

Edlesborough Parish Council

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Presented to Edlesborough Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 21st April 2011

This is my first report as Chairman and covers the period April 2010 – March 2011.

I am trying hard to continue **Mrs Anne Thompson's** sterling work, who was our Chairman for the past 11 years and who, despite tremendous will power and courage, lost her fight for life on 9th October 2010. She will be greatly missed not only for her concern and input to the Parish as a whole, but especially by the many people and organisations she supported in her village of Dagnall.

Anne always took great pleasure in preparing and presenting her Annual Reports. She was so proud of the work that all the Councillors and Clerks did on behalf of all the parishioners.

A great deal of this work involves looking after the day to day amenities which many of us take for granted. In the past year, for example, over £8,000 was spent on **street lighting**, which after the cost of paying for the Clerk, Hall Manager and Caretaker, was the Council's single biggest item of expenditure.

Your Council takes a special interest in ensuring that **Edlesborough Green** lives up to its reputation as our "jewel in the crown", and which provides so much pleasure and recreational interest for so many parishioners. A net £6,400 was spent on maintaining it and the playground during the year. This included the provision of larger, green litter bins located on the road-side of the Green so that they can be emptied by AVDC's weekly refuse collection. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the small and dedicated group of volunteers who have given so much of their time over the years in emptying the old, small yellow bins, and who still carry out a regular litter-pick on the Green.

Although the **Pavilion** on Edlesborough Green is well used by the Tennis Club and football teams, it continues to be a drain on our limited resources. This is due to excessive maintenance and repairs caused by it being used as a 'kick wall' and some wanton vandalism. In addition to on-going net expenditure of £2,700 during the year, a further £3,500 has been invested in the provision of 3 more seats and paved area. Not only will this provide more seating, but it will also help deter the front of the pavilion being used as a kick wall and the consequent repeated damage to the roof and guttering. I am disappointed that the Council's endeavours to develop a more meaningful and economic future for this facility have yet to generate any real interest with residents – and especially the users of the Pavilion.

Very much through the endeavours of Beverley Sage, the Hall Manager, **Edlesborough Memorial Hall** enjoyed its highest ever income of £11,000, which went a long way towards covering higher than normal expenditure of £16,000, due to some £5,000 being spent on new boilers and internal redecoration. This net cost of £5,000 should be seen in the context of the annual donations of £1,500 the Council gives to each of the **Hall Management Committees** at **Dagnall** and **Northall** to help them run their Halls and to help towards the cost of maintaining their playgrounds.

During the year the Council and the Police have had many complaints from residents in Edlesborough regarding the antisocial and most unpleasant behaviour of a minority of dog owners who do not clear-up their dogs' mess. All council tax payers should be aware that £3,400 of their money was spent on the provision and emptying of **dog hygiene bins** through out the Parish during the year. Everyone should help to ensure that this expenditure is worthwhile by encouraging all dog owners to use these bins.

Other significant areas of expenditure during the year included:

- £2,500 on the grass cutting and maintenance of **Edlesborough Churchyard**, helping to make this most important, historic site so attractive. Although the Churches Conservation Trust is responsible for Edlesborough Church, it does not have the funds to look after the grounds.
- £1,900 on the **Parish Cemetery**, which was almost covered by burial fees of £1,750. During the year further progress has been made in developing the lawned cemetery.
- £1,500 on **Allotments**, which was substantially covered by income of £1,100. The Council has previously given Allotment Holders notice of progressive annual increases to ensure that allotment fee income will cover all expenditure within the next 2 - 3 years. The Council is delighted that its 4 areas of allotments continue to be so popular and well used.
- £1,500 to **EDaN** (the Edlesborough, Dagnall and Northall Parish Plan) to help towards implementing some of its projects. This brings the total of the Council's contributions to date to £12,745. EDaN itself has been very industrious and successful in raising net funds of a further £11,543.

Before leaving this financial overview I should also mention that the **Precept** (the money that Edlesborough Parish Council receives from the Parish's council tax payers), for next year has been held at the same level of £64,000 as for 2010/11.

Apart from doing everything possible to obtain best value out of its financial expenditure, the Council also spends a great deal of its time on policy matters. No where is this more true than on **traffic calming** where its endeavours to improve safety and quality of life scored a notable success in 2010. After 13 years of campaigning and lobbying, Bucks County Council finally agreed to reduce speed limits in Northall, between Northall and Edlesborough and the entry roads around the Travellers Rest roundabouts. Northall residents are to be congratulated for the way in which they worked together to demonstrate their support to BCC for the proposals, and which no doubt helped to influence the decision makers.

I realise that Dagnall residents must still be wondering what has happened to the longed for **build out** at the entrance to the village on the Dunstable Road. This project has stumbled from lack of funding from BCC, to the engineers then finding that there is insufficient road space, then to the possibility of a traffic island, which was also then ruled out because of lack of road space, and then most recently, a proposal for a pedestrian crossing. This latest proposal is still being subjected to various safety audits so that the precise location of the crossing can be established. In the meantime, the good news is that the 'Local Area Forum' of BCC has agreed that this project is a priority and that adequate funding has been made available.

