



May Newsletter 2021

[View this email in your browser](#)

## ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

This was held remotely on Thursday (6<sup>th</sup>) evening and all councillors were re-elected to hold their previous roles in this: the final year of our 4-year session before elections next May. Details are in the minutes of the meeting which are published on our website and posted on the noticeboards at the village hall and by St Robert's Church. Our annual meeting was postponed from last May because of Covid-19, as was our parish meeting. Again, no parishioners joined for the obligatory parish meeting. In a way, this is encouraging as it's an indication that all is well and no-one wants a discussion with the Parish Council. It seems everyone knows that they can contact the Parish Council via the clerk ([parishclerk@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk)) and that we keep parishioners informed.

Over the last few weeks, we have dopped leaflets through many letterboxes – to those relative newcomers to the parish welcoming them to sign up for this newsletter. We believe there are an additional 60 homes occupied since the start of last year. Hence, at the sake of some repetition in this newsletter, we hope to enlighten our new readers to what is going on in the parish.

## STOPPING REMOTE PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Parish Council – along with many other parish councils and even some county councils – is frustrated by the Government's refusal to permit the continuation of remote (Zoom type) meetings beyond 7th May 2021. We use the term "Government" loosely, as it would appear this is a civil service edict as we are told the minister responsible declared his support for the position adopted by parish councils but the civil service would require new primary legislation to change the current situation. This ban, as you may be aware, was challenged in the High Court by Hertfordshire County Council along with a number of other advisory bodies in recognition of the current and potentially unsafe Covid situation which still predominates but was, unfortunately, declined by the Judge. The legislation was drawn up in the early nineteen-seventies when no concept of Zoom or Microsoft Teams had ever been envisaged, so the judge had to accept the terms of that legislation, however out of date it is. Common sense therefore did not prevail. It is interesting to note that MPs will continue to have Zoom meetings until June 21, so why should local councils be any different?

In preparation for this circumstance, your parish councillors agreed to follow the National Association of Local Councils' recommendations that we would bring forward by a week our monthly meeting (together with the annual parish meeting) to fit in before the "remote" 7<sup>th</sup> May deadline. We also resolved - to ensure the safety of councillors in addition to any members of the public or press who might wish to be present at the meeting in June - that "the clerk shall enact any decisions made regarding council business after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman". We are investigating a return to face-to-face meetings in July after restrictions are lifted but may still have public participation only by Zoom.

There is also a COVID-safe limit on the number of people allowed in rooms at the village hall so not knowing how many parishioners/press might turn up for a meeting and possibly exceed that limit, decided to wait until September before resuming full face-to-face meetings. (NB We don't normally hold a full Parish Council meeting in August.)

Consequently, there will be no official June agenda but notes will be published and posted on the noticeboards and website regarding any decisions taken during that period. This does not mean there will be any breaks in Parish Council business; we continue to work for the community as always.

#### ADULT GYM EQUIPMENT

Last week saw the installation of the pieces of adult outside gym kit next to the play area on Crimple Meadows. It's ready to use now but we will be having a demonstration day once all Covid restrictions have been lifted. Comments from visitors to the recreation ground to-date have been extremely positive. Everything has been carried out in accordance with the rules applying to play areas, parks and proximity to houses. HBC, after their initial misinterpretation of the regulations and a change of personnel involved, have recently been most helpful and of course have approved the siting of the equipment. We will ensure its monthly maintenance schedule. We hope that all "youths and adults" enjoy using the equipment and benefit from it.



Cutting turf



The finished article (wheelbarrow not included)

#### COLLAPSED FOOTPATH BY THE CRIMPLE

Although this problem is not within the remit of the Parish Council, the initial response from NYCC has been a long way short of what is expected, so we have gone into battle to help get it repaired as soon as possible. Even after we prompted letters from The Ramblers and The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, along with inputs from concerned residents, a local civil engineering expert and the Parish Council, still nothing has happened. People from NYCC have come to look at the problem recently but again refused to look at the problematic river-bank from the optimum position in a garden opposite. Since starting to write this piece, NYCC "PATHS" has sent a round-robin note to those who have been involved.

The news is not great. NYCC seems to be abdicating any responsibility for ignoring input from the locals and for the useless repair, stating it was, "a goodwill gesture without prejudice" which smacks of intervention from their legal department. They also quoted Covid-19 health and safety regulations where the contractor was prohibited from viewing the bank from the land opposite. It would appear he was able to speak to several locals but couldn't walk into an open garden, having been given permission! We find that simply unbelievable as it was in the open air with no other person in proximity. The full email from NYCC can be viewed on our website.

#### STATE OF THE ROADS

We have some sad news to report – one of our parishioners needed hospitalisation after a crash from their cycle while negotiating the terrible surface of one of the arterial roads through the parish. The police were

involved and the accident that caused injury was reported. It usually needs a fatality or an injury before NYCC Highways will react to anything on the roads. Let's hope NYCC react to this one and resurface the whole of Main Street and Station Road. We do know however, that the gas pipes need replacing on Main Street so that should be done before resurfacing. Knowing our utility companies and the council, that may be a forlorn hope.

