

Parish Council Chairman's Report for 2022

The past two years have been very difficult for many people, but now as we return to a more normal life I would like to share with you what the Parish Council has been doing during that time.

General

We have worked particularly hard on the Bolney Ultrafast broadband project which aims to ensure that the village benefits from high speed full fibre broadband, particularly for those with poor download speeds. This has taken a lot of time and much effort by the team, which is still ongoing. We are still on target for completion by November this year.

The Parish Council is always present on Village Day to talk to residents about current issues in the parish or discuss their potential involvement in our activities.

Roads and Footpaths

We have installed our Speed Indicator Device (SID) at various locations around the parish so that residents and visitors can be aware of their speed. This device also collates data to help us review potential problem areas. It does however appear that the majority of speeding offenders are Bolney residents!

We constantly monitor gullies, areas prone to flooding and fly-tipping, and have installed new rubbish bins in the lay-bys on the approach to the A23 and on the A272.

Councillors frequently walk the footpaths within the parish and report issues to West Sussex County Council that cannot be managed by the Bolney Volunteers. The Diamond Jubilee Walk leaflets originally printed in 2012 were reprinted with updates last year to refresh the walks in time for the Platinum Jubilee.

Grants

The Parish Council supports local groups through grants towards the cost of providing services and purchasing equipment. During the past two years we have awarded the Friends of Bolney School a total of £950 towards the cost of music sessions, a Forest School and a new potting shed. The Bolney Community Café received £300 towards a bench, picnic table and Covid screens, and £250 went to the Bolney Volunteers to cover the cost of repairing damaged plants and beds.

We also support maintenance of the churchyard through a yearly grant to the Parish Church, and an annual grant goes to the Rawson Hall to help with keeping the outside public toilet open.

At the end of each financial year we consider grant requests from other organisations which provide services to Bolney residents. During the past two years we have given grants to St Peter and St James Hospice, St Catherine's Hospice, Age UK, the Air Ambulance Trust and 4Sight Vision.

Bolney Volunteers

We work in close partnership with the Bolney Volunteers who carry out a great deal of community work in the parish.

A grant was received from the Sussex Community Foundation which enabled the purchase of a new grit spreader, lawn mower and high viz clothing for use by the Volunteers in the parish.

We also received funding to help pay for refurbishment work on the fingerposts in the parish that are our responsibility. Some of these funds paid for outside expertise, but much of the work is being done by the Volunteers themselves.

During the pandemic, an emergency phone number was publicised in order to support residents who required help of any type, and requests we received concerned assistance with shopping, collecting prescriptions, or even lifts to appointments. This number is still in use and the team can be contacted on 07752 274952.

The Volunteers also maintain the War Memorial and carry out regular litter picks in the parish.

Three flowering cherry trees were planted along the A272 this year, purchased by the Parish Council to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Planning and Development

The Planning Committee is currently made up of five Parish Councillors. In the past year alone, they considered 56 planning applications: of these, MSDC approved three and refused four that the Planning Committee had objected to, and refused one to which they had no objection. Three were withdrawn and eleven still await a final decision. The remaining thirty-four received no objection from the Committee and were subsequently approved by MSDC.

In addition to routine Planning Applications the Committee has to deal with many other planning issues.

As part of the new Marylands Development they tried very hard to obtain agreement for a roundabout at the A272/London Road junction but were sadly unsuccessful. However, an extra lane down to the junction is planned, and traffic lights will be installed here as part of the Northern Arc development; these improvements may alleviate rush hour queueing.

Plans for a further substation in the area from a new off-shore windfarm, Rampion 2, are ongoing. The Planning Committee has responded to the consultations with very robust arguments against siting it next to the existing substation in Bolney.

Proposals have also been put forward by Envirotech for a battery storage facility near the Rampion 1 substation; this project is at a very early stage, but the Planning Committee is keen to ensure that for safety and environmental reasons it is not installed in this rural area.

The Committee also liaised with MSDC in order to ensure that a tree preservation order (TPO) was placed on the woodland north of Ryecroft Road at the request of residents who wanted this piece of land to be protected from further destruction.

Finally, efforts are now under way to produce an appropriate response to the review of the District Plan, which involves four sites in Bolney that would almost double the number of homes in and around the centre of the village. We are working closely with the Bolney Action Group on emphasising the important issues that would affect our community in light of this threat of excessive development.

Finally, if you would like to be more involved in the life of the village, and have the time, we still have a vacancy for a new Parish Councillor. Contact our Parish Clerk, Debbie Thomas, at clerk@bolney.com, talk to one of the councillors and visit the village website at bolney.com.