

ETCHINGHAM

Annual Report 2017



Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 20th April 2017

at

8.00pm

**in the Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft
Etchingham**

Etchingam Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2016-2017

The Etchingam Parish Council has met every month since the last Parish Assembly, with the exception of August 2016. The meeting in December was not a regular meeting but specially convened.

Unlike most villages in the area, we do not seem to be beset by developers, but we know that we have to find sites for thirty more houses between now and 2028. That is why the Parish Council was anxious to see Etchingam develop a Neighbourhood Plan and we are grateful to Frank Smith and his Steering Committee for taking this forward.

The largest planning application that we considered during the year was for the conversion and development of the Bracons site on the High Street. Although we found the overall proposal attractive, we had a number of concerns, many of which were addressed in discussions between the District Council and the developer. Although the modified scheme was not entirely to our satisfaction, we felt able to give it general support.

We were far less happy about the proposed development of two houses on the corner of Church Lane and were appreciative of the efforts of our District Councillors to draw attention to the problems it would cause, not least in terms of its likely impact on flooding and the difficult access. Unfortunately it was held that as the site already had approval and the Environment Agency felt that the attenuation measures promised were sufficient to deal with the flood risk, Rother had to give their approval albeit with very stiff conditions attached which thankfully met most of the concerns we had expressed.

Although not in general against holiday homes and their beneficial impact on the local economy, we have become concerned about their overall number in a relatively small village, and also about the way in which some owners are seeking subsequently to turn them into permanent dwellings. However, when dealing with the ruined Granary at New House Farm, we felt it would be more beneficial to the village and the AONB if this were made into a substantial house reflecting the original footprint rather than remain with a planning permission for the holiday lets that had not gone ahead in the last quarter of a century. We also objected strongly to attempts to turn ancillary buildings (given permission as such) into new dwellings in the countryside.

The state of our roads, the speeding traffic and parking remained high on our agenda. On the former the new contractor has dealt with the potholes and collapsed road edges reported, but we remain concerned about the narrowness and surface of our footways. Speedwatch continues to do sterling work and some reduction in speeds is apparent. However, too many cars and lorries continue to proceed through the High Street at speeds of up to 56 mph and there are too many reports of vehicles mounting pavements, and some near misses, for the Parish Council to be other than concerned at the absence of visible policing in our area. We welcome and supported the petition promoted by Lizzie and her fellow parents and are glad that the County Council will provide a forum for their concerns on 20 June. We are also aware that the owner of Forge Cottage may be prepared to contemplate a scheme to widen the pavement as long as the bill is footed by others and so are exploring the best way forward.

We were particularly concerned by parking outside the Post Office and have suggested to County the painting of a white line indicating the access and visibility needed. The other major parking concern is Church Lane where we were able to protect our own land, but where a permanent solution has yet to be found. We are grateful that moral suasion seems to have had considerable but as yet no lasting effect.

On footpaths we are particularly grateful to Frank Brophy, who not only monitors their condition, but is actively exploring on our behalf the dedication of a new footpath from the woods we own at the east end of Fysie Lane across neighbouring woodland.

Frank and Geoff together with our Clerk have made headway on the proposed new cricket field, the most recent block to progress the need to carry out an archaeological survey. However, the finance is in place, the plans drawn up, and we look forward to making substantial progress in the near future.

We nominate two trustees to ETSR: they are Paul Stott and Nicky Menzies. The village halls have had another successful year, including a major public meeting at the time of the referendum and a Christmas entertainment. The latter confirmed the suitability of the hall for dramatic productions. As the lease remains in draft the Parish Council has not yet been asked to guarantee it. We are grateful for the work done by successive KCC solicitors Andrew Astachnowitz, Catherine Lloyd and Eve Steer and know that the delays are not down to them. ETSR and the Council are of one mind on the outstanding points, what should happen in the unthinkable event of the school closing, and the valuation to be set on the Ahrens Hall in that event should we decide to purchase it. The southernmost bay including the Parker Hall would automatically pass to the village.

We have made grants to the Club and to a number of other bodies at a time when many face financial difficulties. We have also helped the new management of the shop through its initial year. We have also had to make provision for repairs to the shop building (we are the freeholder) and have undertaken repairs to the play equipment and the shelter in the Viper playground. In our capacity as trustees for The Queens Gardens we have accepted the transfer of the Viper area into our ownership. Inevitably therefore the bills faced by the Parish Council have been rising and while we were able this year to keep the rise in Council tax to single figures, there nevertheless had to be a rise of 5.3 per cent. It is worth remembering that although that sounds large the increase on a Band D house is only £4.75 for the year. The good news is that, having already made financial provision for the construction of the playing field, there are no further large scale calls on the Parish purse in contemplation.

I am grateful to all my colleagues on what is I think one of the most far sighted and go ahead Councils in our area, and we all owe a major debt to our Clerk, Paulette, for her energy, her hard work and her unfailing good humour.

Cllr John Barnes

Chair of Etchingham Parish Council

Etchingham Parish Council 2017:

Mr John Barnes – Chair

Mrs Annette Childs – Vice Chair

Mrs Mary Barnes

Mr Simon ‘Sid’ Barrow

Mr Colin Boylett

Mr Frank Brophy

Mr Geoffry Lucas



Rother District Council Report, April 2017

Unfortunately, by 2020 Rother District Council will not receive any Government grant. This grant has been cut by £5.4 million since 2011 by decreasing increments and next year the grant will be just £450,000, a cut of £620,000. So Rother must find a way to make up the shortfall - an amount which, by 2022, will be £2.4 million

However, on the plus side, RDC has no borrowings and a balanced budget. Although, not so happily, there can be no doubt that services will suffer.

