

ANNUAL PUBLIC PARISH MEETING - WEDNESDAY 24th May 2023

Eccleshall Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2022/2023.

This will have been my fourth year as Chairman of the Parish Council and we have achieved many goals, but not all of our aspirations have been fulfilled.

Most people don't realise how long some things can take to get done in the world of local government and with parish councils coming at the bottom it seems even slower sometimes, especially when the council is not the one making the final decision.

Despite that the committees and working groups have done wonderful things under the leadership of the chairpersons and I thank and congratulate them all.

The parish clerk has been as supportive as ever for all members of the council making many things easier which could have been very difficult.

I have always considered my role as 'chairman' not the 'leader' of our council, not pushing my views and ensuring the views of the other councillors are taken into account.

Each year we find ourselves with new council members sometimes with little or no experience of how a parish council works. I have always hoped that members of our community with thoughts of joining the council would spend some time attending council and committee meeting and getting to know how things work.

Again my praise and thanks to committee chairmen and members for their efforts during this past year and wish whoever takes on the role of chairman all the success in providing our community with a thriving parish.

Councillor Peter Jones

May 2023

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE, 2022-2023

The Planning Committee consists of all the members of the Parish Council and the quorum for a meeting is five members. The present chairman is Councillor Bryan Delanchy, and the Vice-Chairman is Councillor Joy Jones.

Meetings of the Planning Committee are generally held every two weeks on a Wednesday. This is because applications have to be considered by the Parish Council within 21 days of receipt. This can reduce to 14 days in the case of amended plans for a previously submitted application, because of this time constraint, and as all members make up the Planning Committee decisions are not subject to the approval of the full Council.

The Parish Council considers planning applications submitted to Stafford Borough Council, which fall within the boundary of the parish. The Borough Council is the local planning authority for this area and it has no statutory obligation to consult the Parish Council on planning applications. It has, however, a policy of consulting widely on applications made to it and the Parish Council is afforded the opportunity of making its opinions known and bringing to the attention of the Borough Council, local issues of which they may not be aware. It is the duty of those of us on the Parish Council to raise the views and concerns of the residents of the Parish of Eccleshall, both the town and the surrounding area. As Parish Councillors, we draw on our local knowledge and our awareness of your concerns and opinions, to fulfil our obligations, not least of all with regard to planning matters.

If you have a concern about an issue or a specific planning application, please raise the matter with your local Parish Councillor who will be able to raise your concerns at the meeting when the application is discussed. Alternatively, you may attend the meeting yourself and raise your concerns during the public participation session at the start of the meeting. It must be pointed out, however, that any concerns that parishioners have with regard to a specific planning application must also be made directly to the Borough Council, as it is this body that finally determines the application. The Parish Council works closely with the Borough Councilors who represent Eccleshall. These councillors are able to “call in” applications for determination by the Development Control Sub-Committee. Otherwise, most applications are determined by the officers of the council, who interpret the requirements of the Local Plan. During 2022, the Parish Council considered 50 applications compared to 2021 when there were 55 applications.

Most applications are for small domestic extensions, agricultural buildings and barn conversions.

In July 2016 the Neighborhood Plan for Eccleshall Parish was formally adopted after successfully being approved by a referendum and became an integral part of the plan for Stafford Borough defining the residential boundary and the extent of housing.

The plan for Stafford Borough named Eccleshall as one of 11 key service villages which would deliver 1200 houses for the 2011 to 2031 development strategy. An 'Issues and Options' document published by Stafford Borough Council in February 2020 acknowledged that Eccleshall has experienced a 23.8% increase in the number of dwellings since 2011.

In December 2022 Eccleshall Parish Council submitted a robust response to the Local Plan 'Preferred Options' Consultation from Stafford Borough Council. Whilst there were no proposed changes to the current settlement boundary, the proposal included the Meecebrook garden community, which had many implications for the surrounding area. There was a large piece of work undertaken by a working group in liaison with community representatives and neighbouring parish councils to produce a detailed response that highlighted many areas of concern. It is hoped that the final Local Plan will take these concerns on board and result in a robust, defensible document to meet the needs of the community moving forwards.

Councillor Bryan Delanchy.

Events Committee Annual Report 2022-23

Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

The Events Committee was formed in July 2021, initially to plan events in Eccleshall for Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, that took place in June, 2022.

