



## Parish Council Chairman's Report

Dear Resident

April 2024

On behalf of Little Berkhamsted Parish Council, it is my pleasure to present our Annual Report detailing some of the Council's activities. This will be discussed in more detail at the **Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 7.30pm in the village hall** to which you are all invited. This is not a formal PC meeting but your chance to get involved, comment and ask questions - whether you have ever been to a meeting before or not. After the meeting there will be complimentary drinks and nibbles and an opportunity to chat with councillors, friends and neighbours. We will also be showing a short slide show of photographs of the village from the archives.

Last May we welcomed local resident, Bob Deering, as our new Ward Councillor. Alongside Ken Crofton, our County Councillor, he supports the Parish Council and provides a link with East Herts District Council (EHDC). His input into planning enforcement and highways issues has been particularly welcome. At the moment there are a number of local planning enforcement cases that are of considerable concern to residents. To date Councillor Deering and the PC have done everything they can, and we await further investigations by the Planning Enforcement team at EHDC.

The condition of the highways is another area frequently raised by residents. Cllr Crofton provided funding from his locality budget to repair a large section of Church Road. The re surfacing has still to be done but our thanks to him as this is already a huge improvement.

Support from both Cllr Deering and Cllr Crofton have helped ensure that several traffic speed and volume surveys have been carried out in the village this year. Now they have this data we are hopeful that Herts County Council (HCC) Highways officers can suggest some traffic calming measures in the village very soon.

We are pleased to report that this year excellent use has been made of the recently refurbished pavilion. Alongside Little Berkhamsted Sahibs Cricket Club, Apple Day Care, Home Farm Dog Training and the Community Café make regular use of the building and the recreation field. It has also been let for private parties and a village wedding and it was used for the village's celebrations of the King's Coronation last May. A new venture, providing alpaca walks is starting soon and there is another village wedding reception being held on the field in the summer. The Community Café was asked to become part of the East Herts Healthy Hubs Project and our thanks to Cllr Elaine Hunter for all the time and work she has put into this.

This year the Parish Council has turned its attention to the village hall because this very old building needed insulation and other energy saving improvements to make it fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The PC managed to secure a grant from the Shared Prosperity Fund for some of this work and fund raising through the village clothing bank, the East Herts Lottery and the Coronation event auction also contributed towards the costs. We have just received a grant from EHDC for new heaters and thermal roller blinds. It has taken a significant amount of time and energy to see the project through but this work as well as internal decoration has now been completed and our thanks go to Cllr Derek Standbrook who led on this project. We were asked to share our knowledge and experience gained from this project with other councils and village halls looking to 'go green' so in March Derek did a presentation to the Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) conference. At the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April there will be a short presentation about the history of the village hall and an official 'reopening'.



As well as being warmer and more energy efficient the hall now looks very smart and is a great space for both village events and private hirers.

The Master Arts Workshops are regular hirers with a variety of workshops generally held one Saturday a month throughout the year. With parking available year-round on the recreation field, internet access, an overhead projector and screen, table tennis table, disabled access and toilet facilities, a fully equipped kitchen and tables and chairs the hall is capable of hosting a variety of events. The venue has been used for exercise classes, receptions, training courses, meetings, fund raising events, parties and film nights over the years so please consider using it for your next event – particularly as parish residents enjoy a reduced hourly charge. There will be a calendar showing availability, booking forms and further information on the new website which will simplify the process.

Our thanks to all those who voluntarily help to keep the village and local area clean and tidy. This includes regular surveying of the footpaths and bridleways, planting up the containers, cleaning the bus shelter, cutting the grass around the war memorial, and collecting litter. Regarding the latter, particular thanks go to Georgie Deering. Her unstinting efforts on the local roads have meant that there has been no need of an organised Litter Pick this year. Thanks too to Laura Brookes Payne, the Parish Clerk, Sandie Ash and Simon Hedley for the work that they do for the PC.

It is not the role of the PC to organise village social events and the village badly needs volunteers if these are to happen. However, the PC will be lighting the village beacon on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June as a mark of respect for all those who gave their lives in the Second World War, particularly on D Day, 80 years ago. Everyone is very welcome to attend.



My tenure as Chairperson has now come to an end and I shall be standing down from the PC in May. It has been my pleasure to volunteer, and I have particularly enjoyed meeting you all and being instrumental in bringing about improvements to the village and parish. There will be vacancies on the PC in May so I encourage you to consider applying. As you can see from this report the work does require time outside of the bi-monthly PC meetings but it can be very rewarding working on behalf of residents across all the areas mentioned above. Please contact one of the councillors or Laura, the Parish Clerk, for more information.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We welcome your feedback either via email [clerk@littleberkhamsted.org.uk](mailto:clerk@littleberkhamsted.org.uk) or at the Annual Parish Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

I look forward to seeing many of you then,

Penny Stokes

Chair of Little Berkhamsted PC