

## **Article submitted to The Bridge magazine in May 2020**

### **Council Meetings**

At the time of writing, the March meeting was the last one that has taken place, due to lockdown measures. Legislation has now been revised to allow the use of virtual meetings (video conference), and the parish council may host a Zoom meeting if any urgent business occurs. We'll alert you to this via the council facebook page and a notice on the noticeboard in the centre of the village. The public can join these meetings and can be issued with a link join the online meeting.

Coronavirus information may be out of date by the time this report is published, but please have a look at the borough council website (link below) for up to date information. As ever, if you struggle to find what you need with the borough council then contact the parish council clerk for help.

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/>

Thanks go out to the Good Neighbours group for their Coronavirus-related support to residents in Harrold, Carlton and Odell. This is a group that the parish council has supported with grants in the past and they have shown themselves to be a lifeline at the present time. You can contact them at [harroldgoodneighbours@gmail.com](mailto:harroldgoodneighbours@gmail.com) or on 07498331299.

### **VE75 Poppies**

The large poppies you may have seen on Harrold High Street are to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE 75). The parish council has purchased these via a donation to the Royal British Legion: the country's largest Armed Forces charity, supporting serving and ex-serving personnel. 8th May 2020 marked 75 years since the guns fell silent at the end of the war in Europe. Due to the global pandemic, many of the national celebrations have been moved to Victory Over Japan Day in August (VJ Day) - when the war, in effect, came to an end. The parish council therefore intends to keep the poppies in place until after this date.



## Village entrance signs

These new village entrance signs were our longest-running project and it's great to see them in place after so much work. Thanks to Bedford Borough Council Highways for a professional install job and to Western Power for clearing space for the one up towards Little Odell.



## Flood resilience

Melanie Bright (Bedford BC Senior Flood Risk Officer) and Gareth Turner (Bedford BC Manager of Highways) attended our March meeting to discuss flood resilience. The parish council has requested from the Environment Agency a publicly-accessible flood webcam; we are waiting for confirmation that the business case for this has been approved. The camera currently on The Causeway is an operational camera owned by the borough council and can't be made public. A requirement of the Environment Agency for eligibility for a camera is that a flood group is operational, so we are in the process of creating a draft plan that a mixture of councillors and residents from Harrold and Carlton could take forward. It's likely that the plan will centre around communication and support for any vulnerable parishioners affected by flooding. Gareth Turner also spoke about the operation of the automated flood signs. Highways are working with the supplier for technical support to ensure the signs and sensors across the borough are working effectively – currently there are some issues with the system. The parish council has also asked if the Highways operational website (showing the status of each of the automated flood signs) can be made public to better enable journeys to be planned.

## Neighbourhood Plan

The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to the Borough Council for review. Following this review, and any subsequent amendments, a further village consultation was then planned; although it is not confirmed at present how this will now happen. It's possible that this could be done with a virtual/video conference meeting to allow the plan to be presented and to answer any questions and take feedback. We will advise if this route is chosen. The updated plan would then be submitted to the Borough Council for official examination. The final step would normally be a village referendum to formally accept the plan – unfortunately this is not allowed to happen until at least May 2021. However, we have been advised that if a plan is in its final stages then, due to an exception for Coronavirus, it can hold more weight in the planning process than usual.

## **Brook Ecology Survey by MKA Ecology**

If you're interested in the Harrold brook then you may be interested to read the ecologist report commissioned by the parish council to improve the maintenance programme in relation to protected species and biodiversity best practice. The aim of the report was twofold:

1. Protected/Invasive Species Scoping Survey: A site visit and desktop study to assess the potential of the Brook and adjacent habitats to support protected species and invasive non-native species.
2. Management Plan: a report outlining the findings and detailing any protected or invasive species issues and mitigation procedures to be followed. To highlight opportunities for enhancing the Brook for biodiversity where appropriate.

You can find this in the Communications section of our website or it can be provided on request.

## **HPFA Sports Pavilion**

Harrold Parish Council is supporting the works to the Harrold sports pavilion with £70k of funding. Works include a new roof, replacement ceilings, electrical works, provision of a wheelchair-accessible toilet, internal decoration and other smaller items. A tender document is now available if anyone is interested in tendering for the work. For full details contact Peter Thompson, 42 The Moor, Carlton MK43 7JR. Tel 07970 040272 or 01234 720585.

## **Grants**

At the March meeting the parish council was pleased to grant £1,050 to the Harrold Pit Run committee to cover race costs - this will be carried forward to the next Pit Run, whenever it occurs, and £1,000 to The Villager minibus service; an organisation managed and run by volunteers to provide community minibus services to the villages of North Bedfordshire to destinations not otherwise served by public transport.

## **New clerk**

The new parish council clerk, David Brough, will take over the role from me (Robbin) in June. David has spent five years as a parish councillor for Harrold and has been heavily involved in many of the projects. He currently clerks for another Bedfordshire parish council. I shall miss the role of clerk and would like to thank the councillors for their continued support. It's a highly unique role and one not to be under-estimated in terms of the amount and variety of work under the pressures of close public scrutiny; you need to be a jack of all trades and master of all of them...

## **Orange recycling bags**

You can put these bags out with your recycling if your orange wheelie bin becomes full. These are available at Harrold Butchers and at the Coop. Please only take the amount you need; we assist the borough council in running this service and we only get restocked on an ad hoc basis.

## **Harrold Parish Council Facebook page**

If you would like updates on Parish Council activity then please join the Harrold Parish Council Facebook page. Link is below.

Address for correspondence (only):

Harrold Parish Council, Brookfield House, 79 Harewelle Way, Harrold, MK43 7DW.

07388 125821. [harroldparishcouncil@outlook.com](mailto:harroldparishcouncil@outlook.com)

[www.harroldparishcouncil.com](http://www.harroldparishcouncil.com)

[www.facebook.com/harroldpc](http://www.facebook.com/harroldpc)

The next council meeting dates are to be confirmed. Please contact the clerk to find out the latest status of meetings.