



Holybrook Parish Council

Serving the communities of Beansheaf Farm & Fords Farm for over 20 years

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL AND RESIDENTS May 2021

The Annual Assembly, which usually takes place in May, is an opportunity for members of the public to learn what activities the Parish Council and various organisations within the Parish have carried out during the year. It is also an opportunity to raise any issues with the Parish Council.

Unfortunately, due to the on-going situation with the Covid-19 pandemic, Holybrook Parish, for the second year, was unable to hold its Annual Assembly and this report has been produced in its place.

The Council:

We were sorry to accept Cllr Sarju Mistry's resignation from the Council as he no longer lives in the area but are pleased to welcome Biyi Oloko as a new Councillor. We still have vacancies, so if any community minded residents feel they would like to be involved, please contact the Parish Clerk for more information.

Covid has really changed our way of working and our contact with the residents of Holybrook. Following Government guidelines, our meetings, over the last year, have been held on Zoom. Our clerk and administration assistant have been working from home and we are, indeed, grateful to them both for carrying out their parish duties with such diligence and flexibility. Bookings at the Beansheaf Centre have been carefully planned around the strict Covid health and safety guidance which has been a challenge but we are very proud to have had the centre available for the permitted groups offering invaluable services during these times such as the Beansheaf Pre-school. Hopefully, we are now getting back to a more normal existence and we will be able to welcome more of our regular hirers back again. Parish Staff will also be making a gradual return to the office.

Planning in Holybrook:

We have had a large number of Planning Applications coming forward as residents are extending their properties rather than moving and we always listen to concerns from residents when considering our comments to West Berks Council. We welcome the news that the Murdoch's site on the Bath Road is being developed after being derelict for so many years. The Bellway site at Dorking Way, building 199 new properties, is progressing rapidly but has been causing some disruption to the lives of nearby residents. We try to work with West Berks Council to ensure that any inconvenience is kept to a minimum.

The application to build 265 dwellings at Pincents Lane/Hill is still being considered by West Berks Planning Department. The Save Pincents Hill Group has been active and 2600 objections have been sent to West Berks Council. Although not in our Parish, increased traffic and the loss of this green space would have an impact on our residents.

There is some Community Infrastructure Levy money coming to the Council from the building of 199 houses at Dorking Way. Consultation with residents has already begun to help decide which projects can be taken forward to benefit the parish. Our Community and Environment committee are engaged in looking generally at enhancements for the area including improving footpaths; where there are none and the condition of those that exist. Missing dropped kerbs will also be addressed.

The Holybrook Festival:

Due to Covid, the Holybrook Festival could not take place in 2020 and, sadly, we have been unable to form a Committee to ensure its continuation. The planning of such an event needs people to commit time and we needed at least two Councillors plus residents to take on this project. For the past few years we have been unable to attract enough residents to commit to the planning of the event or even just help on the day.

There may be other Community events which residents would like to be involved in and we are always open to suggestions.

Projects in the Parish:

The much needed Beansheaf Centre kitchen refurbishment took place in July which will be welcomed by our hirers.

Our playgrounds, at The Holybrook Centre and Underwood Road, are refreshed on a regular basis and inspections regularly carried out. A new slide was installed at Holybrook last year and is well used.

The old tractor shed known as The Garage, at the back of the Beansheaf Centre, is now owned by the Parish (previously belonging to WBC) and there are plans to make good use of this facility. West Berks Council is interested in using it for as a Cycle Hub to encourage more cycling and, hopefully, there will be some summer events for families based around safe cycling. Other uses for the benefit of the community will be considered.

We are fortunate that, during these testing times, we have the beautiful Linear Park on our door-step, which has been well used by residents and others. The Parish Council, to celebrate the 20-years since the inception of Holybrook Parish, promised to plant 20 trees in the Linear Park. With the assistance of West Berks Council and Friends of the Linear Park 20 fruit trees, of seven different varieties, have now been planted at the Hawkesbury Drive end of the park. These will be a joy to behold when in flower with, hopefully, plenty of fruit to be enjoyed. The group of trees is to be named 'The Anniversary Orchard'.

Social Media:

Facebook and Twitter keep our residents informed with information that comes into the Parish Office from outside organisations such as West Berks Council and the Police etc.

Our newsletter is still being delivered to each household 6 times a year and the new noticeboards are another way of communicating with residents.

Our website hosts an array of information including local planning applications, agendas and minutes of the Parish Council and the council's financial information.

Other Parish Organisations:

The Neighbourhood Action Group has been meeting on Zoom approximately every six weeks and is now seeking to have these meetings face-to-face. New members would be welcome to discuss issues which affect residents. If they are beyond our parish remit, then the appropriate authorities are contacted.

The Parish Council has awarded the following grants over the 2020/21 financial year:

The MS Therapy Centre - £350.00
Standby Volunteer Group - £200.00

And Finally:

I give thanks to Vice-Chairman, Claire Tull and all of our Councillors for the support given throughout the year. We are fortunate to have a variety of skills within the council and we are dedicated to ensure that our residents feel that Holybrook is a good place to live. We work closely with our District Councillors to ensure good communication links with West Berks Council.

Mary Bedwell
Chairman Holybrook Parish Council