This year we have seen the launch of the Public Realm Working Group. While this was intended for the 3 towns of Rother, it has now extended its remit into the rural area as well and Ticehurst has an active group. Its aims are to encourage the public to take responsibility for public space, to be able to manage, take pride and become proactive in the care of the recreational areas enjoyed by the public. Here I think Etchingham can show Rother a thing or two! We remember the visit of the Lord Lieutenant last summer to bestow a special accolade on the CIC for their work on the Bistro and shop and one only has to look at the groups who have worked together to make Etchingham such a lovely place to live; picking up litter, keeping watch on traffic speed, and the huge amount of effort by so many people in securing the new community buildings. This is all community involvement at its best and the direction in which Rother is now moving.

The Council is saving money by joint working. By engaging with adjoining councils on waste service, environmental health, legal services, building control and shared financial systems all helps to keep the costs down

Rother's investment in commercial buildings has resulted in a 3 million pound investment in Elva Way, renting out office space to the Department of Works. The opening of the Bexhill Link Road and the Bexhill Access Road which is being built now and that will bypass Sidley, will bring new housing and a commercial park of sufficient size to take the pressure of future development off the rural villages. Rother now collects all business rates and keeps a percentage, after deductions, in return. We are committed to a programme of building more affordable homes so that young people particularly, who want to remain in their own villages, can get on the housing ladder.

My Alerts, the on-line message service, which started as a guide to householders about which bin to leave out and when, is steadily growing in popularity and has over 29,000 users in Rother. The ability to email direct from myalerts has cut down telephone calls to the Town Hall switchboard and it's hoped to include more general items of interest in the future. Maybe we'd better send Nicky to help!

There's no doubt there are some very lean times ahead. We must acknowledge the huge debt we were left with after the last Labour Government and the consequent interest generated that will take years to repay. Rother is a careful housekeeper but this year we must put up Council Tax. It will increase by £5 on a Band D. There will be some criticism as we may not be able to offer such good value for money as staff and services will inevitably be cut. Our Officers are dividing more of the work between themselves and the remaining staff, even though losing many of their number, and are a highly efficient, dedicated team.

You may be aware there was a recent planning application for a pair of semi detached houses on the Lower Orchard site. At the planning meeting I was able to demonstrate the extent of flooding in Etchingham over the last century thanks to a set of photographs provided by Colin Boylett. To my intense disappointment, although the Planning Committee was convinced, the Environment and Flood agency had no objection to the application.

There is sunshine in the gloom; we now have a more efficiently run Council with planning decisions taken quickly, council tax avoidance down to a minimum and a higher number of households contributing thanks to the abolition of the council tax exemption which also now applies to empty homes as well, and our community grant scheme from which we have benefitted over the years is running as usual.

Big decisions are having to be made in the coming year- Bexhill is being consulted in a Governance Review to decide if it should have its own Town Council Officers are engaged in a fact finding mission which may lead to Civil Parking Enforcement throughout Rother which would mean, if introduced, that parking enforcement would be administered by the County Council and not the police

Finally, I have a busy year ahead as I will become Chairman of the Council in May. That will be a big step out of my comfort zone!

Mary Barnes & Robert Elliston
Rother District Councillors



COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT 2017

Despite the very difficult financial situation, there is a good deal of success to report. The County Council has used reserves built up “when the sun was shining” to invest in the economy and match other funds brought into the County. East Sussex now is the fastest growing local economy in England, employment is high and unemployment at historically low levels. More important still family incomes are rising faster than elsewhere. East Sussex was awarded £13.2 million from the Government’s Local Growth Fund in February 2017, following a bid by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). East Sussex County Council will receive £8.2 million for the East Sussex Strategic Growth Project to create new employment developments in areas including Bexhill and Eastbourne. £5 million has been granted towards a £44 million redevelopment of the Devonshire Park area including a new conference complex. More than 1,000 new jobs are expected to be created as a result. The Link Road is bringing new businesses to North east Bexhill and SeaChange, the business partnership in which the County Council plays a large part is working successfully to regenerate Bexhill and Hastings.

Funding was secured to allow Business East Sussex – the county’s ‘growth hub’ to continue for two further years. The service is aimed at supporting businesses at all stages of growth, and helps businesses to find all the information, advice and support they need in one place. Since launching in July 2015, the service has engaged with more than 1,100 businesses and has helped new businesses to get off the ground, including a fashion business which now has an international reputation. During the last year Locate East Sussex has helped 35 companies start up, relocate or expand.

East Sussex County Council is one of seven local authorities which have agreed to form a partnership called Transport for the South East (TfSE). The vision for this new body is for strategic transport planning for the whole area, unlocking economic growth and improving lives for residents. To begin with, TfSE will run in shadow form as it develops its strategy and operation, consulting with transport operators, businesses and the public. With government agreement, TfSE could move to full operation from 2019. A particular aim is to bring high-speed rail to the county.

Building new businesses is important not only for jobs but for our ability to deliver public services. Business rates will increasingly take the place of the Government support for local spending. Between 2015/16 and 2019/20 East Sussex will lose more than 94% of the already shrunken Revenue Support Grant. When account is taken of the amount the Government calculates will be distributed from its share of business rates the percentage loss is less – about 55 % or £54 million pounds. The County has made a four year deal to provide the necessary certainty to plan ahead as to how best to achieve the savings that continue to be necessary. This year, by altering the way we deal with debt and other measures, we reduced the amount we needed to cut from £23 million to £17 million. Together with Surrey and now Brighton and Hove we have brought a number of our business services together in a joint organisation, ORBIS, but there is a limit to what can be achieved by efficiency savings.

