

# HATFIELD PEVEREL PARISH COUNCIL



## ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

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## **Chairman's Report**

Firstly, I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for all their hard work throughout the year. I would also like to extend an invitation to any residents of Hatfield Peverel who would like to get involved with the Parish Council to contact Sarah Gaeta the Parish Clerk and register your interest. As I write this report there are two vacancies for Councillors available. You can find Sarah's email address on the Council's website.

Well, this has been an eventful year: we made it through Covid and we are returning to some sort of normality. At the start of 2021, the Parish Council became the Sole Trustee of the village hall and has formed a management committee to run it, so busy times!

I would like to welcome Carly Truman as Assistant Clerk, who is working with the Parish Clerk to support the operations of both the Parish Council and Village Hall. Welcome, Carly!

### **Okay, what's been going on?**

#### **NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan)**

Currently this document is going through a review period to ensure it reflects the village, so I'd like to thank the NDP team for all the hard work in keeping this document relevant.

#### **Party in the Park**

We are planning a Party in the Park event for 2022 and the date is the 4<sup>th</sup> June to coincide with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. We are desperate for volunteers for the day so if you can spare a few hours your help would be welcome.

#### **Hatfield Peverel Village Hall charity**

The Parish Council has become the Sole Trustee for the Charity and is working with a new management team looking to offer a community service to the village as well as compliance with charity law and managing costs and income.

We look forward in promoting this venture and involving the villagers in new and exciting projects for the future.

Well, that is a short review from me you will see below more detailed information from the chairs of the working parties and committees in their reports.

Again, I would like to thank all the Councillors who have given up their time in their unpaid roles. I am privileged to have their support and their wealth of knowledge and skills to help us make the right decisions on behalf of the parishioners of Hatfield Peverel.

A special thank you to Sarah Gaeta (Parish Clerk) for all her hard work over the last year.

I would like to thank Charley Dervish our District Councillor for her help and support over the last year. My thanks go out to Ken and Jackie Earney who produce the Hatfield Peverel Review and I look forward to working with them on our communication strategy for the future.

I would also like to thank all the people who have worked on different projects and working parties thank you for all your help and support.

Finally, if you would like to get involved by being a Councillor please contact our Clerk. Maybe you don't want to be a Councillor, but would like to join a working party? We always need help and support.

Councillor Mark Weale - Chairman of the Hatfield Peverel Parish Council

## Environment Advisory Group Report

The EAG is tasked to consider those environmental issues that affect us in Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley. We are a group of councillors, including an interested member of the public, who meet each month to try and resolve these issues. As well as myself, we have Cllrs Diane Wallace, David Broddle and Marel Elliston, and the people's representative, Lesley Moxhay. My thanks go to them all for volunteering their knowledge and services for the good of our parish. Additional thanks must go to Lesley as she volunteered to become the Parish's Tree Warden during the year. Essentially, she will make any reports to the parish about trees that are causing issues.

It has been a quiet year for the group, with no major projects to report on. The area around the duck pond requires on-going maintenance. We are pleased to see that most of the flowers that were put in last year have survived, and have started to bloom again this year. Further bulbs have been planted and we hope that these will improve the area even more. We have had many positive comments about the work carried out in the area. Unfortunately, some of this "work" is not for the best. It is a shame that there has been some anti-social behaviour and petty vandalism. However, this will not stop the P.C. from trying to improve our environment. You may not have noticed them, but two kind residents have built some bird and bat boxes. Look up into the trees and you should see them.

Cllr Diane Wallace has organised a few working parties last autumn. A large quantity of small tree and hedge saplings have been planted in various locations in the parish. These include Hadfelda Place, the Rec, the Cemetery and Nounsley play area. The latter has had a brand new hedge planted as well as replacement trees. It was great to receive help from the cubs and scouts on the day. Once they are adults, they can say that "I planted those!".

We continue to tackle those day-to-day problems to ensure our village looks tidy and attractive. Areas covered during the year included:

Attending to dangerous or dying trees and the cutting back/down of encroaching vegetation. Most of the work last year was fairly routine. Note that we can only deal with trees that are on Parish Council land! Can any owners who have hedges bordering on the footpaths within the village please ensure that surplus vegetation is kept trimmed back! This does not only apply to country walks, but also to those hedges alongside pavements.

Refurbishing and renovation of the playground equipment at both the rec and the Nounsley play area. This is an ongoing issue. Health and Safety has to be paramount.

Refurbishment and installation of benches. Note that we passed a Memorial Bench Policy during the year. Should you wish to sponsor a bench in recognition of a loved one, then contact the clerk and she can send you a copy of this policy. There is a need for two new benches on The Rec. Would you be interested in sponsoring one of these?

Purchase of both litter bins and dog mess bins. We will also be buying some new signs asking that dog owners clean up after their pooches.

