

Harrold Parish Council

Chairman's End-of-Year Statement for 2020/2021

Your parish council

Like with other organisations, the year has been coloured by the restrictions imposed by Covid. Village life has been impacted but the parish council has managed to serve our community. Who would have thought eighteen months ago that we would be conducting business on screens, but this has worked well and we have managed to keep on top of things. David, our Clerk, has worked indefatigably and we have benefitted from his informed wisdom. Our accounts are presented with a clarity for which we are grateful; so thank you, David. Luke, our Street Ranger, has cared for our environment beyond the virtual world. Individual councillors too have been active in the environment as well as sharing their expertise and knowledge.

I'm pleased to say that we remain a full council with 13 councillors in our ranks. Your current councillors are: Robert Tickle (Chairman), Richard Barrett, Bob Muller, Jayne Peverell, Pat Pedersen, Sebastian Reger, John Calver, Fran Ross, Eddie Thompson, Heather Paston, Andrew Littlemore, Geoff Turner and Jonathan Robinson. The last three were new joiners this year, so a warm welcome to them. Unfortunately, we said goodbye to David Mercer, Hayden Mead and Andy Bryce this year; we thank them for their time and dedication.

Projects

HPFA Pavilion: We were pleased to have supported the works to the Harrold Playing Field Association sports pavilion with £70k of funding. Works included a new roof, replacement ceilings, electrical works, provision of a wheelchair-accessible toilet, internal decoration and other smaller items. Well done to the HPFA for completing these works during a pandemic...

Dog poo bag dispensers: A common complaint, but also something that's very hard to resolve is dog fouling. We installed three dog poo bag dispenser boxes to encourage owners to pick up after their dogs. Let's hope this has some effect.

Outbuilding & Property Security leaflets: In response to a recent spate of burglaries and thefts from gardens we had police advice leaflets professionally printed, which councillors then kindly delivered.

Saxon House swings: The swings at the Saxon House play area had reached the end of their life and were replaced, along with the safety surface. We had maintenance completed on the other playgrounds.

Developing the Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are pleased to have submitted the final version of the plan for independent examination following multiple consultations with Harrold residents and statutory consultees; a great achievement that has taken a vast amount of work. Following the independent examination, and if no issues are found with the plan, we will prepare for a referendum for the village to adopt the plan this year. The outcome of this lengthy and laborious process, is having control over the location, type and amount of development in Harrold, backed by the public through multiple consultations.

Highways and footpaths

Through the year we worked with the borough council Rights of Way team to ensure footpaths were cleared of fallen trees, and requested surface improvements where they were no longer passable. We also worked with borough council Highways on improvement and maintenance issues to the roads and drains – we have a number of items due this year, such as the works to resolve the flooding of the Zebra crossing and the poor state of the pavement outside the Fish bar.

Distribution of funding to local voluntary groups

One of the council's ongoing strategies is to distribute sufficient funding to local voluntary groups through parish council grants. These benefit parishioners by ensuring that voluntary organisations and services are able to keep functioning and to assist those that are newly formed. We gave a grant of £1000 to the Harrold Allotment Association for a water-harvesting system to enable allotment holders with impaired mobility to access water for their plots, and £500 to The Bridge magazine towards production costs.

Speeding

You may have noticed the two speed feedback signs (VAS) moving around more this year. We are collecting data to determine how severe the speeding issue is in Harrold, as well as using the signs to encourage speed reduction

Flooding

In late December, Harrold and other villages were badly hit by surface flash flooding, followed by flooding of the main river a couple of days later.

Learning from the floods: The borough council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, are obliged to create a Flood Investigations report (with input from the Environment Agency) to clarify what happened during the Christmas surface flooding and river flooding, and what can be improved. This is expected soon.

Harrold Flood Group: The parish council is partway to having an active Flood Group to assist during flood situations. A Flood Plan has been created, reviewed and approved by the borough council. The next step is for the members to receive training and then they are good to go.

Internet Flood Camera: The parish council is supporting a request to the Environment Agency to install a public internet flood camera by the bridge; funding has also been set aside. A camera in this location will: 1. Allow people to plan their journeys around the state of the road before leaving their homes. 2. Provide flood-severity information to the newly-formed Harrold Flood Group to inform their decisions in a flood situation.

Flood channel improvements: The parish council has reallocated and committed funding towards a proposal to improve the flood channel that protects Harrold from surface flooding from the fields to the north. The proposal includes extending the coverage of the channel, speeding the flow of water down it, and increasing the rate at which it empties in the north east. Analysis of the proposal is expected to be included in the Flood investigations report mentioned earlier.

Coming up...

Parish Council owned streetlights

The parish council owns 15 streetlights in Harrold: these are on Mowhills, on the path by the Lower Green, Hall Close and Carlton Road (by the country park). We are waiting for borough council

Planning to approve the upgrade and then we'll instruct the contractors to start the work to install the heritage lanterns.

I look forward to what the coming year brings; let's hope for a marked improvement on the last one... I'd like to thank the councillors and the clerk for their dedication and hard work.

Robert Tickle Chairman - Harrold Parish Council