

Evenley Parish Council
Annual Parish Meeting
15th April 2019

Good evening and welcome to Evenley's annual parish meeting. First an update from me about what we the parish council have been up to this year. We've got a lot on tonight, but its important you have an opportunity to hear our news and ask any questions, though I would ask that we do that at the end when everyone has spoken as they may indeed answer some of those questions anyway.

Again its been busy. The most obvious achievement this year is our success in applying for a public works loan to replace the street lights. As you probably know, many were the old concrete ones, which had long outlived their expected lifetime, whilst others had fittings which are now out of issue. So we've replaced some completely and adapted others to take on the look of Victorian streetlights. For this we have borrowed approximately £28,500 for eight years with a payback of approximately £3,500 a year. The new lights all use LED fitments which in turn will help the parish save considerably on its electricity costs. A big thank you must be given to Spencer who has been the driving force behind this project and has created spreadsheets that Excel would be proud of!

Whilst paperwork is important, as most of you know, it's not my favourite part of life, but it has to be done and once again Cathy, our clerk extraordinaire has ensured we are doing all the right things at the right times. For example, becoming compliant with GDPR regulations has involved a fair amount of work. We've also update and simplified our strategic plan to determine the way ahead.

Meanwhile, tidying up and improving the look of the Parish has remained a priority. More bulbs have been planted; the boxes at the edge of the village and at the hall replanted seasonally and maintained, the entrances to the village have been opened up and re-emerged posts and rails repainted. Jeff and I have helped but real thanks for this must go to Charles Reader - who some genius appointed to the Parish Council! Charles is a one-man dynamo; not only has he hacked and slayed the entrances, he has also strimmed along the village footpaths - just this weekend he's been out there again - so Charles, an enormous thank you on behalf of us all for all your kind work.

We finally obtained the piece of land in School Lane and after consulting with many of the residents, we have planted four Malus Floribunda trees (crab apples) on the land, which are a small, very attractive pink flowering tree, underplanted with daffodils. We have also put up some no parking signs. All of which has hopefully improved the environment and street scene.

The allotments are now in good order. A couple of years ago, we were struggling to find users and quite frankly they were in a bit of a mess. A smart new sign now identifies them and Charles has worked closely with the allotmenters to tidy them up and ensure they are fully let, which I am pleased to report they are. Looking to the year ahead, we are working with the allotmenters to secure funding for a possible joint greenhouse or polytunnel and other ideas to ensure their continued success.

The chaps and I also restored the war memorial to its original state. The memorial is actually listed, whilst the rather ugly concrete slabs laid around it were a much later addition and were in a poor state. After much discussion we decided to return it to how it was originally envisaged and I hope you agree, it looks much better.

Eventually, the double yellow lines have been returned to the corner of the Green and Church Lane, in heritage primrose and hopefully this will ensure this is returned to a safer situation for all users of this section of road. And whilst we are still chasing Gigaclear to finish repairing some of

its damage, we did finally get it to instal the promised free wifi here in the hall albeit after a nine month delay.

We heard about the great news to reform the WI and showed our support of this excellent community development by offering a small grant to help it get up and running. We also gave some money to the village hall to help, albeit in a small way, with its programme of continual improvement.

T'was the Summer of traffic diversions and my trusty team of willing fellows and I got absolutely fed up of battling with Highways England. We had traffic management teams on speed dial and had moving cones around down to a fine art to protect the Green and villagers property from misguided, usually foreign HGV drivers who kept attempting to cut through Evenley taking wings and wing mirrors with them. Finally after probably a fully blown tantrum from me, we had a breakthrough and signage was put in place and the contractors put soil back around the Green in an attempt to repair some of the damage, but it was a taster of what may happen in the future with the construction of HS2 imminent.

With that in mind, our presence at HS2 forums held frequently in Towcester for local parishes took on a greater importance and after many a meeting, email and general moan, I finally have some good news. HS2 through its road safety fund has agreed to pay for a speed calming chicane on Broad Lane, in an effort to slow or even deter drivers from cutting through Evenley to avoiding queues or road closure during construction. Helen Howard from Northants Highways here today can advise us on timing and specifics, but suffice to say, it has been designed to allow agricultural vehicles and HGVs through but will hopefully put rat runners off. This has now become critical as our friends from HS2 will explain to you later.

We have also had a breakthrough with Highways England which up until now has totally ignored us. My new best friend is Olaf and he 'gets it' with regard to the problems our location provides when there are issues on the A43. He has promised to help when road closures are considered, with signage, with contacts for help etc. There's even a whisper of a look at our much landed-upon roundabout. We live in hope.

So we've been to lots of very exciting meetings and slowly slowly we are making progress. Looking ahead, we are working on a scheme to protect the Green, which is slowly being eroded by traffic, and are looking at ways of funding this. We are also putting together some ideas to present to HS2's community fund for funding. We will be applying to SNC for a grant for the allotments; have started a footpath and stile survey with a view to replacing stiles where suitable with two-way (kissing) gates; and will be putting together an application for the best village competition again. So its onwards and upwards!

If you have any questions, we will have a Q&A session at the end, to speed things along or come and chat to any of us councillors afterwards. And if you would like to help in anyway, please come and find me. There is lots to do in the village and we would welcome support, if its offering to water the boxes, repaint them, wash signs, whatever, your help would be very welcome!

And finally before I hand over to our other guests tonight, I would just like to thank the team for all their hardwork this year, its a good bunch and we do have a laugh even at the boring stuff.... and thank you too to our wardens and unofficial helpers and you too for your continued support, comments and suggestions. Oh and if you haven't signed up for news via email, please find Cathy and she will take your details.

Now some of our speakers have elected not to stand up here tonight but have given a written report. These will be available, as will these words of wisdom, on our website and copies are here tonight too.

Cathy Ellis
Chairman

