



Report of the Chair to 2024 Annual Parish Meeting

Introduction

Your Parish Council (PC) is pleased to present its report on the year since the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 23 May 2023.

Unfortunately, in July Cllr Fab de Liberali had to resign but we have a new Cllrs, Steph Ironside and Eve Almond. The roles on the PC are currently as follows:

Chair: Cllr David Kirkby

Vice-chair: Cllr Connie Leach

Facebook and Instagram: Cllr Steph Ironside

Newsletter: Cllr Tony Gaster

Planning: Cllr Rona Blundell

Recreation Ground Repairs and Maintenance: Cllr Simon Leigh-Jones

Link to Events Working Group: Cllr David Kirkby

Link to Handyperson Working Group: Cllr Simon Leigh-Jones

Link to Sustainability Working Group: Cllr Eve Almond

Link to Oliver's Battery Primary School: Cllr Steph Ironside

Tree Warden: Cllr Tony Gaster

Highlights of the previous 12 months:

Asset of Community Value (Texas Drive Field and Yew Hill Butterfly Reserve)

On 29th September 2023, Texas Field and Yew Hill Butterfly Reserve was successfully re-accepted onto the Winchester City Council (WCC) Register of Assets of Community Value for another five years. This followed on from the Oliver's Battery Parish Council's (PC's) initial listing in 2019.

This application to re-list this land required the PC to provide current evidence to support our nomination. Appeals were sent out to residents via the Newsletter and the PC's Contacts List. From these, we obtained testimonials, documenting how the field was used, and what it meant to individuals and groups. One local resident, together with her friends and neighbours conducted an independent survey, producing a valuable, up to date 'snapshot'. We thank Jackie Warren for leading this initiative. The PC also conducted a survey. Additionally, we used data collected when we surveyed residents' opinion as to suitability of local sites included in the SHELAA for the emerging Local Plan, revealing a very high level of opposition to developing Texas Field. All this evidence, together with maps and a powerful portfolio of new photos continued to show how widely the field is used, demonstrated the strength of our nomination. The PC also quoted extracts from the previous tribunal judgement dated 29 November 2019, which it is still relevant today.



The PC thanks all those who helped once again in providing the evidence that Texas Field and Yew Hill Butterfly Reserve remain an Asset of Community Value.

Cllr Connie Leach

Facebook and Instagram

The PC Facebook page is used to publicise all types of parish happenings. In the past year this has included advertising annual events like the Scarecrow Competition and Easter Egg Hunt, providing updates on parish facility improvements and promoting local green initiatives.

The page has 312 followers who regularly 'like' and comment on our posts. We have recently introduced an Instagram account to extend our reach to a younger demographic.

Over the next year we will continue to use our social media accounts to inform parishioners, as well as replying to questions and encouraging comments and discussion as one way to build and enhance our local feeling of community.

Cllr Steph Ironside

Newsletter

Every two months a 16-page newsletter has been published and delivered to every home in Oliver's Battery, the local shops and school. Since this April, it is now in colour. There is a regular team of people who report on activity and happenings within the community. We are still looking for someone to take on advertising which it is hoped will allow the newsletter to grow.

Cllr Tony Gaster

Planning

The Parish Council (PC) is notified of planning applications in the parish and these are reviewed at PC Meetings.

The Council has considered 23 new applications in the year and objected to 5, including a recent one in relation to a Tree Preservation Order, which was refused and the TPO made permanent.

In the case of one application, amended plans were submitted addressing the main concerns raised and the PC then withdrew its objection.

After an enforcement notice was issued due to the Council's concern about unauthorised demolition, an objection was submitted regarding the resulting reapplication. Although the PC and two residents spoke against that application at the WCC Planning Committee, the application was approved.



Planning enforcement does not appear to be effective, for example the PC and city councillors are following up the lack of landscaping around the extension to the dentist surgery which was part of the planning approval.

One application remains ongoing from previous years (9-11 Mount View Road where the PC has also supported local residents regarding the removal of a temporary spoil heap).

The PC commented also on the outline planning application relating to Bushfield Camp particularly on the basis of major concerns regarding the access, the impact on traffic congestion, increased pressure on parking spaces in the parish and nearby and the very real potential for increased CO2 emissions.

Although the PC do not always agree with WCC planning decisions, it is worth noting that all the Planning Officers contacted with requests and queries have been unfailingly helpful to the PC.

Cllr Rona Blundell

Recreation Ground Project

The Oliver's Battery Recreation Ground has seen significant improvements over the past year. Taking inspiration from findings in a Residents' Survey as to how the Rec could be improved, the notion of **A More Inclusive Recreation Ground** was implemented. Crowdfunding with WCC match funding, Football Foundation and WCC CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) grants helped to make this possible.

The aim was to encourage a wider age-range of visitors and to use the space in different ways. We have provided more picnic tables, benches and bins, particularly at the far end of the football field. A short, flat walk allows older residents to walk a little, then sit, socialise and admire the views. The existing grass path cut round the entire Rec is accessible from the Car Park, providing an opportunity for gentle exercise, with stopping points around it, for a rest, a picnic, or even as a place from which to draw or paint the surrounding landscapes.

The new, smaller football pitch, with its new goals and pitch lining is suitable for primary school age children, older 5/6 aside and even walking football.

Finally, the planting of 11 native trees, including two larger specimens, an oak and a copper beech, has enhanced the biodiversity potential of the space.

This year will see less spent on improvements; the key exception is a proposal to repaint the tennis court surface. A high-quality durable net was installed by the Handyperson Group and other volunteers on 28 June.

