

ANNUAL REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES AND ACCOUNTS, 2020-2021

Report by the Chairman of the Parish Council

I have been involved with East Leake Parish Council for over 20 years, but I have to say that the past 12 months have been the strangest and, in many ways, the most challenging.

On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus a global pandemic and just 12 days later our Prime Minister ordered us all to stay at home.

Amongst many other changes, the Government passed legislation which allowed Parish Councils to hold virtual meetings, something that we have done since and we have all had to get used to meeting via zoom.

It has also all changed in the administration department, with Susan Lewis successfully applying for the Parish Clerk vacancy. Susan already has 25 years' service with the Parish Council, all the qualifications we expect the Clerk to hold and knows the village like the back of her hand. Sues successor as the new assistant clerk is Alexandra (Ally) Moore who lives in the village and has a child at a local school.

Unfortunately, it was a year of cancelled events, with the Scouts May Day gala, the VE Day celebrations, The Village Carnival, East Leake Live and the Christmas Lights switch on all being victims of the lock down. We were also unable to welcome the Circus and Travelling Fair which have both become features of the summer months. The Remembrance Day service did go ahead but in a much-reduced way.

When I was appointed the Clerk in April 2000 the "new" estate on Gotham Road was nearing completion and shortly after the second Gotham Road development was approved. A little time later Rushcliffe Borough Council published its first attempt at a Local Plan which identified development of some 400 new homes in East Leake and based on that document we produced our Local Plan. Rushcliffe's plan was rejected by the Government, and with no Local Plan to protect us and the lack of any Green Belt land in the village we experienced an explosion of new building which will eventually total some 1200, without any consideration of what effect that would have on the infrastructure in the village.

Residents do not always appreciate that the Parish Council has vigorously objected to all the recent applications, but a number have gone to appeal before being approved by an independent inspector. Recently we presented the Councils strong objection to the additional 51 houses to be added to the Rempstone Road development only for them to be approved by Rushcliffe Borough Council Planning Committee.

It has not all been negative, however, because we did manage to get the Christmas lights improved by decorating two further large trees in the village centre. Plans for the improvements to the Oldershaw Trust land off Costock Road and the construction of a new car park on Costock Road to remove the on-street parking at the playing fields every weekend is both well in hand. You will also see a drinks fountain appear in the village centre soon.

The Parish Council also took on the role of project manager for the development of a new, much needed, pavilion at the Costock Road playing fields and we are now able to appoint the preferred contractor for that build subject to the necessary finance being approved. Our thanks go to our former Parish Clerk, Neil Lambert, who took on the role of Project Manager for this scheme, a role he continued even after his retirement.

We are also incredibly lucky in the village to have a team of volunteers who give up their time on a regular basis to try and keep the streets and open spaces free from litter, collectively known as The Tidy Team, and in 2020 they were recognised by RBC as Community Champions. Thank you one and all.

The biggest disappointment has been the need to close the children's playground, and the protracted nature of our dispute with the original builder, but I am pleased to be able to report that this has now been resolved and we have appointed a contractor to put right the defects and reopen as soon as possible.

On the financial side, in 2019 the newly elected council inherited a situation where a desire not to increase council tax had been achieved by the previous administration by utilising nearly all the Council's reserves, with the result that to enable us to achieve our aims for the village, increases in the council tax were inevitable. The pandemic meant that some of the projects we had budgeted for in 2020/21 were unable to be completed, resulting in an underspend on the year. This funding has been carried forward to the current year and I am pleased to be able to report that we have been able to budget for a nil increase.

So, looking to the future, let us hope that the Government roadmap works out as anticipated and we can all get back to something approaching normality by the summer.

Finally, I cannot complete this report without giving a big thank you to all the elected and co-opted councillors who give their time and energy for no other reward than to see the village well maintained and the facilities continuing to improve. Also, to our Clerk and Assistant Clerk, who work tirelessly on your behalf, and our two ground staff who have to try and cope with the ever increasing demands of a young and energetic council. I must also thank our County Councillor Andy Brown who has worked with the Parish Council to push forward several projects for which NCC are responsible.