I should like to thank the **EDaN Traffic Management** team for their continuing work on traffic calming, and especially the 100 hours their volunteers spent on operating the Council's 'Speed Watch' radar equipment over the past year. Following a recent, and very well attended, meeting in Edlesborough Memorial Hall, the Team has been boosted by a further **27** volunteers. After appropriate training, they will operate 'Speed Watch' in Northall, Dagnall and Edlesborough whenever they have a couple of hours to spare. Three volunteers are needed to operate the equipment so that all the data on speed, type and colour of vehicle, sex and approximate age of the driver can be accurately recorded and given to the police. In the last 2 weeks of March over 50 drivers were reported to the police for exceeding 45mph in Northall, with one car recorded at 69mph.

This monitoring and surveillance work will become even more important when the new, reduced speed limits are introduced this summer and drivers through our villages are suitably encouraged to comply.

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 the **EDaN Steering Group** and all the other **EDaN** teams:

- the **Beautifying the Villages** team, who have made such a wonderful contribution with their planters around all 3 villages, the inaugural ‘May Day’ fund raising event last year on the Green and the unveiling of the excellent, new Edlesborough village sign. We are all now anxious to see similar village signs for Northall and Dagnall that should be in place by the Autumn of this year. In the meantime, don’t forget to support this year’s May Day celebrations to be held on The Green on Sunday 1st May.

To complement the team’s work, and the new surfacing, the Council is replacing the existing decrepit and unsightly ‘hangman’s gate’ at the entrance to the bridleway from Edlesborough Church to Ivinghoe Aston. To help ensure that horse riders and pedestrians always have good access to the bridleway, appropriate new signs will also be installed.

- the **Transportation** team who continue to fight the cause for maintaining, or even improving, our vital bus links with local towns. In the meantime, they have established the **Community Car Scheme** and have made a wonderful start in attracting so many volunteer car owners to help provide lifts for residents on local journeys to shops, doctors’ surgery etc..
- the **Cycleways, Pavements and Footpaths** team, the outcome of whose work over the past 2 years will begin to be seen over the coming months.
- the **Post Codes** team who are tenaciously fighting their way through the Post Office bureaucracy and procedures to enable householders in the parish to have Edlesborough in their address rather than the historic Eaton Bray.

EDaN also organised 2 concerts last year at St Mary’s Church in Edlesborough, not only to raise funds, but also to encourage parishioners to appreciate the church as part of our rich architectural heritage. The Churches Conservation Trust is delighted that we are now making more use of this historic building and are giving us every encouragement to continue. So, please make a note that the next classical music concert is being held on Saturday 16th July 2011, and is entitled “Beauties of the Baroque”.

EDaN is certainly more than living up to our original expectations, especially with the way in which it has encouraged so many willing and enthusiastic volunteers to become involved in helping to shape and improve our community.

Another important area of our policy work concerns giving the Council’s response to AVDC on **Planning Applications**. Over the past year some 39 applications have been carefully considered, with ‘The Bell’ being the most publicised, and arguably, the one which has attracted most interest in Edlesborough. The Council has given every possible support and advice to the ‘Save the Bell’ campaign. After much correspondence and two AVDC Planning Committee meetings, we have yet to learn whether we have provided sufficient planning reasons for the application to build 2 houses in the car park to be rejected.

The Council’s experience on planning matters over many years will be put to good use when it becomes directly involved in developing its **Neighbourhood Plan** over the coming months as part of the Government’s new ‘Localism Bill’, and AVDC’s new ‘Vale of Aylesbury Plan’.

The Council is literally inundated on a weekly basis with **policy and consultative papers** from 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.

Car parking in the High Street outside the school, and around the junction with Pebblemoor has long been a problem. Over recent months the Council has been pleased to work with the school, its 'safer routes to school' team, Under5s, Bucks CC and the police to try and improve the situation. Towards that end it has recently carried out a small extension to the car park on The Green and formed a new pedestrian exit onto the High Street. At the time of writing this report, a guard rail on the pedestrian exit remains to be constructed before the exit and the car park spaces are then clearly marked out.

However, the Council recognises that considerably more car parking capacity is required and is therefore planning to construct a major extension. This would almost double the number of spaces from the recently increased 29 to a total of 55. This project is being viewed as a top priority and the required funding of some £32,000 will be secured as soon as possible. Subject to obtaining various approvals it is hoped that work could commence within the next 12 months.

In this report I have only had the space to comment on some of the key issues. However, much of the Council's work also concerns the daily grind through so many other matters which are, or could be, of concern to parishioners. For all of this unrelenting, steadfast commitment to duty I am most grateful to our **Clerk, Lin Sargeant** and to my fellow Councillors:

- **John Wilkinson**, who represents the Edlesborough Ward, who is our **Vice-Chairman**, Chair of our General Purposes Committee (GPC) and who also takes the lead role in assessing all planning applications for Council's decisions.
- **David Brown**, (Edlesborough Ward). Unfortunately, David has decided to step-down from being a Councillor at the forthcoming May AGM. He has been on the Council since 2003, and has always made a very valuable and substantial contribution, especially during his time as Chairman of the GPC.
- **Marilyn Prys-Jones** (Edlesborough Ward), who is Vice Chairman of the GPC
- **Alan Williams**, (Edlesborough Ward), who is Chair of the EDaN Steering Group and a member of the GPC.
- **Julie Ratheram** (Edlesborough Ward).
- **Mark Wilson** (Northall Ward).
- Dagnall Ward: unfortunately, since Anne Thompson's death we have had no representatives. However, we hope that this situation will change at the forthcoming May election.

Kevin Cabbage
Chairman and Northall Ward Representative

Edlesborough Parish Council

21st April 2011