We shall be spending £365 million in this year’s budget and intend to make savings of £17 million. We have taken full advantage of the 3% adult social care levy agreed to by the Government and have increased Council Tax by 1.99% – a total increase to the County Council’s precept of 4.99%. Some last minute changes were agreed as our good housekeeping left us with some “one-off” money and we are

- **investing a further £1.3million in highways drainage and pavements**
- **making a further £150,000 available in the Community Match scheme and**
- **allocating £750,000 to schools in recognition of the budgetary pressures they face.**

The Draft Funding Formula for schools, on which the Government has recently completed public consultation disadvantages primary schools with less than 200 pupils. Etchingham, already facing many cost pressures, would face a significant loss of funding. I have been campaigning with our MP and the County Council to get the formula changed. We shall not know whether we have been successful until later in the year, but it looks as if we have got the case for rural primary schools across. ESCC are also trying to prevent the apprenticeship levy being applied to small schools.

East Sussex County Council and Skills East Sussex (the county's employment and **skills** board) secured funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company for Progress – a new project aimed at equipping people with the skills needed by business and preparing them for the world of work. The project (April 2016 and July 2017) includes work experience for pupils in years 10 and 11, visits to businesses, work readiness programmes, tailored support for young people wishing to access apprenticeships and the STEMfest project, aimed at encouraging students to study science, technology, engineering and maths.

A number of positive **educational results** were reported in the summer, including improvements in both GCSE and A level results. At Key Stage 1, the percentage of East Sussex pupils achieving the expected standard was higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 4 our Progress 8 score was +0.04, significantly higher than the national average of -0.03. 87.1% of our primary schools are judged to be good or outstanding, an increase of 10.1 percentage points since August 2015. 77.8% of secondary schools and 100% of maintained special schools are good or outstanding. For comparison the national averages are 77.6% and 93.2% respectively.

A new seven-year contract for the provision **of highway services** in the county began on 1st May 2016. The contract with Costain CH2M replaced the existing arrangement of three separate contractors being responsible for highways, street lighting and traffic signals. The new contract has seen the introduction of a new website and online system for people to report highways issues; www.eastsussexhighways.com. In the first 6 months of the contract East Sussex Highways completed over 220 planned road works, 10,000 minor works, laid 64 miles of tarmac, answered 26,000 calls and progressed major works in areas such as Hailsham and Uckfield.

Our e-Sussex project to rollout faster **broadband** in previously isolated areas has improved access to services, jobs and education. Over 66,000 premises have been connected in the first phase of works, although I find it disappointing that not all have connections have brought greater speeds. The second phase to connect a further 5,000 of the hardest to reach premises in the county is underway and in the latest contract there is much more focus on obtaining genuinely faster broadband.

Significant progress has been made in delivering **East Sussex Better Together** (ESBT), the programme led by two local NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (Eastbourne, Hailsham & Seaford CCG and Hastings & Rother CCG) and East Sussex County Council to transform health and social care services. In 2016 for example, six integrated locality based teams of health and care professionals were brought under single management to deliver more cohesive care, more quickly. We launched nurse-led Crisis Response Teams, helping to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions, and also a new frailty service at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust which helps the frail to live independent and healthy lives out of hospital. In addition, Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) a new integrated point of contact for adult health and care is receiving 8,000-9,000 enquiries a month.

Between April and December 2016, 100% of working age adults and older people supported by **Adult Social Care** received self-directed support. 98.2% of new clients who received short-term services to increase their independence made no further request for support. This means that more service users are planning how they

want their social care needs met and have more control over their support. In addition in, 2016-17 so far, 2,872 people have been supported by STEPS, which helps people maintain independence within their own homes.

Public Health has been leading a programme of work to tackle the health effects of **cold homes**. Work included training frontline professionals to enable them to identify people living in cold homes and refer them onto appropriate services. 374 referrals to the Winter Home Check were made between October and December 2016. Public Health also developed a Stay Well this Winter campaign and helped to develop a Locally Enhanced Service for GP staff to help them identify patients at risk of fuel poverty.

A new integrated service bringing **health visiting and children's centres** together was launched in June 2016. The new service aims to help families be self-sufficient in their communities by providing appropriate early intervention and support, and keep children aged 0-5 safe and healthy by providing accessible, comprehensive, high quality services, promoting social inclusion and equality and respecting diversity.

Our Children's services are second to none but improvement is always possible. Let me single out this year the percentage of court proceedings completed within 26 weeks, important to ensure timely decision making about long term **care for children**, which has increased from 22% in April 2016 to 63% in December 2016. I am also proud that the Council has been reaccredited as a White Ribbon authority recognising our commitment to work to end domestic violence and sexual abuse and ensure survivors can access help and support.

Finally, the **3SC** (Three Southern Counties) partnership of East Sussex, Surrey and West Sussex submitted a proposal to Government late in 2016, seeking to open formal negotiations on a devolution bid. If successful, the bid will help unlock new growth and spearhead a transformation in how public services are delivered in the region. Due to a Government stock-take on devolution activity and other national developments, formal negotiations on the devolution bid are likely to be delayed. Although a strategic pause on activity began in January 2017, work on specific activities including the 3SC Infrastructure and Skills Strategies, digital plans and responses to the Industrial Strategy and Housing White Paper continue. Devolution seems to me essential in our over-centralised state and I hope to see work resumed as soon as possible.

John Barnes
East Sussex County Councillor
April 2017

ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL – FINANCE REPORT

At the January 2017 meeting, Etchingham Parish Council agreed the Budget and Precept for 2017/2018. Despite an increase in the number of rateable properties in the village, as the remaining houses on Parsonage Croft and the old village hall developments have now been bought and occupied, a small increase – equating to £4.75 per annum for a Band D property – has been sought to achieve a Precept of £39,000 which is needed to fulfil the programme for 2017/2018, most of which comprises existing and confirmed projects/running costs

Although work was not able to commence on the Cricket Field last year and therefore no repayment required against the PWLB Loan raised, the amount of £1,200 allocated in 2016/2017 will be retained in general reserves against increased professional fees arising from extra work required to fulfil Planning Approval Conditions in respect of archaeological investigations. It is anticipated that the Loan will be activated as work begins in Spring 2017 and that both repayments, amounting to £2,400 will fall due in this Financial Year.