Thank you.

Cllr Kevin Shaw

Report by the Chairman of the Management Committee

At the time Cllr. Kevin Shaw handed over the responsibility of being the Chair of the Management Committee to me in late September 2020, we were in the thick of a world-wide response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Who knew at that time how long we would need to shield the vulnerable for, while repeatedly locking down and continuing to live under restrictions?

In response to the pandemic, the Management Committee have been meeting virtually on Zoom every month. Our work has continued wherever possible, and we have responded to appeals within the community whenever we have been made aware of a need.

In October, we said goodbye to our former clerk, Neil Lambert. We thank Neil for his work for the Parish Council during his time with us. Members of the committee were actively involved in advertising for and recruiting a new clerk and Sue Lewis, formerly our Deputy Clerk, was successful in gaining this post. We also recruited Ally Moore as an Assistant Clerk and we look forward to continuing to work with both Sue and Ally going forward.

More recently, we have been planning the budget for the 2021/22 financial year. There was an underspend for the 2019/20 year as we had been unable to complete projects we had budgeted for. This funding was, therefore, carried forward to the 21/22 year and this has enabled us to set a precept

with a zero percent increase, which still includes provision for a car park on land on Costock Road and the repair and development of play areas.

Going forward, we are preparing to re-start face-to-face committee meetings as soon as we can, but we will need to consider how we can do this safely and within any guidelines given. We will be reviewing committee membership and portfolios shortly to ensure tasks and responsibilities are shared appropriately across the Council.

I would like to end my report by thanking the councillors on the Management Committee and the staff for their hard work and support during the year.

Cllr Donna Griggs

Report by the Chairman of the Amenities Committee

What a year to take over as Chair of the Amenities Committee. Stepping-up part way through the Council calendar was never my plan, but little about the last year has followed anyone's plans. However, I'm very pleased to have pushed myself beyond my comfort-zone. Though I don't mind admitting I'll be glad to put the Zoom meetings behind us.

Despite the difficulties we have all faced, I'm pleased to report that there has been some great work happening on behalf of East Leake Residents throughout the lockdown period in one form or another. With thanks to a great number of people who have given up their time to make contributions when and where possible.

East Leake Market Association begun its early steps back in 2019, but last September finally saw it come to fruition with the first taster market and December's Christmas market. The ELMA team are comprised of local traders and business owners and has been jointly supported by the East Leake Traders Association, Rushcliffe Borough Council, and the Parish Council. We are hugely grateful for the fantastic efforts of all the volunteers (including the ELMA team) for bringing a safe and successful market to our village. We hope it will be here to stay.

We tried out some new hanging baskets in the village centre this year which we believed looked stunning, and I'm pleased to say more are returning this summer, with hopefully even more impact. This falls alongside continuous plans to develop and improve and increase our planted spaces. We hope you will start to notice more bulbs, more wildflowers and hopefully some decorative troughs on the entrances to our village.

A Tree Warden was appointed, and what a great move that was. Wendy has made an incredible start to adding more trees to the village, both on the Oldershaw Trust Land and dotted around our other green spaces. Please do look after our baby trees while they are growing, by giving them some space. Wendy also secured a grant to create a new hedgerow along the front of the Oldershaw Trust land too.

The Tidy Team have continued their fantastic efforts to keep our village looking super-smart. I'd especially like to thank Finlay Horn who volunteered his litter picking services as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award. Please do follow them on Facebook and get involved in keeping our village tidy. Littering is an offence and Rushcliffe are starting to send their high street wardens out to issue on the spot fines. Please help by using the bins provided throughout the village centre.

I feel like I need a fanfare for this next item – we finally have a contractor ready to resurface our playpark on Gotham Road! Work will start as soon as possible. It has been a long and extremely frustrating battle and we are all relieved the end is in sight. We have created a working party to look at ways in which the Gotham Road Recreational ground can be improved in the future (once funds allow).

