village Plan**

With all the initiatives & consultations that we have been involved with during the year, we decided to limit our activities on the development of our village plan to issues that fitted in with GBC consultation on issues & options for their new Local Plan. Hence, before Christmas we carried out a Housing Requirements Survey, delivering & collecting survey forms at every home in the village. We are very pleased that over 60% of the forms were returned & we are currently analysing the replies. The survey will help us answer some of the biggest questions facing us – if extra homes are to be built in Effingham, how many & what sort of homes should they be? The information we have gathered will directly feed into Guildford's database and should be influential in providing a sound basis for any negotiations. Initial findings from the survey will be presented at the Council's Annual Parish Meeting on 22 April 2014.

### **Lengthsman's Initiative**

Surrey County Council has made funds available to Parish Councils for local communities to carry out additional highways groundworks to improve their villages. Our County Councillor, Bill Barker, has actively supported this initiative and secured funding for 2013/14 of which Effingham has received a share. This funding has been used to improve walkways, trim hedges, carry out tree maintenance and clear scrub, additional works to the normal cutting of the verges carried out by SCC contractors.

## **Flooding**

Whilst Effingham has been less affected by flooding than many areas in the Thames Valley, we have suffered! The deep “pond” on Orestan Lane, west of The Plough pub probably caused the worst disruption to the village. Access to the electrical sub-station & the drains in the compound has dramatically improved this issue and our thanks go to all those who helped resolve this.

Flooding on the spring line along Lower Road, near the Howard school resulted in pupils having to walk in the flooded road to get to school from Bookham. EPC supported a Bookham Residents' Association initiative to build up the footpath that runs behind the school all the way to The Lawn in Bookham. An allocation from the lengthsman's funding allowed the Effingham end of the path to be rebuilt with the work carried out during the Spring half-term week. The footpath surface is now much improved for walkers.

## **Critten Lane (Continuing South from Beech Avenue)**

This road has been in an increasingly poor state. Just before Christmas we were informed, with very little warning, that the road would be closed for repair for several days in the week commencing 16 Dec 2013. Unfortunately, St Teresa's School had not been given enough warning of the closure to adjust school transport arrangements & the work was deferred. Following the subsequent bad weather, we are still awaiting rescheduling of this work by SCC.

## **The Henry Smith Charity**

The object of the Smith Charity is “to provide for the relief of the poor, aged or infirm and their advancement in life within the parish of Effingham”. The fund is there to provide a little bit of extra help & support to those amongst us who could benefit. A small group of parishioners, representing Effingham Parish Council and the three churches, administer the fund & decide on cases of need. All the work is conducted in strict confidence & only the Trustees are aware of the circumstances of each case. If you feel you have need of some help, or know of somebody who could benefit please contact the Parish Clerk.

## **Community Fund**

The Council also has a small grant making fund, the Community Fund, which provides grants to village organisations & groups to support projects which benefit Effingham residents. Applications can be made at any time. Please contact the Parish Clerk for more information.

## **Effingham Village Recreation Trust (EVRT)**

The Parish Council has been regularly updated by EVRT's Managing Trustees throughout the year on progress as they have addressed & updated the key processes & financial strategy for the Trust. The work carried out by the Trustees over the year has been thorough and the Parish Council, as Custodian Trustee, supports the new financial strategy & its aim to secure a sustainable financial future for the Trust. Whilst issues remain over licence negotiations, the Parish Council are satisfied that these issues are being managed appropriately. The Parish Council, as a body, have also been pleased to support the new pedestrian access project on the A246 near the bus stop and the nest swing with funding from the Community Fund. The Parish Council would like to thank the Managing Trustees for the huge amount of time & commitment they have put in over the last year.

## Planning Matters

The major planning concern of the year was the appeal to build a large Care Home on the old St Lawrence School playing field site on Church Road. EPC opposed the planning application and spoke at the Public Inquiry on the appeal. We are pleased that our concerns, and those of residents were accepted by the inspector & the appeal was turned down.

## Commoners' Day

A date for the diary - Commoners' Day will be taking place on Sunday 28 Sept 2014. Residents are invited to come & explore the Common, learn about its history and see Commoners' exercising their rights to graze their animals.

## Parish Council Meetings

Residents are invited to the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday, 22 April, 8.00pm, KGV Hall, Browns Lane, Effingham for an update on Parish Council activities over the last year. Residents can also attend the Ordinary Parish Council meetings to listen to proceedings. These meetings usually take place at 8.00pm, KGV Hall, Browns Lane on the last Tuesday of the month. Dates & agendas can be viewed on the Council's noticeboard adjacent to the Post Office and on our website. Residents can address the council or ask questions during the agenda item Matters Raised by Residents.

## Thanks

I sincerely thank all our Parish Councillors and our Parish Clerk, for the support and commitment given to the village over the past year. Our work this year has been more demanding than in previous years. I believe between us we have strength, breadth & depth that ensures that all matters are fully considered before decisions are taken.

Also on behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank the many people who have helped out over the last year. It would be impossible for the council to successfully achieve what we have achieved in such a busy year without support from local residents.

## Contacts

Cllr Arnold Pindar, Chair  
Cllr Chris Bell  
Cllr Liz Hogger  
Cllr David Martland  
Cllr James Wetenhall

Cllr Ian Symes, Vice Chair  
Cllr Gill Bowerman  
Cllr Andrea Lightfoot  
Cllr Paula Moss  
Clerk - Clare Ritchie

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## Arnold Pindar

### Chairman, Effingham Parish Council

Parish Room Opening Hours - 11.00-1.00pm, Mondays & Thursday