

Edlesborough Parish Council

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Presented to Edlesborough Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 18th April 2013

This is my third report as Chairman and covers the period April 2012 – March 2013.

During the year, further progress has been made in the Council's continuing endeavours to encourage **more parishioner involvement and interest in Council and community affairs**. For the first time ever, a Parish Council Meeting was held in each of Northall and Dagnall, where eleven and sixteen parishioners respectively attended for the whole meeting. Probably much to their surprise, many of them found the proceedings very interesting and informative! Their contributions and feedback were certainly much appreciated by the Council. It is now the Council's intention to hold meetings in the villages of Northall and Dagnall on an annual basis.

During the year the Council continued to publish regular 'News Reports' in 'Focus' each month, and on occasions, supplemented this by using its e-mail list to share some issues with parishioners. The website www.edlesborough.gov.uk still remains as the main notice board for all Parish Council activities and local news, and it appears to be used more and more by parishioners

The Council has also instigated a series of meetings with the existing four Sports Clubs so that their members can take a more active interest and responsibility in the running of the Pavilion. This has now led to a Public Meeting being planned for the 16th June 2013 in Edlesborough Memorial Hall. The Meeting will be hosted by representatives of the Parish Council, existing Sports Clubs and others interested in improving the sports and social facilities in the village.



The Council hopes that as many parishioners as possible will attend, as it is their opportunity to help shape and influence the future sporting and social life in Edlesborough - and in particular - the future of Edlesborough Pavilion.

Of course, strong community involvement is still very much at the heart of the highly successful EDaN (the Edlesborough, Dagnall and Northall) Parish Plan Steering Group and its various Action Teams:

- the **Transportation Team**, whose **Community Car Scheme** has just celebrated its second anniversary. With 16 drivers, 43 registered passengers and some 424 trips so far, the Scheme has gone from strength to strength in providing car lifts for residents on local journeys to hospitals shops, doctors' surgery etc. More drivers would be very welcome, especially from Edlesborough and Northall. Please contact Peter Williams on 01442 842506 to learn how you could make a valuable contribution to your community.
- the **Traffic Management Team**, which is now focusing its attention on the width/pinch points and inappropriate use of the A4146 by heavy goods vehicles, especially London waste lorries. The Team is also aiming to raise funds to replace the existing 'Speed Watch' radar equipment (three volunteers needed for each session), with the latest 'Sentinel' version which can be operated almost remotely.

- the **Cycleways, Pavements and Footpaths Team**, whose work has stalled somewhat during the year, but it should be reinvigorated by interest and possible funds from the Local Area Forum of Bucks County Council, who are beginning to provide some help on new cycleways.
- the **‘Friends of the Church on the Hill at Edlesborough’ Team**, whose mission is to make much more community use of this wonderful part of our heritage and thereby help to safeguard it for centuries to come. They have met with the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), and the Historic Buildings Officer of Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC), who have been very supportive of the Friends’ plans to install a kitchen and toilets, and who made some constructive suggestions. Further progress has also been made in pursuing the Beautifying the Villages Team’s project to flood-light the church, and the CCT’s desire for the church to be much more freely open to visitors. There are a lot of ‘stakeholders’ to satisfy to get anything done, but the Friends are very strong in numbers and resolute in achieving their objectives.

The ‘Friends’ are hoping that lots of parishioners and others will attend at least one of the many ambitious events being held in the first ever **Edlesborough Arts Festival**, which will take place at the Church on the 7th, 8th and 9th of June 2013.

Although the ‘Friends’ will continue to work closely with the Parish Council and the EDaN Beautifying the Villages Team, they are planning to become an independent entity, with their own constitution, trustees and bank account etc. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Alan Williams for his determination and leadership in playing such a pivotal role in helping to get the ‘Friends’ established.

- the **Beautifying the Villages Team**, whose work in Edlesborough over the past few years was particularly recognised by the judges when they awarded Edlesborough as the winner of the Best Kept Village in Buckinghamshire competition for 2013.

Since the Council originally began work on preparing a Parish Plan in 2005, it has provided total funds of £14,245 and EDaN has been very successful in raising its own funds of £17,535, making a total EDaN income of £31,780. Expenditure to date has been £25,069 leaving a balance of £6,711 to be carried forward for projects in 2013/14.



On behalf of the Council, and indeed all parishioners, I should like to place on record our very grateful thanks and appreciation for the splendid work being carried out by all the **EDaN** teams.

The Parish Council continues to spend a lot of its time on **Traffic Calming**, speed and parking matters. Following the hard-fought for implementation of the delayed Speed Review in April 2012, Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), had to be chased relentlessly to paint the various and much needed 30mph roundels on the roads in Northall. BCC continue to be chased to remove all the redundant speed sign posts in Northall, Edlesborough and Dagnall. New “dragon’s teeth” on the relocated 30 mph A4146 entry to Edlesborough near Sparrow Hall Farm, will be installed by BCC when the old teeth have worn out.