If there are potholes, please report them to NYCC. Don't wait for others to do it. There is no guarantee they'll be repaired in the near future but if they're not reported, NYCC will not accept any responsibility for damage or injury as they'll claim they didn't know about it. It appears that if a pothole is less than 40mm deep, NYCC will do nothing about it until it worsens. Proactivity doesn't exist in NYCC parlance.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

We're moving on apace with the principal document that heads up what we want with our plan. Our next Steering Group meeting is this Wednesday when we'll look at all the reports from the Focus Groups. As the composition of these groups has changed over the last couple of years, new ideas and new suggestions have been produced. However, we have to consider the implications for the whole parish, not just what might be preferred for just one area. Of course, parishioners will have the opportunity to review suggestions before we go too far down the route.

#### DOG MESS

We still haven't had a response from HBC regarding provision and emptying of extra dog excrement bins. They are adopting their usual "ostrich and sand" approach hoping the problem will go away. It won't. We have an ever-increasing population in this area and with that comes more pets. HBC seems to be all too fond of vanity projects stopping access in the town centre then claim poverty for things that really matter.

#### CEDAR OF LEBANON TREE

The contractors were all set to fell the tree in Rosedale Close but once one branch near the top had been removed a bird's nest, found to be occupied, was discovered and work had to stop. We await a new date for removal of the tree.

#### MORE HOUSE BUILDING

Planning creep is still permitted, even encouraged by HBC. The recommendation to grant permission for around an extra 40 houses on the former Police Training College (PTC) site was on the agenda for HBC's latest planning committee meeting this Tuesday (11<sup>th</sup>). This is despite there being no extra infrastructure in place to cater for the ensuing explosion in traffic numbers from all the Western Arc sites through our parish.

We expected HBC to fulfil their commitment to granting no new planning permissions for the Western Arc until the Parameters Plan had been signed off. We know not to trust such proclamations with weasel words like "Defer and Approve subject to conditions and a S106 Agreement". Simply "defer" should be the decision, not prematurely "approve". STOP PRESS: HBC have agreed to withdraw the PTC from the planning committee meeting but **to reinstate** it for 3<sup>rd</sup> June. This, we emphasise, is against their own commitment not to permit planning applications before the Parameters Plan is ready. Now that the hearing for the application has been postponed, please take the opportunity to object to application 20/02318/OUTMAJ in the usual manner. Did you know for instance that a roundabout is planned for the junction of Rossett Green Lane and Yew Tree Lane? It's probably just to handle the extra traffic from the PTC site. They're also wanting to dispense with green space on the site to build 40 more houses.

This statement is from HBC in September 2020: **“Any future planning application for development proposals on committed sites should take account of the Parameters Plan irrespective of whether the application is for reserved matters approval or making changes to an extant permission.”** How much clearer does one need to be? This fight isn't over as HBC appears to be prepared to countenance its own duplicity and dispense with integrity.

#### FOOTBALL PITCHES ON THE FORMER DUNLOPILLO SITE

These are already behind schedule but even when they meet the required standards of the Football Association, it appears HBC is considering leasing these pitches to clubs outside our community rather than simply to Pannal Sports Junior Football Club as expected. The carpark space allocated is insufficient and there is no suitable adequate parking facility around Smithy Close or Buttersyke Way for players from both away and home sides. If the pitches were for PSJFC, then one would have to cater primarily only for “away team” transport. We'll be dropping a leaflet to householders on the former Dunlopillo site asking them to express their views to HBC.

#### COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

We're ready to roll again once the final constraints are lifted on social distancing. We have had some more volunteers coming forward but still need someone to organise a schedule for deployment. It's an easy task – just completing a spreadsheet every so often and then filling in the spaces where volunteers state their availability. Please let our parish clerk know if you can lend a few minutes occasionally.

#### GENERAL

If our new readers perceive negativity in some of these revelations about happenings within HBC and NYCC then they have interpreted the newsletter contents correctly. One cannot tar all departments of those councils with the same brush but - overall - the service we receive is abysmal. Some individual officers are great but too many simply hide behind bureaucracy.

Please be aware that parish councillors are all unpaid volunteers and just as the Parish Council respects GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) for our parishioners, we expect residents to respect councillors' privacy too. The contact point for the Parish Council is solely through the parish clerk. One would not contact an employee of an organisation at their private address, nor Mr Andrew Jones MP at his private address; neither should anyone blitz councillors with unsolicited contact at home. Please respect councillors' individual privacy.

Best wishes

Howard West, Chairman, [howard.west@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:howard.west@pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk)

and Dave Oswin, Deputy Chairman, and Councillors Cathy Burrell, Ian Birchall, Steve Cobb and Ryan Dall

For reference, the most recent newsletter is always posted on the Village Notice Board (at the Village Hall) and all newsletters are posted on the website here: <http://www.pannalandburnbridge-pc.gov.uk/Documents.aspx>

Also, if you use Facebook, please join our group where you'll get any breaking news more quickly than through these periodic newsletters:

<https://www.facebook.com/Pannal-and-Burn-Bridge-Parish-Council-1655335551445518/>

