

Reports for Singleton and Charlton Annual Parish Council Meeting to be held on 17th May 2023

Graham Zacharias

IGas

Nothing to report

Potholes

Horrendous area from the bottom of Town Lane for approx 300 metres all individually reported. That whole stretch needs resurfacing. We wait in hope rather than expectation. Another stretch full of problems is on the Charlton Road from the A286 for approx 100 metres. Similar comment to Town Lane. I will keep re-reporting....

CHS

Will be covered as a separate agenda item

Finance

Audit update from the Clerk. No adverse comments anticipated. Well done again to Viv!

Tony Marshall

Southern Water

In mid-April, when SW were about to decommission and remove the pumps in Charlton and East Dean, the float switch on the Charlton pump triggered it to start up again. The Environment Agency had removed their monitoring equipment, so SW had to switch off the pump and bring in tankers. The monitoring equipment was refitted the following week and the pump restarted – but the levels still remained too high and the pub had problems, so the tankers pumped when needed. SW jetted the sewer between Charlton and Singleton, but days later it blocked again, so they jetted some more; although it seems to be flowing okay now, they've kept the tankers on standby, just in case. Their current theory is that there's a constriction of some kind in part of the pipe – so they are now waiting for the levels to drop so they can send in a camera. And the tankers remain on standby.

The central problem is that the pipe across the Leys meadow is just too small: two 6" pipes meet at the manhole by the bridge in Charlton, with a 6" pipe from there to the 8" pipe at Singleton; a 6" pipe has only 56% of the capacity of an 8" pipe. So it seems entirely possible that reducing it further by lining it could have been the last straw. So the latest I've had from SW is an email saying it may be that relaying a 'targeted area' of pipe could be the answer; I pointed out in response that by the time they get a team in to do this, they might as well 'do the job properly' and relay the entire stretch.

While having several tankers just sitting around in Charlton is a nuisance to residents, they amount to a daily – and costly – reminder to Southern Water that the problem needs to be addressed. The matter is ongoing.

Flooding in Charlton Road, Singleton

Subsequent to our meeting with Goodwood, they have written to indicate (somewhat reluctantly) that they will, later in the year, do some clearing in the river. Meanwhile, Viv & I had approached the Environment Agency for a meeting; however, their response was less than supportive, so we've written again, asking why they feel it's okay for children to wade through – and be sprayed with by passing vehicles – the same water that they tell people to avoid contact with. As I write this, we're still awaiting a response.

Parish Design Statement

Mat and I had a meeting to discuss the queries raised by Chris Paterson of SDNP and our responses to these. I have now updated the draft accordingly and sent responses and updated draft to Paterson for his further consideration.

Town Lane speed limit

I had an email from an engineer at Highways to say that our application has been successful so far and that he is taking it forward to the next stage, which is good news.

Mat Chesshire

Valley Design Statement

I met with Tony and went through the draft version that had been returned from the SDNP. We discussed all the points raised by Chris Paterson, rewording when necessary and identifying key locations in both villages. We have since agreed the next draft, with further maps and information included, and this has been sent off once more to Chris Paterson. Hopefully it will be agreed this time, and leave us ready to use within the Parish.

Playground

I have further looked at the types of Zip Wire available in our local area and agreed which quote we should further pursue. I really appreciate the effort that you are putting into this for us Viv - it will be good to get this section of the playground development concluded over the summer. The latest situation is that you are trying to get a reduction in costs for getting both the roundabout and zip wire done at the same time.

Playground maintenance

Having received the last list for what maintenance was required, I have been to the playground and taken pictures of the work that needs doing. My plan is to make a start when the weather is more settled and we have received the report from the annual inspection. I have spoken to Sam, a soon to be councillor, with a view to getting his help in completing the maintenance, maybe also utilising the volunteer group.