Most of the above duties are carried out by our handymen, David and Damon Wallace. We must thank them for their hard work and dedication in keeping our parish looking so pleasant. I know that they often carry out work, over and above, what is expected of them. A mention should also go out to our litter pickers. Please make their jobs easier by either taking your litter home with you, or by using the litter bins provided

Councillor Ted Munt

## **Traffic Advisory Group Report**

The TAG has met five times during the past year, with two further meetings having to be cancelled owing to the Covid situation and personal circumstances of various members of the group. One of the meetings was held via TEAMS.

A new Speed Indicator Device has been purchased, to a revised design. This shows a vehicle's actual speed in green (30mph and under) or red (over 30mph) and a "Thank You" or "Slow Down" message as appropriate. This brings the Council's stock to five SID units and two Vehicle Activated Signs (the ones that flash "30" at any vehicle exceeding that speed) with the additional use of an Essex County Council VAS for between six and nine months of the year. These units are rotated through the thirteen approved sites in the village, being relocated approximately every three months.

We have been involved in numerous traffic, speed and parking issues during the twelve-month period, particularly in relation to the various new housing developments. In the case of the latter, dialogues have taken place with developers and their site managers to mitigate the impact of the additional traffic created by building work. Applications have been submitted to the Local Highways Panel covering traffic calming measures in Station Road and Church Road (in the vicinity of the schools) and also for additional speed warning signs on all entrance roads to Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley. A successful application was also submitted by a former member of the TAG for an extension of the yellow lines at the junction of Woodham Drive and Maldon Road. Station Road residents have received an invitation to participate in the "30mph" stickers scheme to be placed on black and green waste bins but there are no plans to further extend the scheme.

Funding has been secured for additional safety measures in the vicinity of Letches Corner.

No further progress has been made in respect of the delays caused by the traffic lights on the A12 overbridge at Latneys and we rather suspect that no action will be taken by ECC, given the well-advanced plans for the A12 widening which will see the removal of the bridge.

We have also made numerous reports to ECC and BDC of potholes, defective streetlights, missing road signs and broken drain covers, and have followed up directly with the County Councillor responsible for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport in cases where we believe that an incorrect assessment has been made of the seriousness of the issue, or where we feel that remedial action has been unduly delayed. This has led to a case-by-case review with ECC of reported but unresolved issues, with many now due for rectification in the next few weeks.

Representation at meetings on ECC Highways' Devolution of Services project, and on ECC's Local Area Transport groups, has been suspended during the pandemic. We have participated, by TEAMS, in the Essex Local Access Forum, focussing particularly on access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

We are in discussions with ECC with a view to them assuming responsibility for three footways in the village which are currently not formally recognised as such. This will ensure their future repair

and maintenance by ECC. Other work for the current year includes maintenance of the four Parish owned bus shelters and research into the possibility of installing electric car charging points in Hadfelda Square car park.

Finally, the TAG has played, and will continue to play, a key role in discussions with National Highways and ECC on the proposals to widen the A12. We continue actively to press for inclusion of a road from the new J21 to take Maldon bound traffic away from the village and from Maldon Road in particular. In this we are grateful for the efforts and support from all those who attended the various consultation meetings with National Highways/ECC.

Thanks go to all members of the TAG over the past year, and those who have assisted with issues that have arisen. Their help and support have been invaluable and greatly appreciated. We were sorry to lose the services of Ron Elliston as a member of the TAG during the period under review but are very grateful that he continues to play an active role in traffic matters, particularly in relation to the A12 widening project.

John Cockell, Chairman of TAG



## **Community Land Advisory Group Report**

The CPAG group (currently all Parish Councillors) are dealing at present with the Community Park area in Wickham Bishops Road and the Community Land (previously the Blue Land) alongside the Bellway development on Stonepath Drive.

### **Community Land Stonepath Drive**

The Community Land was formally transferred into the Parish Council's ownership in December 2021, and an application to register the title is at the Land Registry.

The owner of Hatfield Place has erected metal estate fencing on the boundary which includes a paved area and kissing gate at the point where the access from his drive enters the Community Land. New hedging and fencing on this boundary will now deter people and dogs straying into the rear garden of Hatfield Place from the Community Land.

An old well that was found in the middle of the Blue Land has been professionally capped and secured by Bellway (the Developer) as the land was in their ownership at the time.

Last year the Developer's landscapers seeded the southern part of the Community Land next to the attenuation basin as a wildflower meadow and formed pathways which are becoming established. This was a planning condition, and now needs to be maintained by the Parish Council for the meadow to flourish.

Contact has been made with the Developer's landscapers, and a meeting is being arranged with the CPAG to discuss the seeding last year, and also to discuss the immediate maintenance of the whole area whilst the contractors are still on site.

