

Parish Council Chairman's Report for 2023

Welcome to the Parish Assembly for 2023. I would like to share with you what the Parish Council has been doing during the past year.

Bolney Ultrafast Broadband

We have continued to work very hard with residents and Openreach to complete the Bolney Ultrafast broadband project which will ensure that the village benefits from high-speed full fibre broadband, particularly for those with poor download speeds. The final build is now nearing completion following rolling road closures throughout the parish and once it has been tested, full fibre will be available.

Roads and Footpaths

We submitted an application for a 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village in November to increase safety for pedestrians due to the lack of pavements in some of the roads. The application has scored well and we hope it will progress to a consultation with residents.

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) also continues to be used at various locations around the parish so that residents and visitors can be aware of their speed.

A councillor also attends regular briefings held by Sussex Police concerning Road Safety and by Gatwick Airport concerning the Future Airspace Strategy implementation, to understand how these issues might affect Bolney.

Councillors frequently walk the footpaths within the parish and report issues to West Sussex County Council that cannot be managed by the Bolney Volunteers. A recent example of a footpath issue resolved is the resurfacing of footpath 37Bo to the south of Colwood Lane.

Grants

The Parish Council supports local groups through grants towards the cost of providing services and purchasing equipment. During the past year we have awarded the Bolney Volunteers £1,000 to purchase a second-hand ride-on mower and the Bolney Community Cafe received £400 towards the cost of a new coffee machine.

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 and this year awarded £100 to 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.

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

They have recently installed new benches in some of the bus shelters and donated four to the local school.

The fingerpost restoration project has remained ongoing throughout the year and the majority of them have now been refurbished.

The Bolney Volunteers still provide an emergency phone number that can be used in order to support residents who require help. The team can be contacted on 07752 274952.

Transport

The council is currently in the process of conducting an online and paper survey to find out if there is a need for additional public transport facilities in the parish which could be facilitated by a Community Transport Scheme. A link to the form can be found in the Parish Magazine and paper copies of the form are available in the entrance lobby of the Rawson Hall.

Planning and Development

The Planning Committee is currently made up of four Parish Councillors. In the past year alone, they considered 50 planning applications: of these, MSDC approved six and refused two that the Planning Committee had objected to, and refused six to which they had no objection. Four were withdrawn and nine still await a final decision. The remaining twenty-three received no objections from the Committee and were subsequently approved by MSDC.

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

During the past year they responded very robustly against siting a new substation for the Rampion 2 project on land next to the existing substation in Bolney. Following the consultation this is now going to be located in Cowfold.

Two proposals have also been put forward for battery energy storage facilities near the existing substation in Bolney. Detailed responses have been sent in response to these, concerning the health and safety problems with these applications in terms of their closeness to residential properties, issues with road access and the risk of fire for which there is an insufficient water supply.

Finally, a huge amount of work was undertaken throughout the year in preparation for a response to the Draft District Plan. Initially four sites were being considered which was then reduced to one site at Foxhole Farm, for a yield of 200 homes. A very detailed response was submitted which is now available to view in full on the District Plan pages of the MSDC website.

Finally

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.

We also welcome residents to our Council meetings which are usually held on the third Tuesday of each month, starting at 8pm at the Rawson Hall. Full details can be found on the website at www.bolney.com.