Jeremy Hunt

Update on our Childrens Services

You may remember that back in 2019 our Children's services received an inadequate report from Ofsted. Since then we have invested millions of pounds in an extensive improvement programme and I am pleased to say that, following [Ofsted's latest inspection](#) (click on this link for the full report), the service was given an overall rating of 'requires improvement', with 'good' judgements for children in care and leadership and management. The judgements on children needing help and protection and children leaving care are they 'require improvement to be good'. Ofsted Inspectors have praised West Sussex County Council for its '*relentless approach to improving practice*' in Children's Services. Some of the key findings from the report were:

Most children coming into care make good progress

The voice of children and young people is strong and well-considered in decision-making

Early Help support is making a positive difference to children's lives

Staff benefit from a wide range of support, and training and development opportunities; and feel valued

The implementation of the new Family Safeguarding practice model has been carefully considered with clear plans for the next steps

Partnership working is improving, although there is more to do
Leaders have been determined to shift the organisational culture and put children first
The advice and support provided to care leavers aged 21 and over requires improvement
Placement choice for children who are looked after requires improvement
The full report can be found at on the following link:
<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50216276>

Highways Update

As you will be aware, following the weather events we have experienced over the last year, we are now tackling a large number of issues on the network. We continue to see exceptionally high numbers of customer reports, in March this was just under 8,000 enquires, this is double what we would normally expect at this time of the year and this trend continues. In January the number of enquiries exceeded 11,000. The impact on the Highways teams has been significant. The teams are incredibly busy and the volume of work is unrelenting, including the significant incidents at the A29, Midhurst and Wiston, which have also added pressure to the workload. For example, we currently have two teams working full time on all the small side roads around Midhurst, which are being used as 'unofficial' diversion routes and therefore experiencing much higher volumes of traffic - and heavier vehicles - than normal. I would like to assure you we are doing all we can to manage the workload across the county; officers are working over-time and we have successfully recruited new staff but they need support and training to become fully operational. Our contractors' gangs are also working twilight shifts and Saturdays to manage the increased number of jobs. We are also looking to increase the number of gangs further but as I am sure you will appreciate; this is common to the entire south-east and nationally, so sourcing additional gangs is very difficult. Our 3 Jet Patchers are now in operation so this will help.

In order to enable the Highway Teams to effectively deal with the volume of safety issues being reported, we will be pausing non-statutory activities for a period of 4 weeks as we did in January. We will extend our response times to customers on general enquiries from 10-20 days. We appreciate your support and understanding at this very busy time.

Just to clarify, the proposed temporary measures are:

- Extend SLA for customer responses – up to 20 days
- Pause non-essential licensing activities (e.g., residential Vehicle Crossovers, Standard Forms of Consent for activities like licensing banners or planters).
- Pause responses to general enquiries, including Community Highway Schemes
- Add pop ups to the webpages to advise members of the public of paused activities
- Amend the wording on the corporate complaints acknowledgment

Midhurst Road Closure update

As referenced above, unfortunately the closure of the A286 in the centre of Midhurst remains closed to through traffic due to the recent fire at the Angel Hotel. Obviously this closure has not only had a huge impact on traffic flows, but it has also had a huge impact on local businesses. Similar to the position around the closure of the A29 at Pulborough - which is now open with single lane working - the situation is complicated in that both these incidents involve property owners and their insurance companies. Added to these complications is that the building is Grade 1 listed and therefore the remaining facade of the building cannot simply be knocked down. It therefore has to be shored up before it is safe to re-open the road. So, although this is not directly our responsibility - and in the interests of the travelling public and the businesses in the town - the SDNP, CDC and WSCC are working together to try and re-open the road as soon as possible. However, this is likely to take around seven weeks to complete the work before the road can re-open. CDC are co-ordinating press updates and the latest release can be found at:

<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/article/37699/Midhurst-fire-update-from-South-Downs-National-Park-Authority-5-May>.

Local Issues

As a parish you appear to be working very successfully on a number local projects, two of which are being supported by WSCC. Thank you for keeping me up to date with the Leys car parking project, which sounds as if it is finally about to happen. I'm pleased that our officers have been able to adapt our normal 'lengthy' and rather cumbersome processes in order to expedite this project.

I have not had any update from either the PC or our officers on your Community Highway project, so I presume this is moving forward okay. Of course if at any time you need me to try and 'move things on', please don't hesitate to contact me.