Contact has also been made with Essex Wildlife Trust with a view to meeting up with them to see if they can offer any assistance or advice with clearing and seeding the remainder of the Community Land as wildflower meadow and developing an ongoing maintenance programme.

A copy of the Biodiversity Management Plan that was part of planning application for the whole site has been forwarded to Essex Wildlife Trust. Braintree District Council has confirmed that Essex Wildlife Trust is the organisation to seek help and advice from for the management of the meadows.

Further work on the reinstatement of the historic York Flagstone path across the development site has been undertaken by the Parish Council's Heritage Warden and the Local History Group which is included in the Heritage Warden's report.

### **Community Park Wickham Bishops Road**

A Lease agreement with WASPS fishing club giving them use of the fishing lakes remains in place.

Difficulty in commencing work on the area to start projects aimed at establishing and enhancing the flora and fauna environment has continued over the course of this year.

The Parish Council are unable to gain access to grant schemes to fund such works until the whole area has been registered in the Parish Council's name by the Land Registry. The Land Registry has significant backlogs of work which are delaying the process. Registration is not likely until November 2022 as the Land Registry will only expedite registration where it is proven to cause hardship. The Parish Council cannot meet those criteria and are now in their hands awaiting clearance of the backlog before any meaningful activity can take place in the Community Park at this point.

Although the dowry funds and income to date from the fishing club is available as basic finance at present, in the longer term a larger and secure planned income stream will be needed to finance what is required to clear the present weed cover and landscaping the area.

A site meeting is also to be arranged with Essex Wildlife Trust to seek their advice and support on managing the land for both wildlife and visitors at the same time as the Community Land.

Councillor Mike Renow

## **NDP Executive Committee Report**

Over the course of this year in partnership with DAC planning, financed through grant funding received from Locality, work has continued to review and update the HPNDP adopted by Braintree Council in 2019.

In view of the length of time since the plan was commenced in 2014, a decision was made to extend the timespan of the plan to 2038

This has resulted in the following principal changes with policies and supporting documents being added to the plan.

1. An OAHN (Objectively Assessed Housing Need) for the Parish which was agreed with BDC acknowledges the Parish has met its allocated needs for the Plan period up to 2033 and broadly meets its need up to 2038.  
Completed by AECOM via Locality technical assistance.
2. A redesigned Development Boundary to include Stonepath and Gleneagles and other areas considered acceptable.  
Completed by DAC using BDC methodology for boundary reviews
3. A Design Code for the Parish. This supplements the Hatfield Peverel Character Assessment already submitted and accepted but has a detailed analysis of acceptable development.  
Completed by AECOM via Locality technical assistance
4. A replacement for the Heritage Policy removed from the plan at examination. A Local Heritage List Project is underway with the parish Heritage Warden/History Group. The aim is to compile a local list of non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs). The list comprises of old buildings, structures, sites and features that that are of local historic interest but not listed. A NDHA status would give them consideration in future planning decisions.  
Assisted by Place Services via ECC Locality Fund and BDC Councillors' Community Grants Scheme.
5. A new Anti-Coalescence Policy. Replacing the Green Wedge policy removed from the previous plan with the intention to avoid coalescence between Witham and Hatfield Peverel and Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley.
6. Creation of a new Air Quality Policy which elevates the importance of the wellbeing of our residents and strives to control development when the World Health Organisation's guidelines on acceptable levels can't be met.
7. Adjustment of the policy on important views to accommodate change following the construction of recent development schemes.

Work remains to create new maps to accompany the plan and update the existing ones after which a new Regulation 14 draft will be completed for local and statutory consultation to be followed by examination and further referendum, which if successful, will lead to the reviewed plan being in a position for BDC to formally consider adoption at full council meeting. The target is for this activity to be completed by the end of this year.

In addition to this activity, the NDP team have produced numerous comment letters to Braintree Council on planning applications made throughout the year where the parish council has felt they were warranted.

Thanks are due to all the members of the NDP team for the work carried out over the year.

Councillor Mike Renow

## Parish Paths Partnership representative (P3) report

### **1 Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme**

Cuts to the three paths in the built-up areas of the village are no longer ECC funded. The annual cuts by ECC contractors of a number of outlying paths around the parish boundaries continue as before, occurring usually in late spring/early summer. Sections of two paths (FP29 by Latneys and FP27 west from its junction with Spring Lane) were added to the list last year. A number of other field headland paths are maintained by farmers John Upson and Richard Lewis (Mowden Hall Farm).

Non-scheduled issues regarding problems on any of our paths are reported on the Highways problem reporting pages of the ECC website, usually by the undersigned. The local ECC footpath inspector reads the reports daily, visits site to look at the issue, allocates priorities and arranges for them to be dealt with by an ECC contractor or occasionally a volunteer working party such as the Friends of the Flitch Way. A number have been reported online over the past 12 months, principally to do with structures and waymarking. (*The recent storm Eunice brought down trees over both rural and residential area paths.*) However, this arrangement usually results in delays in getting attention due to ECC budgetary and priority constraints, so our volunteer group deals with certain vegetation clearance issues in a timelier manner.