Income remains low as it has been resolved the shop rental will only be raised by a nominal amount this year to support the management team in sustaining the steady growth in business being achieved in these relatively early days. In addition, there has been a marked drop in Bank Interest and the Council Tax Reserve Allowance has been reduced by a half. In fact this Allowance will be phased out altogether over the next two years.

However, our application for a grant from Rother District Council to help us purchase the commemorative bench to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday was successful and now bears a plaque to that effect marking the ceremony undertaken at the Village Fete by District Councillor Tony Ganly, Chairman of the Community Grants Panel.

Parish Council Reserve Funds remain adequate and with good housekeeping your Council will ensure they remain so. A rolling programme of maintaining reserves against future replacement and refurbishment of existing assets, such as our playground equipment, has been approved.

The launch of the Neighbourhood Plan has given rise to an application for grant by the Steering Committee, on behalf of the Parish Council, to help support the work that will be necessary to bring this important project to a successful conclusion. This grant will go a long way towards the total cost, keeping additional monies required to a minimum.

The Council continues to make grants available across as wide a variety of community needs and activities as possible to benefit the residents as a whole, not favouring one section or another. The overall sum available in 2017-2018 will unfortunately be slightly reduced on the previous year but in the main, applicants are being offered most if not all of the figure requested.

As required by Law, the Accounts of the Parish Council are subject to an Internal and External Audit at year end and copies of all financial information are available from the Parish Clerk.

Paulette Barton

Etchingham Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer



ETCHINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The questionnaire, designed to get everybody's views on the essential elements of the Plan, has now gone out to everybody in the village. The committee hopes that everybody will complete the questionnaire, so that everybody's views can be taken into account. A website has already been set up, by a local designer, and this will shortly be brought alive, to enable people to complete it online.

The rules and formalities surrounding the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan are very detailed and complex, and it was felt that the work should not proceed without professional assistance so, with the approval of the Parish Council, a firm of consultants has been appointed, to help with the necessary work. The firm, Moles Consultancy, have been assisting with a similar Plan in Robertsbridge, and have - by all accounts - done an excellent job there.

A meeting has been arranged (for the 20th April) at which the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee will meet representatives of Rother District Council (with Donna Moles also present), which will enable us to see more clearly what RDC expect of us.

Once the results of the questionnaire have been received and analysed, focus groups will be set up to begin the necessary follow-up procedures and, hopefully, progress on the preparation of the Plan will then begin to speed up.

Frank Smith

Chairman - Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Council portfolio for Community Safety covers several areas that relate to the safety and wellbeing of village residents, as detailed below.

Police;

As you will probably be aware, villages no longer have a dedicated PCSO, all the PCSO's for each district cover the whole of that district and are allocated to where they are needed each day. So, although you do not see the regular presence of a PCSO in the village you can still contact a PCSO or PC by using the Police Non-Emergency number **101** and asking for a local officer to contact you, if you prefer to use email; 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Neighbourhood Watch;

Etchingham does not currently have a fully active Neighbourhood Watch scheme operating, I do however still receive all the NHW information from the Rother NHW Co-ordinator and will put anything that is relevant to Etchingham on the e-bulletin.

Community Speedwatch;

See the separate report for Speedwatch

Flood Warnings;

We have been lucky in recent winters, with no serious flooding, during the most recent winter we have only had a couple of Flood Alerts, and none of the more serious warnings.

If any alerts or warnings are issued I am registered, on behalf of the Parish Council, to receive all warnings and updates as soon as they are issued. I can then make sure that residents in parts of the village that are at risk are aware of the current situation. As alerts or warnings are received the details are posted and regularly updated on the village website, the details are also sent out on the e-bulletin when possible.

If you have any queries on community safety issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr. Colin Boylett, portfolio holder for Community Safety.



ETCHINGHAM COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

Co-Ordinator; Colin Boylett 01580 819532 07484 635014

etchinghamspeedwatch@gmail.com <https://www.facebook.com/etchinghamspeedwatch>

<https://twitter.com/etchspeedwatch> <https://www.communityspeedwatch.co.uk>

Community Speedwatch is not about getting people reported and fined, it is an educational tool designed to educate drivers to drive at appropriate speeds in speed limit areas by regular deployment of Speedwatch operators with speed detection devices. However, any vehicles recorded at more than the allowable limit of 35mph are referred to the Police and the vehicle owners receive a Police warning letter, persistent offenders may also get a visit from a Police Officer and possible further action may be taken.

The Etchingham group has now been operating for over three years, the first session took place on a wet January afternoon in 2014, the group operates for an average of ten hours each week when operators are available. Since that first session the group has run a total of 980 roadside sessions that have recorded over 9,000 speeding vehicles and more than 7,500 have received Police letters, several have also been referred to the Neighbourhood Policing Team or the Road Policing Unit for further action, the fastest speed recorded so far has been 63mph.

During 2016 the group ran 334 sessions recording just under 3,000 speeding vehicles with over 2,500 Police warning letters sent out, the highest speed recorded during the year was 62mph.

The group currently has nine active volunteers, some do several sessions each week, some once a week and some occasionally. If the group had a few more volunteers available more sessions could be run each week, or alternatively the same number of sessions without using each volunteer too often. The equipment is easy to use and only very basic training is involved, so anyone who would like to consider joining the volunteers, even if it is only for an hour occasionally, first use one of the contact methods above for details of how to sign up.

REMINDER – The speed on the road signs is the **LIMIT** *not* the **TARGET!**

Cllr. Colin Boylett – Portfolio holder for Community Safety and Speedwatch Co-ordinator.





HIGHWAYS

All repairs and maintenance on the roads in the parish, including the verges, pavements and signage is the responsibility of East Sussex Highways. Previously reports of items requiring repair or attention were made through the East Sussex County Council offices. There is now a dedicated highways website and all reports of items needing repair or maintenance should now be made on the website <http://www.eastsussexhighways.com> .

