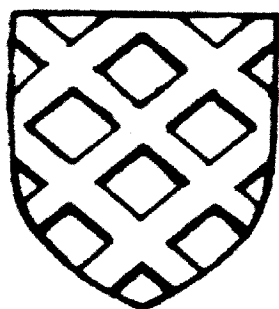


***ETCHINGHAM***

***Annual Report 2024***



**Annual Parish Meeting**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**at**

**8.00pm**

**in the Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft  
Etchingham**



## Chairman's Report 2024

It is tempting, if more than a little misleading, to say the year began well and ended in disappointment. In fact, the last few months have been frustrating, not least because we have had once again had to increase our precept by some £10,000 against probable expenditure, but with no certainty about what sum will in the end be required to find. The good news was the completion on time of the installation of the new playground equipment and the new path across the Queen's Gardens. All was in good order in time for the Fete. At that time the process of selling the Old Stores was well under way and we were confident that we could repay the outstanding debt and have a sum in hand to meet the bill when and if the County Council approved the highway safety measures put forward by TESAG. County would match our spend up to £40K so a total of £80K overall.

It was at that point that the Environment Agency pointed out that the river wall was pulling away the Old Stores and the cottages on either side and that there was a danger that it would collapse and affect the Dudwell. We were required not only to take action to remedy the problem, but to clear whatever was proposed with the Agency. We are fortunate in having as our Vice Chairman, Trevor McGregor, something of an expert in managing such projects, but it has proved a long drawn out process to establish what the most cost-effective solution would be and clear it and any risks involved in the reconstruction process with the Environment Agency. Along the way we learnt that our insurers would deny any liability, leaving us to foot the bill. We have therefore had to make provision in the 2024/25 budget for meeting the sum required, possibly through a temporary overdraft (we are still intent of completing the sale) or if that turns out to be infeasible (the law governing Parish Councils in such matters are pretty restrictive) through a PWLB loan. Since this is bound to take time, we have also had to make provision for the continuation of the payments on the PWLB loan that helped fund the initial purchase of the Old Stores.

Progress continues towards the delivery of a package of road safety measures. The County has agreed to progress the scheme under Community Match and the next step is for their engineers to come up with detailed costed proposals to deliver the reductions in speed that we see as desirable and they agree are feasible. The scheme for an advisory 20 mph zone along the A265 frontage of the site has yet to be agreed and we have commissioned the necessary surveys of pedestrian movements to see whether this can be justified. It is common ground that in the absence of a footway on the southern side of the A265, a pedestrian crossing cannot be justified at that point and it is moot whether there is any place within the village where going to that expense would be justified. We are therefore concentrating for the most part on establishing effective buffer zones at either end of the current 30 mph zone. We have also made budgetary provision in case the work is agreed for a start in 2024/25.

The Parish Council is not responsible for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan, although in full support of it. Nevertheless, the Clerk has been actively involved. The technological problems that were getting in the way of its production appear to have been resolved and Rother DC have been helpful. Fortunately it is well timed to fit in with the new Local Plan which will govern development in the High Weald. Consultation on that is under way and I would encourage every villager to take a look and make their views known. The High Weald Management Plan has recently been agreed and is well worth reading to understand the historic landscape in which we live.

The Parish Council comments on every planning application that affects the village and surrounding area, many of which are uncontentious and can win our support. But there are developments which have an adverse impact on their neighbours or on what is now known as a National Landscape (Area of Outstanding National Beauty) or on both and these are vigorously opposed. Even if rejected, they

can go to appeal and we make further representations to the Inspector taking the appeal. On occasion we comment on applications in neighbouring parishes and, much more rarely, on applications further afield that may have implications for the High Weald. We made representations on one appeal against a Rother decision this year, a proposal for a dog walking site in Church lane and welcome the fact that the appeal was turned down. In addition, we had the good news that enforcement action against the owners of the business at New House Farm was no longer necessary as the Farm has returned to private ownership.

We have also secured action from South East Water about the raw sewage erupting into the fields opposite the Church, but we remain concerned about the drainage system more generally and in particular about the potential flooding of the properties in Church Lane. We are in contact with the rail operator about clearing the ditches on its property, but it is probable that the system will not work as it should unless and until the Rother is dredged. We have made this point to the Environment Agency and have also briefed our MP.