### **2 Volunteer working group**

As reported last year, the volunteers did not wish to be subject to some of the more onerous ECC requirements when working formally within the P3 scheme, so they are restricted vegetation clearance, as noted above. Work such as installing or repairing bridges, gates, waymarker posts etc has to be referred to ECC for action.

Vegetation work is mostly a solo activity, but the heavier jobs were tackled by our single household couples when the work requires more than one pair of hands. These activities will continue in the current year.

If any resident notices a problem they think needs attention on any of our paths they can report them to the undersigned, Ken Earney - 381235, or to any of the volunteer group: - Adrian Coombes – amc0374@aol.com/ Ron Elliston – 380827/ Kevin Gallifant – 381850/ David Goodey – djgoodey50@gmail.com/

Lesley Moxhay – lesleymoxhay@hotmail.com/

Ted Munt cllrmunt@hatfieldpeverelpc.com/ Mike Renow – 380071

### **3 ECC issues**

#### **3.1 - Path from The Street via Bennett Way, New Road to FP18 (Cutts Close to the Rec')**

The parish needs the entire length of this key village path to acquire permanent legal protection, and to ensure it be maintainable at public expense by ECC. Currently only the length from The Street to the northern arm of the Bennett Way cul-de-sac has this status, appearing on the county Definitive Map as FP4.

John Cockell (TAG chair) is pursuing the issue and currently negotiating with Eastlight (formerly Greenfields) Community Housing to have the remaining two sections of path dedicated by them for takeover by ECC, ultimately to be added to the Definitive Map.

### **3.2 - FP29 Chase Cottage diversion**

An ongoing issue, resolution of which is now solely a matter for ECC PROW officers and the landowner.

### **4 Stonepath Meadow – FP43**

Development is under way on the site within a boundary fence bordering the path. The original historic York flagstones have now been relaid along the original line of the path in front of the new houses facing Stonepath Drive, but there is as yet no date when we shall be able to walk it.

### **5 Public Rights of Way improvements**

Resulting from development approvals granted to developers within the parish, they entered into Section 106 Agreements with Braintree District Council covenanting to pay contributions to add to or to improve a number of our facilities. Some of this money has been allocated for public rights of way improvements. Three paths have so far been identified for attention:

**FP18 -Cutts Close to The Rec.** (*for more recent residents of the village, the park*) - repair of most of the length of crumbling edge of the path bordering the ditch

#### **FP7 - Church Road to Sportsmans Lane**

A drainage measure is needed to reduce the winter flooding of the section from Church Road to the lower kissing gate

**FP34 - A12 underpass to Terling Hall Road** - levelling of the surface of the recently diverted length beside the railway embankment from the Ter to Terling Hall Road (*subject of a number of complaints by walkers over the past year*).

One portion of this funding is required to be allocated for a parish map showing the public rights of way to be sited within the new housing on the old Arla Dairies site.

Once costs of the tasks have been established, we will know what other needs could be considered within the allocated sum.

### **7 Maintenance of paths by local resident volunteers**

Thanks to those residents who cut side growth and mow, strim or otherwise maintain path surfaces in their neighbourhood as the need arises throughout the year. Their efforts are much appreciated.

## **8 Nine Walks around Hatfield Peverel**

The online version in PDF format of Catherine Voysey's booklet "Nine Walks around Hatfield Peverel" is now available on the parish council's website. It is subject to ongoing review so that it can be amended wherever inaccuracies come to light. Anyone finding anything misleading or inaccurate is asked to refer it to Councillor Ted Munt or the undersigned so that it can be corrected.

## **9 Deadline for recording historic rights of way abolished by DEFRA**

The DEFRA statement read: *We will repeal the 2026 cut-off date for recording historic rights of way, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to allow time for paths to be identified and added to the public rights of way network.*

This is very good news. Following lengthy campaigning by the Ramblers Association and a number of other organisations, it means that there will be more time to save the most important and useful paths, ensuring they're added back to the map and protected for the future.

## **10 Parish Footpaths Warden**

Due to one or two health issues impacting on the role I will regrettably be stepping back from it over the coming months but because of my long experience I will still be available for advice whenever needed.

## **6 Path flooding and boggy surfaces**

Flooding affecting paths FP7 and FP39 is kept under review. From the time of last year's report, no significant flooding has been observed following that reported in 2020 on FP7. FP39 will be investigated once Covid-19 regulations are relaxed.