If you do not have internet access you can phone your report to 0345 6080193

If there are items relating to roads, pavements or verges that you would like to bring to the attention of the Parish Council send the details to the Parish Clerk or one of the Councillors who hold the Highways portfolio, currently Cllrs John Barnes and Colin Boylett. If it is something that might require discussion at a Parish Council meeting, make sure it is reported to the Clerk at least ten days before the next meeting to make sure it is in time to be added to the agenda.



Etchingam

'Etchingam Village Website'

www.etchinghamvillage.co.uk

The village website is provided by the Parish Council as a means of communicating Parish Council and village activities and information to village residents, potential new residents and visitors. The pages are updated on a voluntary basis by a Councillor to keep the cost of providing the website as low as possible.

The agenda for all Parish Council meetings is published on the website about a week prior to the meeting, the minutes of all meetings are also on the site, all the agendas and minutes of previous meetings are archived on the site, all meetings for the last five years are archived, so visitors can search for information from historical meetings.

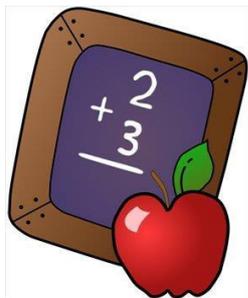
Contact details for all Councillors and the Clerk are on the site and they can all be contacted directly from the contact page for each Councillor.

Information on village events and organisations can be found on the website, there is a section with details for the Church, and any interesting local information can be added, items for adding to the website can be sent to etchinghamvillagewebsite@gmail.com

The website also has a Facebook page where updates are added when new items are added (www.facebook.com/EtchingamWebsitePage) and Twitter account (@etchweb)

The Parish Council also has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/etchinghampc) and a Twitter account (@etchinghampc)

Cllr. Colin Boylett, portfolio holder for Council Communications.



Children, young people and the recreation areas

Looking back to Summer 2016, the school celebrated the Queen's 90th birthday with a red, white and blue themed tea party and traditional games.

After a six year Partnership, the school officially became the Riverside Federation with Bodiam C E School in July.

The Key Stage 2 production of 'The Tempest' performed in the magnificent Ahrens Hall, was an enjoyable treat for all who attended.

In September, the Year 6 pupils were present in the Parker Hall to see the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service being presented to the De Etchingham Community Interest Company by the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex.

The Federation Reveal Days to introduce the Learning Journeys continue to be enthusiastically received by the children and result in some wonderful presentations in both the written format and in creative art works.

In February, the school received an Ofsted Inspection. The report states that 'the school has a friendly, welcoming and positive atmosphere'. Learning is meaningful, exciting and fun and the leadership team has maintained a good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

A report on the Barn Owls Pre-school appears as a separate article in this report.



The Queen's Garden and the VIPER play areas continue to be well used by both the village children (and the not so young village children!) as well as visitors from the surrounding areas. The equipment is inspected regularly by the Parish Council and annually by a professional company to ensure that the equipment conforms to rigorous safety standards.

Annette Childs . Chair of Governors. Etchingham School/ Riverside Federation.



VILLAGE PLAGROUNDS

The Children's playground equipment in Queen's Garden and on the Viper site is well used and enjoyed by village children, some of the equipment has now been in use for a number of years, as equipment gets older problems relating to safety can arise quite quickly.

Every year in September the Parish Council has a professional safety inspection carried out on both play areas and any problems highlighted are dealt with as quickly as possible. As part of my role as portfolio holder for Community Safety I have instigated a monthly check on the equipment, it is not as detailed as the annual inspection but should pick up any potential problems between annual inspections before they become a safety issue.

Etchingham Annual Report 2017

Barn Owls – Etchingham Pre-school

I may be at risk of repeating myself from last year's report to the Parish of Etchingham, simply because Barn Owls has continued its successful run and has kept delivering the standard of childcare and development which makes it one of the best pre-schools in East Sussex. In the Christmas village play, "Dick Etchingham", I was struck by one character, played by Nigel, called Giant Ofsted. Ofsted is our regulatory body and indeed looms very large in our day to day operation but we had a regular Ofsted Inspection in July 2016 and passed with flying colours, a "Good" rating, bordering on "Excellent". Congratulations to Helen, Jade, Nicky, Jo and Amanda.

Our numbers, depleted by the natural progression of the older children to primary school, recovered rapidly in September 2016 to 36. In the previous July, 21 children moved up, most of them to Etchingham's own Primary School, so Barn Owls feeds the substantial majority of CEPS intake at Reception level.

Given the size of Barn Owls, we have been able to balance costs and income in spite of rising costs – the cost of running the new building is substantial and I feel sometimes that County Council is giving us funds in the form of EYEE voucher money and taking it back in shared building costs. Controversially, Rother DC also charge us substantial business rates – we have argued that we are not a business but a charity-based local amenity but to no avail.

During this year and next, additional Government funding will translate into a higher voucher rates, rising this April from £3.60 per hour of childcare to £3.94. This will help to meet rising costs but is still not enough to cover our operating costs, particularly if numbers of children fall due to a decrease in birth-rate.

We continue to raise funds through the dedication and hard work of Miranda Booth and her team and we are grateful for the support that the village gives. We are currently in a position, financially, to buy key equipment, furniture and play things. Our priority is to replace and add items that will provide learning opportunities for the children, for example "tablets" which will replace our battered laptop computer which the children use. We also welcome back our original climbing tower and we are very grateful to Dan Cudlipp and Westridge Construction for a superb renovation job – it rained after the job was finished and Helen finally allowed the children to use it, so the wet slide made great fun! Thank you, Westridge.

We welcome Dan as a new trustee – it is good to have parents on the trustee body. And finally, I would like to thank all involved in running Barn Owls for their support and hard work.

Alan Davies

Chairman of Trustees, Barn Owls



Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation (ETSR) Report to the Parish Assembly 2017

The village halls have now been open for over two years.