Although we have not suffered as much as other parishes, the process of enforcement in Rother seems bedevilled by insufficient capacity and the failure to employ specialist solicitors, points that have been made through our ward councillors. Our particular concerns have led us to take an active interest in the Northern Parishes Group amassing evidence on the subject; and we are delighted to learn that the District Council has now set up a Task and Finish Group to look at Enforcement policy and its implementation. One our members, wearing her District Councillor's hat, is a member of that group.

The Council has decided to award the Emma Beeney trophy for 2024 to Nicky Menzies for producing the e-bulletin daily and sometimes more than once a day. This is a major contribution to village life and is greatly valued.

Councillor Colin Boylett and his Speedwatch Team continue with their efforts to keep speeds down at the approaches to the village and in the High Street. The results of their work are published on the Parish Council website, another of Colin's invaluable services, and they have a demonstrable effect both in bringing speeds down and substantially reducing the number of offenders. I would appeal to younger members of our community to consider whether they could not take some part in this work.

As Chairman I attend the meetings of the Rother Association of Local Councils, and I am also one of that body's representatives on the Board of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils. I am currently its Vice Chairman.

The Council is concerned about social isolation in the parish and therefore gives its support to the regular Cake and Coffee morning in the Bistro. It has heard a presentation on the proposed social hub there, but this has yet to materialise. The Clerk takes part in the Clerk's network and is also an attendee at the regular meetings with the police arranged by ESALC.

Those who attend our monthly meetings or study the minutes on the website will be aware that there is much else that the Council does on a regular basis and I would like to thank warmly my Vice Chairman and fellow Councillors for all that they do. Unfortunately, Councillor Roma Turner has decided to move to be nearer her family, and we have accepted her resignation with much regret. She led for the Council on children's issues and served on the Human Resources Panel. We are very grateful for the active part she has played in our affairs and wish her well in her move.

I should also like to thank all those who turn out on our annual litter pick and the many others who help to keep the village looking good throughout the year.

Our handyman, Laurence Worton, continues to inspect our play equipment, and carries out regular maintenance of both the Queen's Gardens and the Viper Playground as well as a number of other tasks. We are very appreciative of all his hard work. Finally, and far from least, on behalf of the Council I should like to thank both our Clerk, Paulette Barton, and her assistant, Olga Bilai, for all their hard work this year, often struggling with wayward IT. They are rather more than the engine room of the Parish Council, and Paulette in particular helps us navigate with some success the increasingly tricky world in which Parish Councils now operate. Their role, however, has gained further in importance during my term in office and that process seems likely to continue, whatever the outcome of the forthcoming General Election.

Cllr John Barnes

Chairman

May 2024

## ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL – FINANCIAL REPORT

A quiet start to the year and a most unusual one in these current times as Etchingham Parish Council had actually achieved a small decrease for ratepayers in order to help balance out the previous couple of years when rises had had to be made to manage both unavoidable and unexpected expenses. Future years will have to show increases as the extent of Parish Council responsibilities continue to grow and rises in the Cost of Living plague us all sadly.

The highlight of the financial year was doubtless being able to bring the long-awaited new playground in Queen's Gardens to fruition. Opened just in time for the Annual Village Fete (Party in the Park plus Dog show) it was quite obvious from the swarms of children enjoying it as part of the day that it was a huge success. Coming in at £58k this was no small expense but was funded entirely from reserves, some of which was money remaining that had to be raised during Covid to ensure the survival of ETSR (The Etchingham Trust for Sports and Recreation) a legal obligation on the Council but, due to the hard work of the then Trustees, was not required due to the NHS booking of the halls as a vaccination centre. There being no mechanism for returning rates that are not used, the Council promised it would be spent to benefit the village and to replace a very rapidly deteriorating but much-loved playground without having to resort to lengthy fund-raising efforts or taking on a substantial loan was deemed appropriate.

Work still continues in bringing the work of The Etchingham Safety Action Group (TESAG), a sub-committee of the Parish Council, to a successful conclusion. This is a very long process and we are unlikely to see any physical results until 2025 but the momentum is still forward as we work closely with colleagues at ESCC Highways and make sure that there are adequate funds in the Budget going forward to manage the loan which will have to be taken out to secure these improvements.