I have also been copied in to your correspondence with Southern Water, which has been very informative. I have also added a few prompts to SW where applicable, but Tony obviously had this under control. I haven't seen any recent emails, so hopefully the situation is improving and I suppose we now wait to see their plans for repairing/replacing the pipe across the water meadow.

With regard to the Charlton Road and the proximity of the river to that road, our Highways Department have written to Goodwood pointing out their riparian duties with regard to maintenance of the river, explaining our concerns that the flooding is undermining the integrity of the road. To date I am not aware we have had any response.

Finally, please don't forget to keep an eye on our website, especially our news and campaigns page where you can keep up to date with all our latest news. <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/news-and-campaigns/>

Also, a reminder that all our public meetings are webcast live and are also archived, so you can always view them later. <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/watch-county-council-and-committee-meetings-online/>

Henry Potter

I have little to report due to the Purdah period prior to the Local Elections.

I was one of the fortunate Members to retain my seat as your representative for the Goodwood Ward, many failed and you now have a Council with a distinct majority of Liberal Democrat members. The adjustment to this new balance will take some time, the membership of various committees is, as I write this, undecided but should be made clear at the first Full Council Meeting on the morning of your meeting. (17th) There is one thing quite clear, the new Leader 'elect' will appoint someone else to attend SDNPA Meetings instead of me, so any news of activities in the Park will be less apparent in the future.

Currently, the work on the railway line north east of Singleton Bridge is nearing completion and until more funding is found any further works will be curtailed and there is still no firm decision on how the West Dean Tunnel is to be negotiated, though there is now greater discussion about a route through a small spinney of woodland north of the Highways footpath, the original concept, which is now considered too dangerous with often fast moving traffic using the A286. The result of the bat survey in the actual tunnel is still not completed, so for now the idea of passing through the tunnel is discounted.

The District Council is publicly consulting on a review of the Public Spaces Protection Order for control of Dogs (2020) 'from last Wednesday (10th) until 7th June. The proposal is to extend the PSPO Order for a further 3 years but any comments or opinion once received will be considered before the extended Order is confirmed. The link to the consultation can be found on the Councils webpage 'letstalkdogsinpublicspaces' so if you have thoughts on any variations to the Order, now is the time to provide them.

And that concludes my brief report.

I thank all for your support over the past years and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Clerk – Vivien Nuttall

Playground

Installation of the bounce area for the basketball was delayed due to bad weather, it is now due to be installed on the 30th May. The new Zip Wire and Roundabout has been ordered, I am awaiting a delivery date. Two new benches for the younger children's playground have been ordered, these are to replace two broken and rotten benches and have been bought with a grant for the Kings Coronation from Chichester District Council. We will now be taking a break from fundraising for the playground.

The Leys Parking Project

We have now raised enough funds to complete this project and a contractor has been selected. Work is due to start in the school holidays in order to cause the least disruption. There will be 9 parking spaces plus 1 disabled space, a path that will join up with the current path to enable children and adults to walk to the school and other destinations safely and fencing to separate the cars from the path. The intention is also to install charging points for electric cars, these are supplied free of charge. We are hoping that these will be installed at the same time as the construction work for the parking bays etc. We have also applied for a number of trees from the SDNP, these will not arrive until October/November.

Finance

Finance Report

Finance Balance in Current Account (15/05/23) £14,801.25

Playground Reserves held in Current Account - £17,557.88.

Accessibility Project Reserves held in Current Account - £10,158.54

Total in Current Account – £ 42,517.67

Balance in Savings Account – £7,013.93

Funds Received since 21/03/23

½ Years Precept - £12,670.50

Private Donations for the King's Coronation Party - £200.00

Grants Due

Balance of CDC Grant for the playground - £6,971.00

Kings Coronation Grant from CDC for the playground - £500.00

IGas Grant for the playground - £2,000

Rees Jeffreys Grant for the parking project - £21,000

Total Raised for the Playground - £50,600.00

Total Raised for the Parking Project - £36,200