We are currently working on plans to create a natural, local play space for young children on the Oldershaw Trust land, fulfilling its purpose. We are using the Section 106 money from the Cornflower Way estate from RBC designated for this intent. We have consulted directly with the local residents and are thrilled that they are, in the main, very supportive of our plans. We hope to run a 'come and look at our plans' event at some point in the near future.

We have continued to support the Playing fields charity in their plans to develop the Pavilion, as we believe it will be a great facility for the village. Plans have been drawn up by architects and funding is being sought. We are currently waiting on a decision from planning at RBC to enable the go ahead for an overflow car park on Costock Road, which we hope will alleviate some issues with parking at that end of the village, once it is complete.

We hope you like our new-look newsletters? We are aware that huge paper runs are not ideal environmentally, but we know that not everyone can access the internet, or posts on social media, so felt it important to ensure that everyone is kept in the loop every now and then. As a Council we are mindful of becoming more environmentally conscious in our practices and are currently writing a new wildlife policy. When you're out and about in the village over the next few months look out for the new drinking water fountain appearing on the outside of the Parish Toilets, it should happen very soon! You will be able to fill your water bottles and re-hydrate when you're out without needing to purchase single use plastic.

We hope you enjoyed our new additions to the Christmas lights this year. We thought they brought some much needed sparkle to lift spirits in such a difficult winter. St Mary's church yard has continued to be cared for by generous volunteers, I'm sure these efforts have been appreciated by many this past year.

I'd like to say a big Thank you and 'happy retirement' to Neil (previous Clerk) and Conrad (previous Chair), we are very grateful for your continuing contributions to our village. I'd also like to congratulate and thank Sue for her wealth of knowledge in her new role as Clerk, welcome Ally who is already making a positive contribution as Assistant Clerk, and finally thank Adey & Steve for coping with the ever-changing demands of the Parish Council.

Please do get into a good habit of proactively reporting issues around the village; <https://www.fixmystreet.com> is a great place to start to ensure the right people find out about the problem. For anything Parish related, please do get in touch with the Parish office; parishclerk@east-leake.gov.uk. Rushcliffe Borough Council (<https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk>) and Nottinghamshire County Council (<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk>) also have very comprehensive websites and their own reporting systems too. Thank you for your support with this.

Many of our fantastic projects and spaces just wouldn't be possible without donations of time and energy from you all. Giving something back to the community can be very rewarding and give the us the opportunity to get out into our wonderful village, to meet people, make friends and create that special ethos that East Leake is known for. Please consider what you can do to help make a positive impact and join in, even if it's just an hour here and there. **EAST LEAKE NEEDS YOU!**

Cllr Sara Budzik

Report by the Chairman of the Planning Committee

I have been Chair of the Parish Council Planning for a few months now and have found the position both interesting and fairly demanding.

The last year has by no means been typical. After the large development applications of the last few years, 2020/21 has been relatively quiet. Currently there is one pending housing application with the inspector, which is for a small development on Costock Road. The Parish Council has again objected

to this application. We have now had over 1300 additional houses approved over the last few years. However, the Stonebridge Drive development application is also still outstanding.

Residents do not always appreciate that the PC has vigorously objected to all the recent applications, but a number have gone to appeal before being approved by an independent inspector. Recently I was asked to present the Council's strong objections to the additional 51 houses to be added to the Rempstone Road development only for them to be approved by Rushcliffe BC Planning Committee.

On a more positive note, the Planning Committee recently supported a Solar Farm in the area.

We are grateful to all local residents who make comments either directly to the PC or on the portal for individual applications. We will continue to fight for our village and will carefully consider any further applications which come our way in the future.

Lastly, I would also like to say a big thank you to the members of the Planning Committee for their sensible contributions and for their shared wealth of knowledge which has been a big help to me.

Cllr Liz Taylor