Hopes that I could be reporting the sale of the Old Stores during this financial year have sadly been thwarted by a demand – a legal obligation we cannot ignore – from the Environmental Agency to make substantial repairs to the Dudwell river bank to the rear of the premises. While nothing of the sort appeared in the detailed surveys undertaken on the property prior to putting it on the market the EA had noticed that the wall was showing significant 'bowing' outwards which, if this resulted in a collapse of the wall into the Dudwell, might result in significant flooding risk. A specialist area but Etchingham Parish Council is extremely fortunate in having a Councillor with a very high level of expertise in this field who has led the discussions within Council and with the EA to try and reach an equitable outcome in terms of cost and specification. A scheme is currently under scrutiny by the EA which it will hopefully agree so that work can start during 2024 as such work is obviously very weather dependant. Once agreement is reached and final costs established there will have to be some sort of loan funding put in place. All efforts will be made to make this a short-term arrangement so it can be cleared once the premises are sold, however Parish Councils are subject to a number of restrictions and caveats as to how they can borrow money but be assured the very best advice will be sought to make the whole process as painless as possible to our public purse.

Try as hard as it might the rate could not remain static for 2024/2025. As mentioned above both costs and responsibilities rise without any additional support from 'above'; we have had to budget for some additional tree work; existing and probable future loans must be covered; our long term insurance contract must also be renewed this year, we await that figure with some trepidation; and not least manageable sums will be put aside each year against repairs and replacement of village assets to try and avoid 'surprises' in future.

In spite of all this grants and donations continue to be made. The Coffee and Cake Club remains a very popular morning in the monthly calendar and during last year the Council was able to support a special celebration tea for the Coronation and to support the school in giving each of its pupils a memento of the occasion together with one or two other events and worthy causes.

As required by Law, the Accounts of the Parish Council are subject to an Internal and External Audit at year end and copies of all financial information will be available from the Parish Clerk in due course.

Paulette Barton

Etchingham Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer

May 2024

# **Report from Councillor John Barnes to Etchingam Parish Council: Rother District Council - highlights and key issues – 2023/24**

## **January 2023**

The Council started the new year by urging residents and businesses to take part in a budget consultation, as the authority continued to face increasing demands on its finances.

A new requirement for voters to show photo ID when they vote was highlighted. Residents were warned the new rule would apply for the first time in the May 2023 local elections.

January ended with some fantastic news, as the authority was told it had been awarded over £19 million for community, creativity, and skills in Bexhill. The investment, from the Government's Levelling Up Fund would be used to support two major projects at the De La Warr Pavilion and in Sidley.

## **February**

This month the authority highlighted its work to keep the district tidy with the removal of unsightly graffiti at several sites, and by encouraging smokers to dispose of cigarette butts in the right way. The Council also promoted its green credentials with the launch of a new energy improvement project for village and community halls across the district.

Cabinet met at the end of the month to agree items including community grants of more than £40,000 for groups in Battle, Burwash, Icklesham and Staplecross, the extension of a contract for Citizens Advice with £85,000 of additional funding, and progress being made on the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

## **March**

In March, the Council launched a special £10,000 grant for community groups looking to celebrate the Kings Coronation in May. Further good news was confirmation the district had been chosen as one of 20 new Levelling Up Partnership areas and would benefit from a share of the £400m UK fund.

This month also saw the authority addressing some difficult issues. The Council continued its negotiations on the devolvement of public conveniences to town and parish councils and issued a joint statement with East Sussex County Council on the Government's proposed plan to use the Northeye site as a centre for people seeking asylum.

## **April**

The forthcoming May elections took centre stage with another step in the process ahead of residents going to the polls. The authority published its 'Statement of Persons Nominated for the District & Parish Elections' online allowing people to check those standing in each ward.

It was another example of the work of the authority promoting the elections which has included the election timetable, including deadlines for registering to vote and voting by post, plus Photo ID needed in polling stations, and the LGA debate note hate campaign.

The Council also kicked off its annual work to promote safety, protection of the environment, and respect for local communities at Camber and along the rest of the district's coast.