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Ken Earney, Parish Paths Partnership (P3) representative, Hatfield Peverel

## Heritage Report

### **DETAILS**

Margaret Freeman, Heritage Warden for Hatfield Peverel Parish Council has worked/continues to work on the following:

### **PARISH COUNCIL**

Attended Parish Council meetings; liaised with the parish clerk and councillors; and engaged with the Neighbourhood Development Plan Group (of which the Heritage Warden is also a co-opted member).

### **LOCAL HERITAGE LIST PROJECT 2021/22**

In May 2021 the Neighbourhood Development Plan Group instructed the Heritage Warden to undertake a Local Heritage List Project for the parish of Hatfield Peverel. The Parish Council agreed to this in June 2021.

The aim of the Local Heritage List Project was/is to identify and research old buildings, structures, sites and features across the parish. The project centres on asset types considered 'at risk' due to the absence of a statutory Grade I, Grade II\* or Grade II designation. The Local Heritage List Project remains ongoing - albeit at an advanced stage.

The objective is to formulate a local list of non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs). It is designed to part-inform the evidence base for the re-instated Heritage policy within the Neighbourhood Development Plan (under revision).

Funding was secured through ECC Locality Fund; BDC Councillors' Grant Scheme; and Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.

The talented History Group continue to work at pace and comprise of: Councillor Linda Shaw; Councillor Kevin Gallifant; Helen Peter; Jennifer Rowland; Valerie Doyle; and Colin Moore.

Engagement with parishioners has been adhered to throughout the process:

25/08/2021: Talk - Hatfield Women's Institute - Church Hall

03/10/2021: Public consultation - Village Hall Open Day

30/11/2021-04/01/2022: Public Consultation - Library, Online & Facebook

14/12/2021: Talk - Hatfield Place

25/03/2022: Talk - Hatfield Peverel & Ulting Horticultural Society - Church Hall

03/05/2022-28/05/2022: Exhibition - 'Beyond The Bricks' - Library. 2



## **VISUAL DISPLAY AT HATFIELD PEVEREL LIBRARY**

Public Consultation 30th November 2021 - 4th January 2022

Display prepared by History Group & Library Staff

### **LOCAL HERITAGE LIST - PROJECT PHASES**

#### Phase 1: Scoping & Nomination

The History Group formed in the Summer 2021. The group identified asset types through scoping work which involved meetings, events and consultation. The Parish Council was presented with an 'emerging' local heritage list of 36 potential asset types - subject to modifications. The emerging list went before the Parish Council - presented by the Heritage Warden - on a rolling monthly basis.

#### Phase 2: Research & Exhibition

Heritage Warden and History Group referenced the following directory and resources:

Primary sources via Essex Record Office and The National Archives. Documents consulted included maps, deeds, photographs, surveys, sale catalogues, manorial records and minute books.

Secondary sources via Hatfield Peverel Library, the Heritage Warden Box and private collections.

Publications consulted included scholarly books, blogs and internet searches.

Historical newspaper and magazine articles via The British Newspaper Archive.

Ordnance Survey maps via The National Library of Scotland.

Online search engines via Ancestry and The Genealogist for census returns (1841-1911), trade books and electoral rolls.

A History Group member consolidated the collective research. And then generated attractive and informative display panels. 3

## SAMPLE EXHIBITION PANEL

### BEYOND THE BRICKS

#### Phase 3: Assessment & Determination

Panels displayed at 'Beyond The Bricks' exhibition (May 2022) will be used to inform the assessment and determination phase. Detailed nomination forms will be completed for up to 16 asset types. Place Services will determine whether the asset types can form a list of non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) for the parish of Hatfield Peverel. The list will become part of the evidence base for the re-instated Heritage policy - within the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Development Plan (being revised).

#### **4 PUBLICITY**

A History Group member has generated the following posters:

Hatfield Peverel Local Heritage List

The Hatfield Place Christmas Talk: A History of Hatfield Place 1791-2021

Beyond The Bricks: The Stories of Hatfield Peverel's Buildings.

Another History Group member printed and laminated the posters to benefit the project and parishioners alike.

#### **PLANNING**

Heritage Warden has:

Written responses to planning applications regarding listed building consent considerations. Liaised with developer regarding retention of historic York Flagstones on the land off Stone Path Drive.

Organised - with a History Group member - interpretive signage for the historic York Flagstones on the land off Stone Path Drive

#### **FAMILY HISTORY**

Heritage Warden has:

Answered requests from family members/interested parties seeking information about past parishioners of Hatfield Peverel.

#### **ARTICLES**

Heritage Warden has written:

Freeman, M 'Lest we forget' in *Hatfield Peverel Review* (December 2021) p 8.