The Parish Council had originally campaigned for the speed limit on the whole of the A4146 from Travellers Rest to Edlesborough to be reduced from the national speed limit of 60mph to 40mph. In

the event, the 40mph limit was only approved for the first 300m from Travellers Rest. The Council has, however, continued its campaign because of parishioners' real concerns about traffic turning into and from Ivinghoe Way and Cocks Close/Pebblemoor, and the lack of a "buffer" zone entering the 30mph limit at Church End. BCC have re-affirmed their view that the stretch of 60 mph 4146 does not meet Government guide lines for 40mph, but there might be a remote possibility of a 50mph limit, subject to further speed analysis. To enable this analysis to go ahead the Parish Council has agreed to pay the costs.

Following AVDC's introduction of the new re-cycling bin scheme last autumn, the Parish Council provided additional bin stickers to maintain weekly continuity of the campaign to make drivers aware of the appropriate 30 and 40mph speed limits in the parish.

In June, the final section of white '**no parking**' lines was installed by BCC - between the bus stop cage in the High Street and its junction with the A4146. This has certainly helped deter inconsiderate and illegal parking which otherwise makes it so hazardous for vehicles entering and leaving the High Street at this dangerous junction with the A4146.

BCC has been requested to provide a school crossing patrol in Dunstable Road, Dagnall. The outcome will depend on the results of a survey regarding the volume of traffic using the Dunstable Road between 8.20am and 8.50am whilst children and parents are endeavouring to cross this very busy road on the way to Dagnall School.

The long delayed opening of the 'Gaddesden Walk' in Dunstable Road, Dagnall now depends on BCC's safety audit of a proposal to erect 10m of road side barriers to prevent children rushing out of the footpath and into the busy road.

Many parishioners have complained over the years of the chronic car parking at the surgery in Cow Lane. The Parish Council's suggestion to utilise some of the amenity land between the surgery and the rear gardens of the houses in Wren Walk was, unfortunately, ruled out by AVDC because of the original legal restrictions placed on the land by the donor developer and AVDC.

Turning now to some of the amenities provided by the Parish Council:

- Following the U5s move to Edlesborough School last summer, some progress has been made in finding new hirers for **Edlesborough Memorial Hall** (EMH). However, these efforts should be enhanced by the planned replacement of the existing chairs with new, more comfortable upholstered chairs in May 2013. The Council is very grateful for generous donations from the Burghope Trust and Edlesborough WI to pay for 50 and 10 of these new chairs respectively, leaving just the balance of 20 chairs to be funded by the Council.

The total gross cost of operating the Hall during the year was £9,279; the total income was £7,358, leaving a net cost of £1,921 for 2012/13.

- **Edlesborough Green:** in addition to the normal meticulous cutting of the grass and hedges, the Parish Council, for the first time in many years, invested additional money in a programme of aerating, feeding and 'community friendly' weed treatment of the grass. Despite an extremely wet summer, the grass and ground conditions were much improved, and the Council has arranged for a similar programme for 2013.

In view of some damage to the Green caused by the 2012 Carnival, the **Carnival** Committee has worked very hard over recent months to develop a 'Bad Weather Contingency Plan', a new 'Green sensitive' layout of stalls and Vehicular Movement Plans which vary according to the weather and ground conditions. All of these plans should avoid any similar problems in 2013.

The Council is currently investigating the costs and benefits of replacing the bark chippings in the existing play ground with a 'wet pour safety surface', similar to that used at the Northall Village Hall Play area.

A great deal of the Council's time over the year was spent in preparing the **Commons Act 2006 Section 38 Application** to Defra for approval to extend the children's play ground, and for retrospective approval of the basket ball stand and tarmac pad, and the pedestrian entry/exit and facilitating strip extension to the Memorial Hall car park. The Application was processed by The Planning Inspectorate on behalf of Defra, and their responses will be considered by the Council immediately following this Annual Parish Meeting.

In any event, the Parish Council will continue its investigations into the validity of the original **1965 common land registration** of the Pebblemoor end of the Green. This registration also included all the land now occupied by The Pastures. The fact that this registration was shown to be invalid and The Pastures area was subsequently cancelled, suggests that the registration of Pebblemoor end of the Green was also incorrect. The Council is keen to have the whole of the Green registered as 'Village Green', which provides all the necessary safeguards without the bureaucracy of the Commons Act.

The total cost of maintaining the Green during the year was £10,434 (including £1,773 cost of maintaining and insuring the play ground). This was offset by some income of £1,100, leaving a net cost of £9,334. ..

- Some of the other amenity costs in 2012/13 were:
 - **Street lighting:** £9,293
 - **Dog Hygiene bin emptying:** £3,862
 - **Cemetery:** £3,294, offset by income of £1,110, leaving a net cost of £2,184
 - **Churchyard maintenance:** £3,383
 - **Pavilion:** £2,789, offset by income of £1,309, leaving a net cost of £1,480
 - **Allotments:** £2,166, offset by income of £1,548, leaving a net cost of £618
 - **War Memorial** regular clearing & tidying-up: £551
- The Parish Council also gave its normal annual donations of £1,500 to each of the Hall Management Committees at Dagnall and Northall to help them with the running and maintenance of their halls and play grounds.