## **May**

The District Council and Parish Council elections took place on Thursday 4 May and results were announced at the election count held at the De La Warr Pavilion on Friday 5 May. On the day of the count, the Council published results as they came in on its website and on social media.

Later in May, the Council highlighted its work to promote equality and diversity with the raising of the Progressive Pride Flag at the Town Hall in Bexhill. The Flag marks International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

## **June**

In June, the issue of public open spaces was on the agenda. The Council launched a consultation on proposed changes to dog controls in public spaces, and highlighted the need for budget savings with proposals to change grounds maintenance.

The issue of Northeye again came up this month, with Council Leader Doug Oliver releasing a statement to confirm that the Government had changed its plans and would not be opening the proposed centre in September 2023 but the plans remain on the table.

The Council's Cabinet met and approved items including continuing with the enforcement of certain environmental offences - such as dog-fouling and littering. Cabinet also confirmed the Council's Net Zero pledge and its membership of UK100 – a network of UK local authorities who have pledged to reach Net Zero by 2030.

## **July**

The Council helped to celebrate the completion of 15 new affordable homes for local people in Icklesham. The Council joined Hastoe Housing Association, the Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust, Icklesham Parish Council, Sussex Community Housing Hub and other partners to mark the project.

Other highlights included promoting democracy to school pupils when a group from All Saints School visited the town hall, praising improved bus timetables that will boost the economy, and highlighting Egerton Park in Bexhill - recognised as one of the country's best parks for the eleventh consecutive year.

## **August**

This month the authority announced it had appointed Lorna Ford as its new Chief Executive and welcomed its first cohort of energy champions – volunteers who will train others to



reduce their energy bills and save money. August also saw the Council continuing its work to maintain the electoral register by asking residents across the district to check their details and ensure they do not miss out when it comes to voting in local elections.

## **September**

There was good news for people in the Rye area this month with the announcement that Rye Pool was set to reopen in October. The Council and its partners had worked tirelessly to make the facility available again for local people after soaring energy costs forced its closure in 2022.

Community groups and projects in Battle, Bexhill and Winchelsea were among the beneficiaries of the latest round District Council community grants with close to £20,000 being handed out. And a local eyesore in Bexhill got a welcome makeover as National Highways confirmed it had completed the Ravenside roundabout improvements.

## **October**

In October, due to budget savings, the Council introduced a trial closure of public toilets over the winter months in Battle, Bexhill, Pett Level, Sedlescombe and Rye. The Council took the decision as it faced a £3.8 million shortfall in its budget.

At its Cabinet meeting, the authority discussed various issues including the Council Tax Support Fund, cash payments in car parks, dog controls, and CCTV cameras.

The month also saw the authority highlight its work to get people of all ages active and healthy. The Council promoted a national rugby play programme called Rugby tots for pre-school and primary school aged children to take part in rugby-themed activities.

And looking ahead to Bonfire Season, the Council reminded Rother bonfire societies of their responsibility of clearing up litter after their official events.

## **November**

The Council launched a wide-ranging consultation on its budget situation. Using all its communication channels, the authority urged residents and businesses to have their say on how the Council manages its finances, as Government budget cuts, soaring costs and extra demand for services create a £3.8m funding gap.

Towards the end of the month, the Council started its annual 'Love Local' campaign, urging people to shop and eat locally in the run up to Christmas. The campaign, which includes input from businesses themselves was boosted with the announcement that once again free parking would be available on set days in council-run car parks during the festive period.

## **December**

The last month of the year saw continued activity on Rother's budget consultation and Love Local campaigns, and at a Cabinet meeting, councillors discussed the Council's Climate Strategy and how its aims would be implemented over the coming months and years. At the

same meeting, cabinet members were told that the authority had received £76,000 from DEFRA's Coronation Living Heritage Fund, for tree planting, community orchards and biodiversity work across the district.

## **January 2024**

January saw the announcement of a new £300,000 rural business grant for Rother - offering match-funded grants of up to £50,000 to help create jobs, increase productivity and adopt new technology. The month also saw the opening of five revamped tennis courts at Egerton Park in Bexhill, and the Council hosting a housing event at Manor Barn in Bexhill with 80 delegates from councils, developers, consultants and housing providers.