Freeman, M 'Hatfield Place: its history from 1791-2021' in *Hatfield Peverel Review* (February 2022) p 20.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Sincere gratitude is expressed to Sarah Gaeta (parish clerk); Carly Truman (assistant clerk); ECC Councillor Derrick Louis; BDC Councillor Charley Dervish; BDC Councillor Darren White; parish councillors; The National Archives; Essex Record Office; Hatfield Peverel Library; editors of *The Review*; the NDP group; and the History Group. Special mention of thanks to parishioners who share their knowledge of Hatfield Peverel's treasured History.

Margaret Freeman, Heritage Warden

## Financial Report

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the Parish Council carried over £389,826.88 into the new financial year, with reserves broken down as follows:

**Earmarked reserves:**

Football Club reinstatement fund	10,437.56
MUGA pitch fund	3,021.31
Community Events	3,150.26
Community Park	32,048.90
Hadfelda Square Car Park	16,149.97
Streetlight (insurance)	3,106.40
Community Land	205,841.1

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273,755.52

**General reserve** 116,071.36

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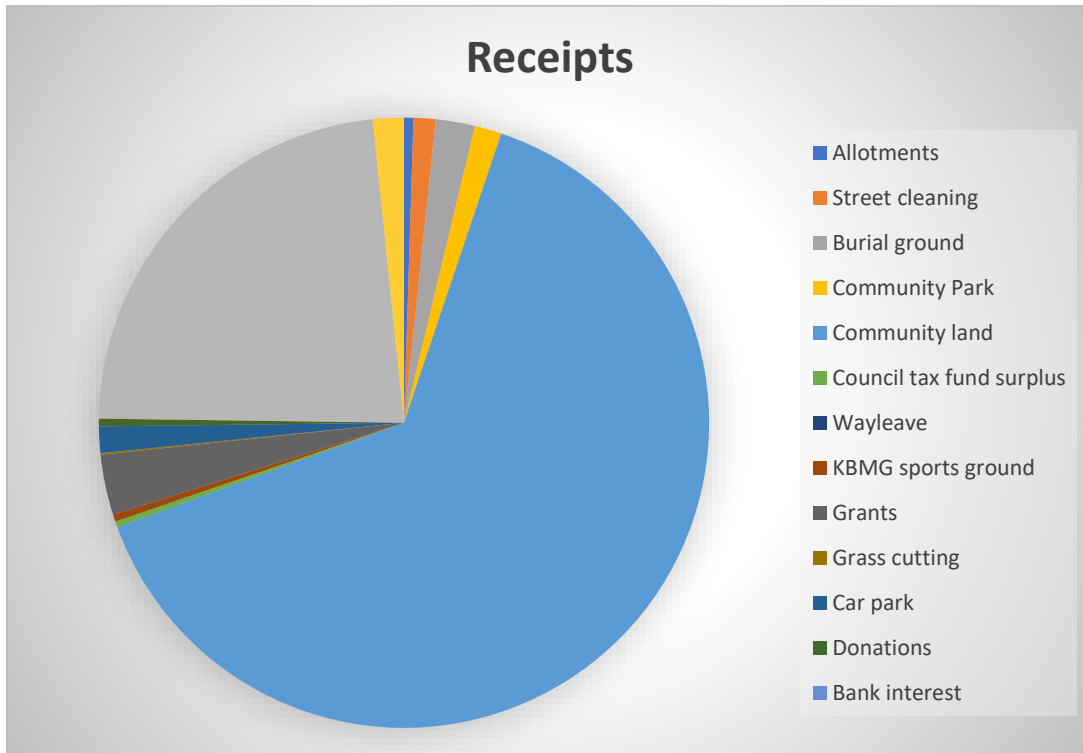
116,071.36