The Parish Council organised and subsidised ten events, including the very poignant Beacon lighting ceremony with a piper and singer held at Eccleshall Castle, three very popular afternoon teas, various competitions such as The Great Eccleshall Bake Off, as well as giving prizes to the winners of the Art Competition organised by Bishop Lonsdale Academy and a packet of wild seeds to each child in the school. Various other groups and organisations put on popular events, such as the line up of acts for 'Party on the Street' by The Ecclian and The Royal Oak, and the Treasure Hunt and Barbeque hosted by The Rugby Club. All the events made this celebration in Eccleshall very special. The Parish Council was the umbrella organisation for the 32 events across this four day celebration and produced a brochure detailing all dates and times. The whole celebration was a great success and enjoyed by many residents of all ages.

Celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla

The Events Committee, have within less than a year, also planned a Coronation Picnic held in the grounds of Eccleshall Castle on 8 May 2023. Again, with the kind permission of Melissa and Mark Carter-Motley. The Committee considered that since the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations had been so successful, we could not repeat any of the previous events. Hence the Picnic to celebrate the Coronation of the new King and Queen.

The predicted weather forecast was somewhat dubious for 8 May and indeed when the team went to set up at 10am it was raining. The weather cleared enough for most of the 4 hours and many residents enjoyed the music of country singer Alan Williams, the dancing of the Morris Men and in particular, Stafford Brigades Youth Marching Band. This group of talented young people were still playing in the pouring rain just before 4pm. The inflatables were very popular with families, as was the facepainting/bubble show artist and the Ice Cream man. The Scouts provided hot and cold drinks. The Marshals were very effective and kept everyone safe and the Explorer Scouts helped people in cars to parking spaces. The St Johns Ambulance were also in attendance.

Croxton held a commemorative afternoon tea to celebrate the new King and Queen.

If there are any special celebrations – Eccleshall is definitely the place to be!

Councillor Ros Taylor

9 May 2023

Enhancements and Preservation Committee – Annual Report 2022/2023

Assets

This includes benches, picnic benches, bus shelters, the village sign, the clock, Croxton play area, Elford Common, Copmere Picnic Site, the Wash Pits, some kissing gates:

All these items have to be checked annually by a Councillor and the condition of them reported back to the Clerk with any remedial action that is required.

New Seat

The Ecclian Society have agreed to replace the broken seat on The Eyeswells. The seat they are providing is an upgrade and will have a plaque celebrating the Coronation.

Croxton Play Area

It has been agreed as part of best practice to increase the number of official checks that are done on this equipment.

Contracts

The watering contract for the flowers in the High Street has been accepted for 2023. In late 2022 the committee accepted quotes for the Christmas trees and lights.

The contract for grounds maintenance (grass cutting) has been agreed.

Clearing pavements is an ongoing process.

A lengthsman has been appointed, which should make it easier to get small clearing and cleaning up jobs done.

Elford Common

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have approached us with a scheme to introduce 2 small ponds which should increase the wildlife and biodiversity. It is hoped work will commence over the autumn/winter 2023.

Beech Road Play area

We have once again written to the County Council asking them to transfer or lease this area to the Parish Council so that we can plan to do a refurbishment there.

Report compiled by Councillor Libby Dale, Chairman.

Footpaths Committee Annual Report 2022-23

This has been another busy year for the Footpaths Committee, the Footpath Marshals, and the Keep Eccleshall Tidy Team.

Bench to Bench Walks

Last May the Footpaths Committee produced a Bench to Bench Walks booklet detailing six walks around the 24 benches in Eccleshall. This booklet was primarily designed for those in the community who enjoy short walks, are recuperating after illness, older residents, parents with small children, pushchairs and wheelchair users. All walks are accessible, are on hard surfaces and the distance between benches is shown so that people know how far it is to the next bench. These booklets can be found in the Eccleshall Library and have been very successful.

Circular Walks

The Footpaths Committee is currently working on a booklet detailing ten circular walks around the parish footpaths. These walks have been overseen by the Footpaths Committee, designed by the Footpath Marshals and trialled by different Marshals to ensure accuracy, flow and suitability. This booklet is very close to being completed and should be available in Eccleshall Library within the next few weeks. We hope that this booklet will be as successful as the Bench to Bench Walks.