The Council also formerly launched its Climate Action Strategy and received confirmation that it was a member of UK100 – a network of local authorities who have committed to taking ambitious climate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This month the council completed its budget consultation and announced it had received over 700 responses from residents, groups and businesses.

A very busy start to 2024 was completed with the Council welcoming the official start of work on a new NHS mental health hospital at Mount View Street in Bexhill.

## **February**

The month started with an announcement that the Council had added more services to its My Rother online offer – allowing residents and businesses to save time by accessing council tax and housing benefit information online. February also saw the announcement that the Peasmarsh Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum would be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month.

February saw the Council set its budget with £15m planned to be spent on services in 2024/25. Despite years of funding cuts, soaring costs, and greater demand for services, the Council announced that it would be able to balance its books by using some of its limited reserves, identifying efficiency savings and maximising income from investments, fees and charges. The authority said residents will also be asked to pay an additional 2.99 per cent on their council tax – the equivalent to an extra £5.94 a year for a Band D property.

## **March**

In March the Council gave its backing to Empty Homes Week – a national initiative aimed at bringing empty properties back into use for housing, agreed to hold two consultations on the local Plan and an Anti-Social Behaviour Order for its beaches, and highlighted the latest round of its community grants programme which provided over £66,000 to six local projects at Little Gate Farm, Bexhill Family Collective, Bexhill Heritage, Crowhurst Parish Council, Icklesham Parish Council, and Three Oakes Village Hall.

March also saw some fantastic news with Government confirmation that Rother would be one of only two areas in the south east to be given Levelling Up Partnership status and that it would receive close to £19m in funding for regeneration and community projects across

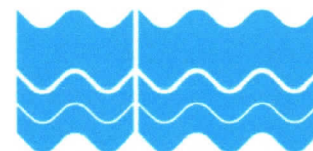
the district, and the Council also announced a new Coronation Community Orchard grant scheme, providing grants ranging from £500 to £5000 to help create green spaces and connect communities with nature.

## **April**

So far this month, the Council has taken part in English Tourism Week, helping to promote the tourism industry with leading Cllrs touring some of the most popular attractions across Rother – celebrating 1066 Country as a quality visitor destination.

The authority has also started to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, taking the opportunity to highlight its service to residents and businesses since it was formed in 1974.

And at its Cabinet meeting this month, the Council discussed the Long-Term Plan for Towns initiative for Bexhill that will see £19.5m over ten years from the Government - backed up by a further £14.9m from the Council's capital programme – spent on community and improvement projects.

ESCC ANNUAL REPORT FOR ETCHINGHAM PC  
MAY 2024

## Driving sustainable economic growth

Following a competitive tender process, a **new contract for highways and infrastructure services** with Balfour Beatty Living Places Ltd, began in May 2023. In June 2023, the Council approved additional one-off funding for highways in 2023/24, including £2.5m for carriageway patching work, £3.1m for drainage works and funding for carriageway repairs. Over the first three-quarters of the year, **70 road improvement schemes** were completed, over 19,000 potholes repaired, 132 patch works were completed across 62 sites, around 100 road signs were replaced and around 150 minor drainage schemes were completed.

As part of the Council's **Bus Service Improvement Plan** a number of projects have commenced including the roll-out of reduced price bus tickets, improvements to bus stops including the implementation of QR plates at all bus stops which can be scanned to receive next bus information, £10.5m of conventional bus service improvements to increase the frequency and running times of some services and the Flexibus service which now covers nearly 90% of East Sussex. 10,000 passengers have taken a trip on the Flexibus. In November 2023, a public consultation was launched on the draft **Local Transport Plan**. The plan looks ahead to 2050 and sets out how we will connect people to places through the county by walking, wheeling and cycling, using public transport, traveling by car, or by new ways to travel. In May 2023, the Council was awarded £1.22m from Active Travel England's **Active Travel Fund 4** to support schemes that encourage people to become more active and help reduce carbon emissions.