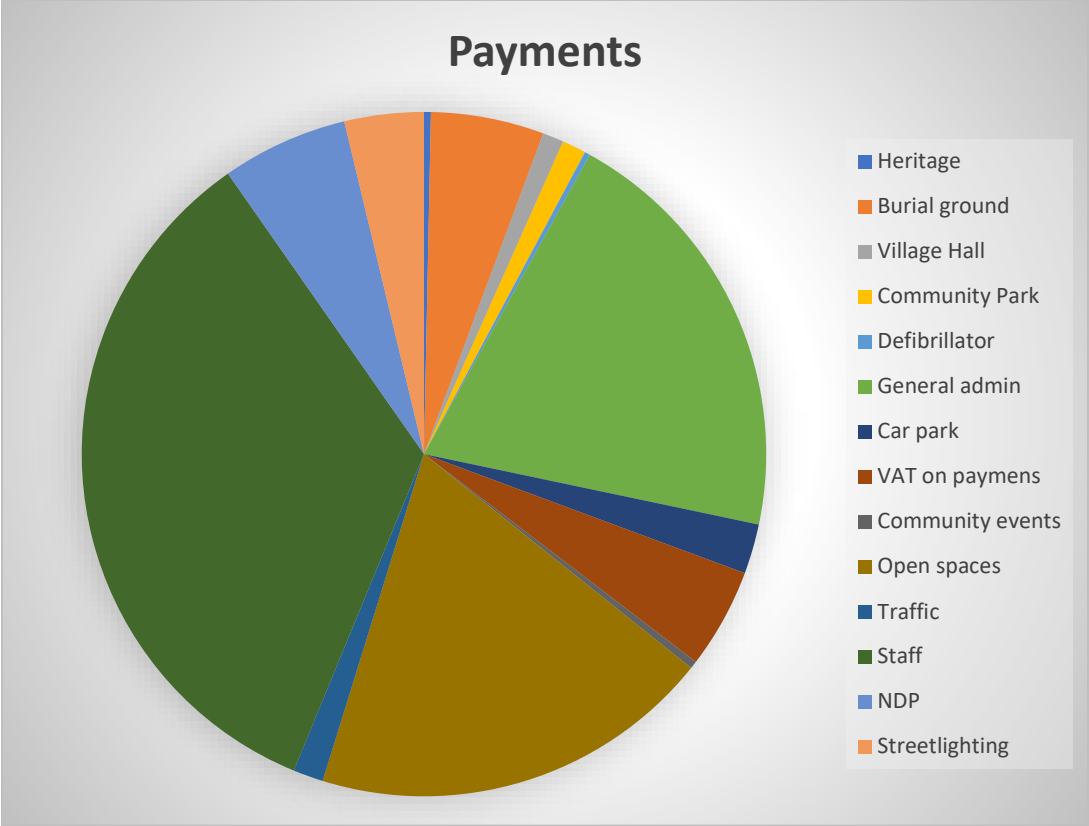
**Total reserves**

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**389,826.88**

Receipts and payments were apportioned as follows:





For further information, the **Annual Governance documents** submitted to the External Auditor can be viewed here:

[Finance - Hatfield Peverel Parish Council \(hatfieldpeverelpc.com\)](http://hatfieldpeverelpc.com)

Sarah Gaeta, Responsible Financial Officer

## **Braintree District Councillor Report**

### **Annual Report 2021-22**

#### **Operations**

The Victoria Square covered car park, part of the Manor Street development in Braintree, has opened and provides 48 parking spaces to the public in the centre of the town.

The BDC car parks have been awarded the Park Mark accreditation for yet a further year, confirming the safety and low crime levels of our car parks in Braintree and Witham

The relatively new bring-bank recycling collections of textiles, and of food and drink cartons, have proved popular and are being more and more used by residents. 19 tonnes of textiles, and 7 of cartons, were collected during 2021, plus an additional 7 tonnes of small electrical material - all these collections provide a revenue to the Council.

Braintree Local Highways Panel is contributing some of its annual funding to the initial research stages of the proposed Earls Colne-Coggeshall cycle route.

An officer and Member Working Group has carried out a review of the BDC Taxi Licensing policies, to ensure that best-practice is followed in the taxi and public hire vehicle provision in the District.

#### **Health & Wellbeing**

Rising levels of childhood obesity, reduced fitness levels, social isolation and loneliness all featured strongly during the pandemic.

However, with the support of the voluntary sectors, parish and town councils and many individuals, we were able to recognise and help minimise some of the effects.

By using our assets, including the leisure centres, swimming pools, community transport, council officers and elected members and operational workforce ; together with our strong links with the County Council and NHS, many examples of individual support and community activities have been created which will leave a lasting, positive legacy from the devastating effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

#### **Planning**

**LOCAL PLAN** : The examination of BDC's draft Local Plan Section 2 , conducted by two Inspectors, took place in July 2021 and then went out to public consultation on the proposed modifications. The Inspectors are now considering the responses to that consultation, and we await their decision on whether the Council can find the Plan 'sound'.

**PLANNING**: The Planning Committee has continued to be extremely busy throughout the year with meetings continuing to be held fortnightly, rather than monthly, to determine the large numbers of applications being submitted. During the latter part of 2021 several major applications went to Appeal, with their developers hoping to overturn BDC's refusal to grant permission. Although the refusals were upheld, frustratingly, each Inspector also gave different interpretations of BDC's 5 year land supply, which is crucial to determining applications. Finally, it was declared by one Inspector that our land supply stands at 5.1 years. Good news, but it is a slender safety margin.

**ENFORCEMENT:** A successful review of the Enforcement process, undertaken by a cross-party group of District Councillors over the summer months, resulted in a number of recommendations to improve the service; these proposals were presented to Full Council in February this year and were unanimously approved. There will be a staffing increase of five new officers for the team and improvements to the way Enforcement complaints are reported and monitored.

### **Climate Change**

The Councils Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, to make the District Carbon Neutral as far as practical by 2030, was unanimously approved by Council in September 2021. Since then the Climate Change Working Group continues to meet to work on the implementation of the Action Plan.