Footpath Marshals

The 21 Footpath Marshals have again walked their allotted eight or so footpaths twice a year and reported back any issues they have found along these paths i.e. overhanging branches, fast growing nettles, broken stiles etc. The Footpaths Maintenance Operative has then been out and repaired, trimmed and generally maintained the footpath if it has been possible to do so. This regular oversight by the Footpath Marshals has been a very valuable method of keeping track of any issues and this scheme works very well.

Keep Eccleshall Tidy Team (KET Team)

This very important 35 strong team has helped to keep all areas in and around Eccleshall generally tidy and free from litter. Some have also litter picked at the various special events held in Eccleshall over the past year i.e. The Platinum Jubilee Celebrations and the Coronation Picnic. The team have also recently pledged to collect 18 large refuse bags of rubbish to the Great British Spring Clean Campaign.

I wish to offer a personal thank you to all the Footpath Marshals and the KET team for their exceptionally community minded attitude and commitment.

Councillor Ros Taylor, May 2023

Policy and Resources Committee - Annual Report 2022/2023

The committee is traditionally chaired by the chairman of the full council and this year that was Councillor Peter Jones.

The committee meets on all matters financial and policy oriented as the name suggest and makes recommendations to the full council on those matters including the annual budget.

The time-consuming item was of course the budget - establishing where the council gets its income and how it spends it, and whether to increase or reduce the parish precept, or of course leave it as it is. Balancing the budget whilst considering the plans of the Council and its committees is one of the main aims of the Policy and Resources committee.

Applications for grants come first to the Policy and Resources Committee and in many cases if the budget allows, granted. The council only gives grants to Eccleshall parish organisations or ones that provide a service for the Eccleshall community. Sometimes the grant is minimal and other times larger depending on the application needs and the remaining budget allocation. This year, grants were given to:

- Rotary/Library for contribution to the defibrillator
- Eccleshall Community Amateur Dramatics
- Croxton Well Dressing Festival
- Katharine House Hospice
- Eccleshall Tennis Club

Councillor Peter Jones, May 2023.

Traffic Management Committee – Annual Report 2021/2022

SIDS (Speed Indication Devices)

Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS) are very popular and the analysis done by Councillor Reid highlighted some interesting results. On the whole they are very effective in Eccleshall itself but not so effective in Slindon and Croxton. Further action has been suggested for the coming year.

The survey results are available at

<https://eccleshallparishcouncil.co.uk/finances-and-documents/general-publications/>

Pot Holes

Everyone is frustrated at the lack of repair work being done on our roads. We are continually writing to Highways to try and get these repairs actioned.

Parking

(See Appendix 1 for survey)

This is going to be a perennial problem. With over 300+ extra houses in Eccleshall in the past 3 years the number of cars coming into the town is ever increasing. A parking survey was done in March 2023 showing that there are 146 restricted parking spaces & 106 unrestricted parking spaces.

Electric Charging Vehicles

County strategy effectively bans all forms of on-Street EV Charging in any context. It explicitly bans private homes installing their own devices outside their homes. This means that Eccleshall will only get EV points if a private landowner changes their mind and decides to allow it, until and unless County Policy is modified.

Councillor Libby Dale
Chairman of Traffic Committee

Appendix 1 – Parking Survey

Parking Survey – Eccleshall Town Centre area

A survey of parking locations was undertaken on Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd March 2023 by Cllr. L. Dale, in order to inform the Council of current locations where vehicles can be parked.

Co-Op Car Park Stone Road -Restricted to 2 hours parking.

There are 71 marked out car parking spaces plus 2 spaces for Mother and Child plus 3 Disabled spaces. Total 76 spaces.

10 of these spaces are allocated specifically to Eccleshall Traders.

County Council Car Park in front of the Co-Op Unrestricted parking

17 Spaces

High Street Parking

South Side - Restricted parking (2 hours) - 30 spaces

North Side - Restricted Parking (2 hours) - 30 spaces

Unrestricted parking from Restricted Parking to the Church - 20 Spaces

Church to Cricket Field Gate

Unrestricted parking - 60 spaces

Car Parking on Stafford Street

Restricted Parking - 10 Spaces

Castle Street

Unrestricted parking in lay-by in front of flats - 9 spaces.