The **broadband** project eSussex completed its final build in 2023. Together with commercial investment this brings gigabit-capable coverage (1000 Mbps) to 67% across the county, with 98% of premises receiving superfast speeds of >30Mbps. In addition, the Council hosts the new South East Grid (SEG) network, which contributes to the provision of ultra-fast data network connectivity throughout the county.

The Turner Prize exhibition opened at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne in September 2023 with 1,200 people in attendance. The prize, which was awarded in December 2023, has been instrumental in showcasing the county to a wider audience. In June 2023, the Council-led **Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative** and **Sussex Modern** launched the **Sussex Wine Tourism Plan for Growth** which sets out how the Sussex wine sector could grow from bringing £25m of value to the economy currently to nearly £300m by 2040, creating over 3,600 jobs.

Promoting **employability and skills**, over 1,000 pupils attended Open Doors workplace visits over the first three quarters of the year, supported by Industry Champions to gain experience of a real workplace. 226 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges by the end of December 2023. In addition, in October 2023, the East Sussex Careers Hub hosted the online 'What Next?' event connecting young people and their families with careers experts and local employers. The Youth Employability Services was re-commissioned with the new contract, which has a focus on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, starting in October 2023. Over 1,600 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex Libraries over the first three-quarters of the year. In addition, since 2019, the Council has committed over £1m from its apprenticeship levy to support local small and medium sized employers take on an apprentice.

## Keeping vulnerable people safe

An **inspection of the Council's Children's Services** by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) took place in December 2023. The inspection report published on 6 February 2024, found that the lives of the most vulnerable children in East Sussex are improved by 'consistently strong and effective' support. The help, protection and care children and young people are receiving from the Council earned an overall 'good' rating, while inspectors found the experiences and progress of children in care to be 'outstanding'. This report is set against the context of rising demand for Children's Social Care services and increased complexity of needs. Increases in costs have been particularly acute in looked after children's care costs, in particular external residential costs (with average costs increasing by 13% between quarters 1 and 2) and support for children with the most complex needs.

Following extensive engagement activity with clients, carers and families, the Council published a new **Adult Social Care Strategy** in 2023; 'What Matters to You'. The strategy guides residents' understanding of what adult social care is, outlines six priorities and sets out how these will be taken forward.

The delivery of the **Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme** over summer 2023 was the biggest yet with over 21,000 sessions attended by more than 4,200 young people. 75 providers ran activities at 118 sites reaching more areas of the county than ever before. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) element of the programme also grew with 14 specific SEND providers. Also over the summer, funding was made available to deliver positive activities to support young people with low attendance at primary school during their **transition to secondary school**. 313 young people participated with 86% saying they felt more excited about starting their new school.

**Trading Standards** were involved in over 1800 interventions over the first three-quarters of 2023/24 to protect vulnerable people, including installing CCTV and call blockers to try to prevent people from falling victim to telephone scams and as part of support sessions and training for vulnerable groups.

As of 31 December 2023, 1,762 guests had arrived in East Sussex under the **Homes for Ukraine** scheme, hosted by 812 sponsors. Over 600 people have subsequently moved into private sector accommodation.

### Helping people help themselves

In 2023, the Council opened 11 **Family Hubs**, including in Eastbourne, Lewes, Hailsham, Peacehaven, Uckfield, St Leonards and Hastings. Visitors to the hubs can get support and advice from midwives, health visitors, early communications support workers, early years practitioners and more. Activity sessions give children, parents and carers the chance to socialise and support their children's development. In addition, the Council was successful in securing £7m of Youth Investment Funding to upgrade **youth facilities** in Heathfield and Peacehaven.

**Reablement services** are provided to help people to regain mobility and daily living skills, especially after a hospital stay. Between April and December 2023 95.1% of people who received short-term services did not request further support and between April and September 2023, 93.5% of older people discharged from hospital to reablement or rehabilitation services were at home 91 days after discharge.

Work continued on the **integration of health and social care** in 2023/24. A joint five-year Sussex Shared Delivery Plan was endorsed in June 2023 by the Council. The plan brings together delivery milestones for 2023/24 and a roadmap for years 2-5. This includes delivery of integrated community teams, operating initially in Hastings.

15 **road safety** schemes were completed during the first three-quarters of 2023/24 to improve road safety infrastructure. Over 3,700 people have also benefitted from 'Bikeability' courses.