When we last reported ETSR said that they were focusing their efforts on three main areas:

- Post completion snagging and design issues
- Completion of the Lease
- Successful management of the halls.

We can confirm that the snagging has now been completed. The issue of the Parker Hall over heating during the warmer months has been resolved, we hope and believe, by the contractors installing a film on the outside of the glass. We have been advised that the Market Square is sufficiently robust to take events such as farmers' markets.

At the date of writing the lease has yet to be finalised and we are still operating under a licence from ESCC. Until the lease is in place we are unable to transfer our capital contribution to East Sussex County Council and it remains ring fenced in our accounts. There are a limited number of issues to be resolved and we hope that the lease will be signed by the time of the Parish Assembly. For obvious reasons County is pushing completion hard. We would like to thank Andrew Astachnowitz and Catherine Lloyd for their dedication and skill that they have put at the disposal of the community. Eve Steer has taken their place and is working tirelessly on resolving all outstanding issues. As we have been disappointed in the past, please take any indication of a date for completion with the proverbial pinch of salt!

The Joint Management Committee (formed from ETSR and the school) meets regularly and takes decisions consensually. The discussions have been amicable and constructive and ETSR would like to pay tribute to Greg Coleman who manages the entire building and has been tireless in seeking ways to reduce costs and in particular energy costs.

Very good use of both the Parker and Ahrens Halls is being made during the week with many regular users now settled into the halls. The Practice Room is now up and running and has been used for a local band to practice in. We still have insufficient demand for the recording studio to warrant equipping the room. A particular pleasure this year was to see the hall in use for the Christmas show, which demonstrated that it is a good venue for theatrical performance.

ETSR are very grateful to Trustees and others who open and close the halls and ensure that the premises are left in good order. However, we would like to set up some kind of users committee and would ask the community to reflect again on how it might become more actively involved in the management of the halls.

Bookings are steady during the week and childrens' parties are beginning to make use of the halls at weekends. However we would like to see more use of the halls for wedding receptions and to that end we would like to explore with the Etchingham PCC how we could best achieve this.

A new website for the halls has been created - www.etchinghamvillagehalls.co.uk Whilst it may need a tweak here or there, it shows when the halls are in use or not and lists activities and contact details of the more regular users. The contact details for the bookings remain admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk and 07855 239848, but if you wish to book the hall please first of all check that the hall is available on that date by using the website.

While our income is building up and is more than adequate to covering the running costs of the hall, it does not yet cover the administrative costs of the Trust, and we also need to build a long term maintenance reserve. We would like to thank all those who have been actively involved in fundraising over the last year - a more detailed report on this was given in our AGM Report. Going forward ETSR are starting a 100 Club Monthly Draw which is being coordinated by Paul Stott. We hope also to put on some larger fundraising events over the year but if anyone else wishes to support ETSR by organising a small fundraising event please do get in touch with Catherine - admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk.

The Trustees continue to work tirelessly to ensure that that what are by any standards magnificent facilities are equipped to provide the best possible venue for all village activities. At the ETSR AGM on Thursday 10th November 2016 John Barnes, Nicky Menzies, Steve Millea and Paul Stott were again elected as trustees. The Trustees elected John Barnes to continue as Chairman, Paul Stott as Vice Chairman and Steve Millea as Treasurer. Paul Stott and Steve Millea are the nominated trustees from the Parish Council. Since that time we have co-opted three further trustees to fill the vacancies. We welcome Paulette Barton, Darren Langridge- Kemp and Nick Smith to our number.

ETSR would like to take this opportunity to thank Caroline Moore who stepped down from ETSR at the AGM. Caroline has played a major part in ETSR for longer than most of us care to remember. She was active helping Sasha Hunt secure the site and more recently played a valuable part in securing the charitable grants that helped to get the hall built. In between she was a key player on the team which brought the projected school and hall into a joint project and contributed a great deal to the successful design. She continues to be a staunch supporter of our activities even though, to our regret, she has chosen to relinquish her role as a Trustee.

Now that we have embarked on our third year of operation, we are confident that the halls can be self-financing, although it is probable that some fundraising will be necessary for some time to come to keep the Trust itself viable. However the increasingly regular use of the halls by villagers and others makes us very optimistic not only about their future, but our ability to build a maintenance fund that will give the buildings a long and useful life.

My final task in this report is to thank my fellow trustees very warmly for all that they have done this year. The village is greatly in their debt.

Update from the Etchingham Community Interest Company (CIC)



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The MBE for volunteer groups

Last year was a quieter year for the CIC with one notable exception. In June 2016 the group received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. The CIC was formed in 2008 and has been responsible for a number of community projects aimed at restoring the heart and amenities to our village. These projects include opening the Bistro and the re-launch of the village stores as the Etchingham Shop & Deli.

The splendid glass award and citation from the Queen was presented to the CIC on a very hot and sunny day in September by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for East Sussex, in the Parker Hall. The event was hosted by the Parish Council and attended by various dignitaries, sponsors, local people, children and teachers from the school. One of the highlights of the day was an unusual cake topped by a map of the village and served with tea. The Lord Lieutenant, Peter Field, looked magnificent in full uniform but must have been very hot on the day. Picture below of the cake, Lord Lieutenant and Colin Phillips, Chairman of the CIC



Bistro@the station

Update from the Bistro

It's been a busy year including a celebration for the Bistro's 6th Birthday on the 20th August 2016. This wonderfully successful event was attended by 40 local people, eating and drinking to live music in the garden. Long may the birthday parties continue!

Other highlights during the year included:

Staff Training – Lucy Kneller and Gemma Blades both passed their exams in December. Gemma obtained the B.I.I.A.B. Level 2 Certificate in Hospitality and Catering Principles (Kitchen Services) (QCF) and the B.I.I.A.B Level 2 Certificate in Licensed Hospitality Operations (QCF). Lucy obtained the B.I.I.A.B. Level 3 Certificate in Management. It's great to see the staff gaining additional qualifications and putting everything to excellent use to provide fabulous food for customers.