Cllr Connie Leach



Recreation Ground Repairs and Maintenance

It has been a significant year for the parish recreational ground. Not only has there been the grounds maintenance fulfilled by our contractor Grass and Grounds and the monthly visual checks and minor works but also numerous features of our hugely popular playground have been repaired or replaced.

In the Annual Play Inspection report, received on 27 April 2023, there were 3 findings classified as Moderate Risk, all others were classified as Low or Very Low Risk. However, remedial works to some low-risk items were included in a project with the 3 moderate risk items, to avoid further deterioration.

This project included replacement of structural timber posts to large multi play unit, new safety surfacing to bottom of long slide and under the two swings and cradle swing, replacement basket swing and cradle swing seats, replacement basketball backboard, hoop and net.

During the year, other items were completed, including replacement rope bridge, replacement tennis net, cutting back branches overhanging the tennis court and remedial works to timber platform to the small slide.

The Handyperson Group also undertakes regular maintenance, see separate report for more details.

It is obvious, upon any brief visit to the Rec that the improvements are greatly appreciated.

Cllr Simon Leigh-Jones

Working Groups (volunteers)

The PC has three working groups: The Events Group, The Handyperson Group and The Sustainability Group.

Events

The Oliver's Battery Events Group are a small team of local residents, which formed nearly 6 years ago, are a Working Group of the PC and have the aim of putting on 4 main events a year for our community - one for each season.

All these events have been both well received and well attended.

Last calendar year saw the Easter Egg Hunt in early April, the Coronation Celebration in May, Scarecrow Week late October/early November and the Christmas Tree celebrations early December.

The Events Group gather a likeminded team together to run each event. This year's Easter Egg Hunt had a team of 22 for instance, as well as the generous sponsorship from our local Alexandra Sports - which enabled the very modest entry fees.

Looking forward this year, we are always looking for kindred spirits to become part of the core team and specifically this year, also someone to take on the organising and team forming/building to put on a Summer Event for the community.



This year's Scarecrow Competition will be in late September, whilst the Christmas Tree lighting, carols and mulled wine/mince pies event will be helped by a team that includes St Marks and the Oliver's Battery WI.

The Events Group also organise the monthly 'Thursday Evening Meal Out', which has been held at the South Winchester Golf Club and this year, now successfully alternates between two of our 'Local' Pubs.

We also have 35 local residents, who as the 'Distribution Team' of some 10 years need a very special mention, as the local Oliver's Battery Newsletters would not appear on your doorstep without them.

Colin Stride on behalf of Events Group, oliversbatteryevents@gmail.com

Handyperson

The Handyperson Group consists of one female and 4 male local residents.

Activity over the previous 12 months has included protective staining of new picnic tables and benches, applying the Autumn and Winter nonslip stain to the recreation ground play equipment, clearing the leaf fall from some local paths, and maintaining the road speed warning device in Old Kennels Lane. Additionally, the Group remains on call to make safe or fence off any defective equipment in the Recreation Ground or The Battery and had been used several times in this role.

Recently the Group have taken on organising the watering and minor maintenance of the new trees in the Recreation Ground.

David Warren on behalf of Handyperson Group

Sustainability

In 2023 Sustainable Oliver's Battery had three themes, all selected by our residents in the 2022 parish survey: Home Energy; Wildlife and "Stuff" (waste/ swaps/ repairs).

Home Energy

Good progress made; since the presentation 2023 OBPC AGM by Gary Spring, the PC used a grant from WCC to acquire a second thermal imaging camera. 25 properties have had thermal surveys. Two members of this team attended the free Energy Champion Training workshop organised via WinACC.

Wildlife

Our **wildflower** seed give away in Spring started conversations - encouraging wildlife friendly gardening in Oliver's Battery. We are also continuing to develop a wildflower meadow on the corner of the Battery.

Summer 2023 started the **Hedgehog** Highways project facilitated by Claire Morgan who has raised awareness and is now mapping hedgehog activity/ habitat.

Ongoing collaboration with Oliver's Battery Countryside Group.



Waste

The third theme of “**Big Outdoor SWAP**” appears to be popular and encourages reuse and help keep “stuff” out of landfill.

Eve completing waste prevention champion training.

Plans for 2024

Networking with other active groups within the parish, possible social/ educative event in St Mark’s TBC. Continue with the above activities as well publicising sustainable issues and sending topical news to the over **seventy members**.

Recruiting new members!

Cllr Eve Almond on behalf of Sustainability Group, obsustainability@gmail.com

Tree Warden

During the year, work has been done on the Rec area and the Battery to remove overhanging branches. There are some dying trees on the Battery which are being monitored.

Cllr Tony Gaster

Environment

The Lengthsman Scheme provides a valuable resource to undertake regular work around the parish, as directed by the PC, such as clearing paths and cutting back vegetation.

Until recently Colden Common PC managed the Scheme on behalf of a cluster of parishes. A new contractor, Grass and Grounds, has been appointed and the cluster of parishes will now be managed by the Clerk at Hursley PC. It is planned that the new Scheme will commence in May. Grass and Grounds are our current Groundsman.

Cllr David Kirkby

Finance

Attached to a budget control report, which is a summary of the receipts and payments of the PC for the year ended 31 March 2024, showing a comparison with the budget for the financial year. The main income is the Precept, which forms a component of your council tax.

Clerk, Brendan Gibbs



Conclusion

The PC is the first tier of local governance and will continue to seek to represent the interests of the community as a whole.

Cllr David Kirkby

Chair Oliver's Battery Parish Council