Those Parishioners who have attended Council meetings over the past few years have realised the difficult task the Council has in trying to find the money to pay for all these day to day costs, as well as endeavouring to fund new and improved amenities. The Council is very keen to spend more of its time on future improvements to amenities/facilities rather than just coping with the day to day maintenance issues.

So, the **Budget and Precept for 2013/14** was the subject of much discussion by the Council over recent months due to a number of factors.

- the cumulative adverse impact of having held its Council Tax Precept at £64,000 for the past 3 years
- the Council's continuing aim of trying to keep the Precept as low as possible, compatible with providing Parishioners with well maintained – and where possible, improving – amenities
- bench-marking with other local AVDC parishes
- the uncertainty of the Government's proposals concerning fundamental changes in its 'Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS)
- the complicated relationship which was likely to emerge, from 2013 onwards, between what used to be called 'Precept' and the total Council Tax income for parish and town councils, as a result of changes in LCTS
- every possibility that the Government might cap any increase in Precept as from 2014

➤ the Parish Council's Budget for 2013/14 requiring a total Council Tax income of £74,109

At its meeting on 17th January 2013, the Council finally agreed to set its Precept at £68,000.00 for 2013/14 on the understanding that this would be topped-up in 2013/14 by £5,803 of LCTS and £306 from AVDC. It was understood that the Government's LCTS would probably be reduced in future years, and that the top-up from AVDC was for one year only.

The total of £74,109 in 2013/14 is the equivalent to £58.25 per year of Council Tax for a Band D property, compared with £49.85 in 2012. The new Band D rate of £58.25 is still lower than that payable in all but one of the other seven AVDC local parishes. (Cheddington £74.37; Ivinghoe £72.58; Slapton £66.34; Wing £65.11; Mentmore £63.48; Pitstone £61.39; and Marsworth £49.17).

After all those figures, I am pleased to report that the Rural Exception Scheme for eight **affordable homes** in Edlesborough has now reached the stage where the owners of several possible sites are being approached to determine if one of them would be prepared to sell some of their land. This would have to be at a price which would be higher than its agricultural value, but substantially lower than the free market price for commercial housing.

My thanks and those of the whole Council and, I am sure, of all Parishioners, continue to go to all the Wing South Neighbourhood team of **Thames Valley Police** whose work in the Parish has become so much more visible and effective over recent years. In October the Parish Council was delighted to congratulate our own PCSO, Jackie Dodson, on having received the award for Police Community Support Officer of the Year for the whole of Buckinghamshire.

Your Parish Council continues to take a very active interest in the proposals to expand operations at **Luton Airport**. These proposals could considerably worsen the noise disturbance experienced by parishioners, especially if the flight paths have to be modified to accommodate the additional traffic and if there was any increase in night time flights.

I am also very grateful for the tremendous time and input from Chris Poll, our District Councillor who attends every Council meeting and who has kept it well informed of AVDC matters, and who is always on hand to offer real help, advice and experience.

I would also like to place on record our appreciation of the help and support we receive from Mrs Avril Davies, our County Councillor.

As I mentioned in my Report last year, the Council is literally inundated on a weekly basis with **policy and consultative papers** from the Government, AVDC, BCC and a myriad of other organisations which have, or could have, a bearing on the lives of parishioners. Much unseen work is therefore undertaken by Councillors in reviewing these documents and submitting the Council's views and comments.

I would like to remind all parishioners that, in working tirelessly for the benefit of the local community, all the Councillors do so completely on a voluntary basis. If anyone feels that they would like to contribute to the development of the parish, may I suggest they stand as a candidate at the next Parish Council election in 2015. In the meantime however, we are currently short of the second councillor for Dagnall and the Council would welcome any nominations for co-option on to the Council to cover this vacancy.

Finally, I am most grateful to my fellow Councillors for all their tremendous support and hard work during the year:

- **John Wilkinson**, who represents the Edlesborough Ward, who is our **Vice-Chairman**, and who also takes the lead role in assessing all planning applications for Council's responses to AVDC.
- **Marilyn Prys-Jones** (Edlesborough Ward)

- **Alan Williams**, (Edlesborough Ward), who is Chair of the EDaN Steering Group
- **Julie Ratheram** (Edlesborough Ward).
- **Mark Wilson** (Northall Ward)
- **Brian Holt** (Dagnall Ward)
- **Chris Nevard** (Edlesborough Ward)
- As already mentioned, we are still short of the second representative for Dagnall.

and to our very hard working **Clerk, Lin Sargeant**, and to **Penny Pataky** our **Assistant Clerk** who began a job-share with Lin last October, and who is also the **Manager** responsible for looking after EMH, the Pavilion and the Green

Kevin Cabbage
Chairman and Northall Ward Representative

Edlesborough Parish Council

18th April 2013