Quiz Nights and Topiary – some might think this a strange connection, however, the monthly quiz nights are still extremely popular with all proceeds going to the Station Garden Project, including the Bistro garden. The highlight of the garden continues to be the topiary that Peter Baldock and Charlotte Molesworth have been working on for a couple of years. It is really taking shape now and the Alice in Wonderland theme is clear to see. We receive many positive comments on the ever evolving hedge work. A big thank you to all those involved!

Friday Night - Pizza Night - is still a huge success, being booked up a week in advance. To meet demand the plan is to do the same as last year and we will open earlier in the summer months plus the occasional Saturday evening every month.

Resident Artist – Tom Marsh held another very successful Art Exhibition in July. He leaves his art work on display throughout the year for the enjoyment of customers and constantly generates interest. We are very lucky to have a resident local artist to enhance an already beautiful building.

The Bridge Club – meets every Tuesday and Thursday lunch time, led by Geoff Lucas. Depending on the weather the club is either upstairs in the Conference Room or in the Garden. Interest has continued to grow throughout 2016 and there are often a minimum of 8 players on Thursdays now!

Private Hires – The Bistro was booked throughout 2016 for private functions, averaging over one a month. The pattern seems to be continuing into 2017 with bookings currently right up until October.

Themed Nights – Finally throughout 2016 we hosted many themed nights on a Saturday evening including: French Night, Italian Night, Steak Night, Curry Night and a very popular Burn's Night held on 28th January 2017. Local villager, Lawrie Webster, provided a truly passionate 'Address to the Haggis'. Check the website and ebulletin for dates and events during 2017.



Thank you for your support and custom and we look forward to welcoming you to the Bistro throughout 2017/2018

Paul and Julie Collins

Etchingham Shop & Deli

Update from the Shop & Deli



At the beginning of December the Shop & Deli celebrated its 1st anniversary of reopening with free fizz and cupcakes for all customers. Throughout the year James, Jennie and the team have continued to offer villagers freshly made food, everyday essentials and artisan products.

Due to popular demand the number of high quality freshly made meals available has been increased. All meals are made without any additives or preservatives. The Shop continues to offer a good selection of everyday essentials, providing affordable products to villagers 7 days a week including newspapers, eggs, milk, fruit & veg and bread.

A number of local artisan products are on sale including favourites such as Lighthouse Bakery Bread, goods from the Traditional Cheese Dairy and Old Diary Brewery. Throughout the year James and Jennie have also discovered new Sussex and Kent suppliers making their products available to villagers. These new suppliers include Patisserie Lingaud Chocolates, Kent Crisps, Burghfield Apple Juice, Kencol Aperies Honey, Turners Cider, Norman Hunt & Sons Cider, Chapel Down Wines & Biddenden Wines.

Highlights during the year included:

Staff training – James and Jennie hosted a wine tasting training session for all staff in order to introduce them to the wine selection available at the Shop & Deli, to help them talk knowledgeably to customers. The Shop & Deli now employs 12 staff from the village and they got to know each other over a fine selection of wines.

Takeout Thursday's – these continue to be a success with new seasonal recipes available each week and orders often up to 40 per week. This year the meals have also been expertly paired with affordable wine for customers to enjoy.

Focus group – during the summer the CIC helped to run a focus group with a number of villagers to get their feedback on the Shop & Deli. The evening was a huge success with lots of positive feedback received and ideas for improvement.

Launch of the Shop & Deli website – one of the pointers that came out of the Focus group was the desire for more frequent and informative communication. As a result in the autumn we created and launched a Shop & Deli website and regular direct emails to customers. This keeps the villagers up to date with details of the latest Takeout Thursday's, What's Cooking, New Products and Offers and also includes details of the opening hours. The website and direct mailing complement the social media channels which continue to be used to interact with customers. There have been a total of 26 online reviews for the Shop & Deli with an average score of 4.8/5 out of 5.

Food Hygiene rating - talking about numbers, the Shop & Deli continues to hold a 5/5 food hygiene rating from the Food Standard Agency, recognising the high standard of hygiene maintained for staff and customers.

Outside catering – the Shop & Deli has catered for a number of occasions in the village this year providing hot drinks, sandwiches, scotch eggs, sausage rolls, cakes, salads and more. Just ask James if you have an event on the horizon.

Loyalty cards – finally both coffee and 'Deli meal' loyalty cards were introduced to reward customers for their loyalty through a free coffee/meal. Don't forget to pick yours up next time you visit.

Thank you all for your support and kind comments about the monthly window displays. Feedback is always welcome and the Shop & Deli team looks forward to continuing to serve you during 2017/2018.

James and Jennie Thiele



The Assumption of Blessed Mary & St Nicholas

The highlight of the year for our church was without doubt the redecoration of the interior of the church building. It has been restored to its full beauty and many who have visited have remarked about the amount of light now being reflected from the repaired and whitened walls.

At the end of 2015 the church in Etchingam, together with St Bartholomew's Burwash and St Philip's Burwash Weald became part of the United Benefice of Burwash, Burwash Weald and Etchingam with myself as Rector over all three churches. We are still feeling our way to some degree but as we move forward it is an opportunity to share resources, ideas and energy whilst retaining our individual Parochial Church Councils and financial responsibilities.

We are extremely blessed by the number of priests who give of their time to minister on a Sunday morning. Canons Patrick Sales, and Will Pratt, Revds Iain Morrison, Peter Clark, Dick Dengate and of course Revd Jean Manning who became extremely well known and loved in Etchingam. Jean announced her retirement at the end of the year and she will be sorely missed. Although I hope, that after a rest, she may be persuaded to officiate at services on an occasional basis.

