

**MINUTES OF THE EAST LEAKE PARISH COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD VIA ZOOM ON TUESDAY 27th APRIL 2021 AT 6.30PM**

PRESENT: Cllrs Lesley Way, Liz Taylor, Donna Griggs, Kevin Shaw, Chris Mulligan, Carys Thomas, Lynn Forsyth, Eleanor Robinson, Lindsey Maggs, Mel Roper, Nick McGowan, Terry Rountree, Wendy Thompson, Sara Budzik,

ALSO PRESENT: The Clerk, Sue Lewis; Assistant Clerk, Ally Moore; Ruth Edwards MP, and 1 member of the public.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Richard Miller – reasons given and accepted.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

The Chairman, Cllr Kevin Shaw, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ruth Edwards for attending.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF 7TH MAY 2019 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:

Proposed: Cllr Kevin Shaw

Seconded: Cllr Donna Griggs

Agreed Unanimously

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. Sue's 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 Council's 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 began 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 rehydrate 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 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 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 Borough Council 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

QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS – PLANNING, AMENITIES AND MANAGEMENT 2020-2021:

There were no questions.

UPDATE FROM RUTH EDWARDS MP, FOLLOWING BY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED:

Ruth Edwards expressed her thanks at being invited to the meeting and explained that she would be giving updates on three main areas: the Health Centre, flooding and development.

Health Centre

Ruth visited the Health Centre back in February 2020 and saw first-hand how much an upgrade is required. There are two streams of funding currently being pursued: Public Health England Capital Funding and the Levelling Up Fund (in which each council gets to submit a bid for each constituency that they cover). Rushcliffe Borough Council are looking at submitting a bid which will include the upgrade of the Health Centre as part of a multi-purpose community hub which would include a new health centre, GPs, pharmacy, and social care/community services.

Flooding:

Ruth has met with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water. Severn Trent Water has now admitted a hydraulic deficiency on the sewerage network within the village which presents a risk of flooding to property and waste service interruptions. They are now assessing the need to reinforce the network due to growth in the village and will be making a decision on this by the end of Autumn once they have finished their feasibility evaluations.

Development:

Ruth does not believe the current planning system is giving us the tools we need to make sure that houses are going where they should go, and protection from speculative developments, so we need to see urban brownfield prioritised.

Ruth fully supports the abolishment of Duty to Cooperate (which is in the planning reforms published last summer) and has been talking to Robert Jenrick about this since the election as it has been raised by so many people across the constituency.

Questions to Ruth:

Cllr Terry Routree asked the following questions:

- Who specifically are the "decision makers" to allow the bid to progress?
- Is a visit to the site still planned for the Health Minister Jo Churchill, and could you please advise what role in the decision making the Health Minister Jo Churchill will play?
- Will the Health Minister's visit affect the decision outcome, so is the visit of the Health Minister required to go ahead before any decision can be made?
- How is the proposal proceeding following the submission to Treasury? Is it on hold due to the current situation or is the bid for funding progressing, and have you received any response from Treasury regarding the bid for funding?

Ruth replied that, in terms of the Public Health funding, a decision will need to be made before the spending review which is coming up in the Autumn. In terms of the Levelling Up Fund – 18th June and expect decision in Autumn. The Levelling Up Fund will have several rounds so there will be further opportunities in the future if we're not successful. In terms of the health minister Ruth thinks good opportunity to show the Department of Health first-hand how much we need a new Health Centre and this will also raise the profile of our bid and campaign with the department.

Cllr Lesley Way asked Ruth how much communication there be with Parish Council regarding the Levelling Up Fund bid.

Ruth informed that she has spoken Rushcliffe and they have confirmed that East Leake Parish Council will be involved, and Ruth will ensure that the bid manager, once appointed, is aware of this. At this point The Clerk confirmed that she already has been invited to join the meetings.

Cllr Way asked if Ruth is aware of the letter sent to Robert Jenrick from Rushcliffe Borough Council regarding estate management charges, and our campaign to get changes made to ensure a fairer system as this is of particular concern to East Leake residents due to the large recent developments and the number of householders affected.

Ruth confirmed that she has seen the letter which was sent to Robert Jenrick and is aware of the issue. Ruth's understanding, in terms of the Government's position, is that they committed to create a new statutory regime so that freeholders pay maintenance charges to get the equivalent rights of leaseholders to challenge their reasonableness. Ruth believes the Government is planning to bring in legislation and she will be happy to write a follow up letter to Robert Jenrick to ask where we are in terms of progress with the matter.

Cllr Lynn Forsyth:

The New Homes Bonus was designed to provide cash for areas that allow new homes to be built. Then Minister for Housing and Local Government MP Grant Shapps stated in his foreword to the New Homes Bonus: Final Scheme Design that 'The New Homes Bonus will have localism at its heart'.

In the same document it is stated that the government expects councillors to work closely with their communities – and in particular the neighbourhoods most affected by housing growth – One of the suggested uses for this money is to improve leisure and community facilities for these neighbourhoods.

In the year 19/20 Rushcliffe received £1.6 million. In 20/21 £2.3 million and the projected figure for 21/22 is £1.6 million.

During the time since the Local Plan was adopted in 2013 there has been an increase of over 1300 houses in East Leake. That an increase of around 50% on the existing housing in the village.

24% of new housing built in Rushcliffe in this period have been in East Leake.

Our chairman Cllr Kevin Shaw, who also happens to be one of our 3 Borough councillors has on at least 2 occasions approached Rushcliffe Borough Council to ask for access to these funds. Specifically, he has asked for £500,000 to go towards the desperately needed refurbishment of the Costock Road Pavilion. He has been told that no money is coming to East Leake.

Ruth – As our MP can you please explain to me and our residents why this money is not being fairly disseminated throughout the borough, and why East Leake has been forced to accept 1300 new homes but is not deemed worthy of a penny of this money.

Ruth responded that she understood the frustrations and would facilitate a conversation with Simon Robinson and Roger Upton of Rushcliffe Borough Council

Cllr Carys Thomas referred to the update Ruth gave regarding Severn Trent Water, and the issues they have admitted to. Cllr Thomas said that we would like to be able to say in our responses to further developments that the sewage system is inadequate and that Severn Trent Water have admitted this but there is nothing we can point to, and could Ruth help with this?

Ruth asked Paul Honey (case worker) whether there was anything in writing which could be used to support objections and Paul confirmed that he would work to obtain this.

Cllr Thomas referred to the development of solar farms in the village. Whilst we acknowledge that solar farms are a positive element in terms of energy, they are destroying habitats. Cllr Thomas asked the question why new homes are not being built with solar panels already on the roofs, rather than putting them on fields.

Ruth replied that she fully supports the notion and going forward they will be. Ruth will investigate this and ask the question about when this will be brought in.

CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS ON PAST YEAR AND PAST COUNCIL:

The Chairman expressed his thanks for all those who attended the meeting and who asked questions.

Meeting closed at 19.09pm

DRAFT