

## Englefield Parish Assembly - 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 - Chairman's Report

Thank you everyone for attending the first, and hopefully, last remote Englefield Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly.

It goes without saying that it has been an extraordinary year with this being our first APA since 2019 because the 2020 meeting was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have missed our annual gathering in the Tearooms which have been relatively well attended for a small parish.

In spite of these disruptions, the Parish Council has continued its work and met remotely on five occasions in 2020/21 during May, July, October, January and March.

This was possible due to changes in the law which allowed remote meetings to take place for the first time, but those rules will expire on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021, hence us meeting somewhat earlier in April this year.

In spite of all the negatives, the Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a reminder as to how fortunate we are compared to many others around the world and in the UK to live in Englefield Parish.

The Council acknowledges the impressive joint efforts of a number of village organisations and individuals in supporting the community during the Coronavirus lockdown. Much of this good work has gone on quietly behind the scenes but very clearly Englefield Village Stores has been a central part of this good work.

The Parish Council was very pleased to nominate Andy & Laura Allen for various community awards and delighted that they were recognised with a West Berkshire Council Big "Community Thank You" and also went through to the final round of the Berkshire High Sheriff Awards.

I'd like to thank my fellow Councillors too for their hard work and participation in the numerous decisions made. Parish Councillors fill a role in trying to decide the best outcome or course of action within the community. Their time is given voluntarily and goes beyond simply attending meetings, with much background reading and research required, particularly with regarding the planning matters.

We must also formally record our thanks to Simon Strang, who stepped down from the Parish Council during the year after more than 15 years' service and we were delighted to fill the casual vacancy through the co-option of Lynn Dennison, a resident of North Street, who has been a good supporter of the Parish Council for some years.

Whilst sadly we were unable to celebrate VE Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 as planned, our community pulled together to put on a socially distanced event from our doorsteps and the inclusion of a Piper made for a fitting tribute to this important day.

Englefield is such an appealing parish that it attracted an unauthorised encampment in May 2020 and the Parish Council would like to thank the residents of North Street, in particular, for their fortitude and community spirit in helping clear up the site.

The Parish Council also dealt with half a dozen planning applications, the review of the West Berkshire Local Plan and a consultation regarding the proposed closure of Deadman's Lane to traffic.

Councillors also considered a concert Licence Application during a meeting attended by representatives of the Englefield Estate and the concert promoter.

In addition, more routine matters continued by way of dog bins, highways, finance and Parish Council rules and regulations including the Annual Return and Audit. Supporting all of this work is the vital role of the Parish Clerk, the most important person in the work of a Parish Council. As ever, we are very grateful to Nia Rands for another year of hard work under less than easy conditions, juggling work, family and Parish Council business very successfully.

Finally, I'd like to thank members of the public for attending meetings. It is much appreciated and we encourage more parishioners to attend meetings as we look forward to getting back to face to face gatherings before too long.

ENDS