Total restricted car parking (2 hours) 146 car parking spaces.

Total unrestricted car parking spaces. 106 car parking spaces.

In addition to these 246 FREE car parking spaces there are the following:-

Pubs

The Little George

The Smithy

The Kings Arms

The Royal Oak

All these Pubs have their own designated Car Parks

Crown Surgery

Has its own designated Car Park

The Library

Has its own designated Car Park

It is also worth noting that cars can park on the Stone Road, Gaol Butts, Hartlands Road, Cherry Tree Close and many other areas without any cost or time restrictions.

Councillor summary:

I think every town in England has “ parking” at the top of its issue list. Eccleshall is a thriving Market Town with influxes of many new and welcome residents.

There will never be enough car parking spaces to meet everyone’s needs/wants, but I am sure there are many more parking spaces than most people thought or were aware of.

Eccleshall Parish Council

Summary Receipts and Payments for Year Ended 31st March 2023

Last Year Ended 31st March 2022		Current Year Ended 31st March 2023
	Operating Income	
89,944.68	Administration	93,244.92
3,667.69	VAT Data	9,295.62
<u>93,612.37</u>	Total Receipts	<u>102,540.54</u>
	Running Costs	
46,392.57	Administration	41,625.80
19,874.26	Open Spaces	22,934.78
17,877.57	Projects	4,482.14
1,180.00	Traffic Management	4,752.54
3,791.68	Highways Maintenance	705.00
1,159.28	Events	9,651.02
1,000.00	Village Halls	1,000.00
247.90	Contingencies	1,706.06
7,808.15	VAT Data	5,438.12
<u>99,331.41</u>	Total Payments	<u>92,295.46</u>
	Receipts and Payments Summary	
<u>103,737.89</u>	Opening Balance	<u>98,018.85</u>
93,612.37	Add Total Receipts(As Above)	102,540.54
197,350.26		200,559.39
99,331.41	Less Total Payments(As Above)	92,295.46
<u>98,018.85</u>	Closing Balance	<u>108,263.93</u>
	These cumulative funds are represented by:	
6,188.23	Current Bank A/c	0.00
66,648.61	Deposit Account	0.00
25,182.01	Savings Account 1	25,655.23
0.00	Unity Current	6,144.83
0.00	Unity Deposit	76,463.87
<u>98,018.85</u>		<u>108,263.93</u>
	Reserve Balances are represented by:	
-5,719.04	Current Year Fund	10,245.08
50,855.52	General Reserves	38,447.34
1,100.00	EMR - Clock Maintenance	1,100.00
8,000.00	EMR - Community Centre	10,000.00
3,033.79	EMR - Croxton Play Area	1,370.79
830.00	EMR - Traffic Calming	1,518.00
6,889.58	EMR - Highways/ex CC Duties	6,889.58
3,605.25	EMR - Training	3,605.25
0.00	EMR - Allotments	2,344.14
3,064.01	EMR - Elections	4,384.01
9,618.00	EMR - Eagle Street Art	9,618.00

Eccleshall Parish Council

Summary Receipts and Payments for Year Ended 31st March 2023

Last Year Ended 31st March 2022		Current Year Ended 31st March 2023
2,169.96	EMR - IT	2,169.96
5,906.78	EMR - Elford Heath Management	5,906.78
405.00	EMR - Flood Works	405.00
1,260.00	EMR - Copmere Picnic Site	1,260.00
7,000.00	EMR - Beech Road	9,000.00
<hr/> 98,018.85 <hr/>		<hr/> 108,263.93 <hr/>

Signed : _____ (Chairman) _____ (RFO)

Eccleshall Parish Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 31 March 2023

Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances

Bank Statement Balances

31/03/2023	Public Sector Deposit Fund	25,655.23
31/03/2023	Unity Current	6,144.83
31/03/2023	Unity Deposit	76,463.87

108,263.93

Receipts not on Bank Statement

0.00

Closing Balance

108,263.93

All Cash & Bank Accounts

3	Savings Account 1	25,655.23
4	Unity Current	6,144.83
5	Unity Deposit	76,463.87

Other Cash & Bank Balances 0.00

Total Cash & Bank Balances 108,263.93