As part of the Diocesan strategy the church hosted a 'welcome tea' in the Parker Hall. Craft activities for the children, the opportunity to chat and get to know each other over a delicious tea made it a successful afternoon. During Lent, lunches in aid of charity were also an opportunity for fellowship.

It is always a blessing to officiate at the occasional offices, although tinged with sadness when that service is because a family has lost somebody dear to them. However we have also known the joy during the past year of several baptisms and a wedding. We look forward over the coming months to more baptisms and a summer wedding.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of those who contributed to the redecoration project and the ongoing maintenance of the church. We are all stewards of the church building which has stood in Etchingam for many years and the generosity, care and support of the community helps to ensure that it continues to be a beacon in the village.

Sally Epps
Rector of Burwash, Burwash Weald & Etchingam
April 2017



Report on Etchingam Music Festival 2016

The Music Festival had a good year both musically and financially in 2016 and finished with a small profit.

The Festival kicked off with an evening of clever musical satire from "Instant Sunshine" which had us all in stitches and filled the church. We hope to have a repeat performance in 2018.

This was followed by another visit by the pianist Florian Mitrea, a great favourite of the Festival, who performed with the exciting Atea Wind Quintet. This concert was a sellout too.

The midweek concert featured Richard Evans who gave a tribute concert for our late patron and his friend and mentor; Dr. Peter Katin. Richard had played for us before both in a shared concert with Peter and as Peter's understudy when he was hospitalised a few years ago.

The Saturday Supper concert : "Opera as you like it" showcased opera students from the Royal Academy of Music. We are always amazed at the talent of the various students who perform for us. Many who have appeared in Etchingam over the years have proceeded to Covent Garden and the International opera scene. We were grateful for a grant from Etchingam Parish Council towards this concert, particularly as it is always a favourite with our local residents.

We finished with "Shakespeare through the seasons", an afternoon of Choral Music by Crowborough's "Singing for fun" and readings from Shakespeare by the Etchingam Poetry Group. Sadly the audience for this was rather diminished by the fact that Andy Murray was playing in the Wimbledon final!

We were pleased to be able to make a donation to the repair work on the church. We really value the use of this wonderful building and it's great acoustic for the Festival.

Mary Newington

April 2017

The Etchingam Singers

In 2016 we acquired a new conductor – who is extremely good, patient, and full of excellent ideas. We now have a four-part choir, which opens up a whole new repertoire to us.

During the last year, we have given three performances: for the “Not So Young” Club in Burwash; at the annual Flower and Dog show in Etchingam, and our usual performance at the Christmas Play, also in Etchingam.

We rehearse in the Parker Hall in the new School buildings, on Monday evenings from 7.45 until 9.15.

We are always looking for new members and there is no audition to be afraid of so anyone interested should contact either Courtney Kenny (01580 819125) or Robin Hare (01580 201388).

Courtney Kenny

April 2017

Rother Valley Ladies

April 2016 to March 2017

We have had a full and entertaining programme over the past year.

Our eighteen members have enjoyed talks at our Wednesday meetings in the Parker Hall – always followed by a delicious tea – and the subjects have ranged from Charles Darwin to Charles Dickens, and Ellen Terry to Beatrix Potter.

We have visited Sedlescombe Vineyard and been on a coach trip to Rochester, and are looking forward to an equally interesting programme for the rest of 2017.

For further information please contact Greta Crane on 01580 819304.

ETCHINGHAM FRIENDSHIP CLUB

(formerly Darby & Joan Club)

The Club was founded in 1958 for those people in the Village of 55 years and over.

We meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 2.30pm in the Parker Hall for a talk, usually with slides, followed by a superb tea.

Outings usually take place on two of the months, where funds permit, but Membership is just £10 per year.

Please contact Julia Barrow 01580819475 for more information and a copy of the 2017 Programme.

Please come and join us, you will be made very welcome.

FRIENDS OF BURWASH SURGERY

Sadly, after having held the position for many years, and done an excellent job, our Treasurer is standing down at our forthcoming (June) AGM. Happily, we have a volunteer to take over the role, and also another new committee member, so all looks well, now, on that front. The surgery itself is also working very well, with a settled partnership and staff.

The provision of transport continues to be one of – not to say the - most important function of the Friends. We have a rota of drivers, but would always welcome new volunteers. This only involves perhaps two or three requests per year, to drive a patient to (usually) a hospital appointment (and back), or possibly just to and from the Surgery.

We have a capital reserve, to meet requests for equipment, from the Surgery, and have just paid for three portable hearing loops for them. This has, of course, somewhat depleted our resources and donations are therefore - as always - very welcome!

The committee meets only about once every three months and, due in no small part to the excellent jobs our transport coordinator (Pat Lewis), and our secretary (Sue Mumford), do for us, being a committee member is not too onerous a task. There is certainly room for one more member and, if anybody feels they could sign up, we would be pleased to hear from them.

Contacts

Chairman: Frank Smith 01580-819326 langsmith_@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Jill Copland 01580-819321 teakeeper@mypostoffice.co.uk

And Finally, from the Parish Office.....

Another interesting and challenging year, often feeling a bit like three steps forward then two steps back on some projects – but overall there is progress!

As a village Etchingham has a reputation for punching well above its weight and that only happens when there is real community involvement. Your Parish Council can't (and shouldn't!) do it all, the way forward for the village to get the future it wants and deserves is when we all pull together. Something that Etchingham does extremely well and demonstrates on a pretty regular basis.

Having said that, there is a huge debt of thanks due to all your councillors, Parish, District and County – they are a hard-working, enthusiastic and visionary bunch, nothing would happen without them. Also our MP, Huw Merriman, who regularly raises questions in the House directly on our behalf and that of the other rural communities in the Constituency.

So here's to another year when hopefully we will see the completion of both major and smaller projects, and doubtless another wish-list for the years beyond that.

Paulette Barton
Clerk to Etchingham Council
April 2017