As part of the Climate Change Strategy and to celebrate Her Majesty the Queens Platinum Jubilee 13,000 native British tree whips and 73,000 bulbs were made available to groups throughout the District for planting. The uptake was very good and groups were asked to add them to the data base for H.M.'s Jubilee Green Canopy. The trees and bulbs that were left over were planted on Council owned land. In addition, special trees with a plaque to celebrate the jubilee were planted in Weavers Park Braintree, Halstead Public Gardens and Witham Town Park.

Throughout the pandemic Environmental Services and Enforcement Officers were an integral part of working to keep our citizens safe.

### **Economic Development & Business Support**

As part of the changes required to meet the Covid-19 restrictions, early in 2021 BDC acquired the technology to enable hybrid meetings to be held in the committee area and webcast to the public making it possible and for some attendees to be physically present in the committee area and others to attend remotely and contributing virtually. This has allowed the public to speak in person at meetings when Public Question time is on the agenda and maintain an open and democratic authority.

During the last two years BDC staff in the Economic Development and Finance Departments have been actively supporting residents and businesses through financial support where needed and acting as rapidly as possible to minimise the damage that the pandemic caused to the local economy. BDC has paid the following grants:

#### Exceptional Hardship Fund:

2020/2021 £3,302 9 awards; 2021/2022 £8,687 17 awards

Discretionary Housing Payments:

2020/2021 £291,592 277 awards; 2021/2022 £249,649 257 awards

Government grant of £150 per LCTS claimant:

2020/2021 £846,445 5,643 awards; No 2021/22 grant

Test & Trace Support Payments (Isolation Payments):

2020/2021 £217,500 435 Claims; 2021/2022 £869,000 1,738 Claims

### Business Grants – Various schemes:

2020/2021 £47,308,844 paid, 9615 claims; 2021/2022 £8,637,458, paid, 1617 claims

A key priority remains supporting our businesses through this period of adaptation and recovery. We continue to dispatch government grants and support. In addition, we continue to offer local support packages including the recent £30,000 opportunity, consisting of small grants for High Street shops and businesses to improve the look and feel of their frontages. For more information, please contact: [www.braintree.gov.uk/business](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/business).

Due to the unprecedented impact on our local business community, we are in the process of refreshing our economic plan to ensure BDC continues to play its part in supporting the needs of our businesses both urban and rural. This is building on our strong record of engagement with business over the years and our desire to help turbo charge new sectors that will create well paid jobs, post pandemic and attract new businesses to the area.

The Council has been working with neighbouring local authorities, after allocating a percentage of Additional Restrictions Grant income to support economic development projects across North Essex and will continue to do during 2022/23. Braintree DC is delighted that the I construct innovation hub building at Springwood Industrial Estate is completed and business support to stimulate the development of new products and services in the construction sector has been being provided since last summer.

In line with our commitment to Town Centres, BDC has started the procurement process to appoint contractors to bring forward improvement schemes in both Witham and Halstead. With the major completion of town centre works in Braintree and a programme of markets and/or events in all three towns, the Council will continue to play its part in doing all it can to help increase footfall, enabling our towns to bounce back together.

### Supporting Communities

The councillor grant scheme has provided approximately £64,000 of an available allocation of £73,000 allowing some vital support to our town, parish and rural groups to respond on the easing of Covid.

Along with this, our we have been getting our community groups back to more face to face supporting including events such as Community safety partnership, United in Kind, Community 360 initiatives, and an increase in our community transport services etc. It has also assisted in re-engaging with communities after Covid restrictions were eased to show that it's safe to be out and about to adapt with living with Covid. It also gave communities the opportunity to raise any concerns about ways of collaborating with our partners to ensure we can continue to work together for the greater benefit of our district.

Some of the events organised in partnership with the BDC communities' teams include

The creative climate challenge with our local schools

Inter faith week - engaging with a wide range of faith and religious groups

Dementia friendly train - celebrating Braintree Railway station becoming dementia friendly.

The final piece of important community work is the cycle strategy that was unanimously agreed as a special meeting of full council. This strategy is working with a number of stakeholders to make our roads safer & usable for all ages giving greater connectivity to our towns and villages

### Housing

The Council has continued its very good record on affordable housing delivery from the previous two years, and this year the affordable housing delivery programme will comfortably exceed the annual plan target of 250 and the number of completions for the year will be the highest annual delivery of affordable housing ever achieved in the District.

### Skills

The Council continue to build on our work with local businesses and education providers to enhance the skills offering within the District. This is as important as ever as part of our bouncing back together plan, as we come out of the pandemic. We are reviewing the work we have been proud of in recent years with the Braintree District Education and Skills Board, and look to revitalise vital skills relationships for the benefit of residents of the District

District Councillor Charley Dervish