In September 2023, ESCC partnered with The Tribe Project, an online platform and app that connects **volunteers** with local opportunities. There are now over 175 roles across the county. The Tribe Project offers volunteers flexible positions accommodating availability, location, and skillset. The Council's External Funding team responded to 220 enquiries over the first three-quarters of the year from the **voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE)**. The team has helped organisations secure £389,361 in funding over the same period.

Annually the Libraries team take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, to encourage children aged 4 to 11 to enjoy the benefits of reading over the summer holidays. This year East Sussex saw its largest uptake since 2018, with 7,198 participants. **Libraries** also provide free computer and internet access, alongside volunteer led 'IT for You' sessions to support people to develop IT skills. So far during 2023/24 over 1,729 adults have participated.

### Making best use of resources in the short and long term

The Council's **budget and Council Plan** for 2024/25 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 6 February 2024. Councillors approved a £538m net revenue budget for 2024/25 with no new cuts to services. The decision not to reduce services was taken despite the rising cost of providing them and funding not keeping pace. In setting a balanced budget, Councillors agreed to use £14.3m of the Council's limited financial reserves to meet the shortfall and to increase council tax by 4.99%.

The Council participated in a Local Government Association (LGA) **Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)** in June 2023 with the aim of further improving the Council's work. The subsequent independent report found the Council to be well-run and well-managed, open and approachable as well as a trusted and respected partner. The Council was also found to be financially prudent with a good record of financial stability and on the delivery of savings.

Over 2,000 people took part in a **survey on the Council's priorities and spending** from October to December 2023. 70% of people felt the Council's priorities were the right ones, with 60% of people suggesting that highways should be the priority for any additional investment.

The Council has continued to work with partners to deliver carbon reduction and our **climate change** plan. In 2023/24 this has included securing £245k to develop a plan to provide people with the skills to enable the retrofit of domestic properties to reduce their carbon emissions, £4.4m to support the installation of electric vehicle charging points in over 280 locations and nearly £300k of Forestry Commission funding for tree planting projects. Sixteen **energy efficiency** projects were completed on Council buildings during the first three-quarters of the year, including 4 LED lighting projects and 5 solar PV energy generation schemes. Total energy use in quarter 2 of 2023/24 was down 9% on the same period last year and down 25% on the baseline year 2019/20.

The Council spent £307m with 853 **local suppliers** over 2023, equating to 64% of total contract spend. In addition, during the first three-quarters of the year, 11 contracts were awarded which were in-scope of the Social Value Measurement Charter. These contracts had a total value of £4.9m with £1.3m of **social value** commitments secured, including apprenticeships, work experience, creation of local jobs, and local volunteering initiatives. This equates to an outturn of 27% of applicable procurement spend, against a target of 10%.

In September 2023, the **East Sussex Pension Fund** Team won the Governance Award at the Local Authority Pension Fund Investment Awards.



## COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Council portfolio for Community Safety covers several areas that relate to the safety and wellbeing of village residents, as detailed below.

### ***Police;***

The Clerk and community safety portfolio holder are in regular contact with our local PCSO, Chloe Cameron, she keeps us up to date with what is happening in the area. If you have something you want to discuss with an officer you can contact a PCSO or PC by using the Police Non-Emergency number **101** and asking for a local officer to contact you, **101** is the number to use to report non-urgent matters to Police.

As always – if reporting an urgent matter, do not hesitate ~ call **999**

More information and help available on the Sussex police website [www.sussex.police.uk](http://www.sussex.police.uk)

### ***Neighbourhood Watch;***

Etchingham does not currently have an active Neighbourhood Watch scheme operating, I do however still receive occasional NHW information and will put anything that is relevant to Etchingham on the e-bulletin, social media and village notice boards, and if appropriate will add to the Parish Council website.

***Community Speedwatch;*** See the separate report for Speedwatch

### ***Flood Warnings;***

We have been lucky in recent winters, with no serious flooding, during winter of 2023/24 we only had a few Flood Alerts, and none of the more serious warnings.

If any alerts or warnings are issued I am registered, on behalf of the Parish Council, to receive all warnings and updates as soon as they are issued. I can then make sure that residents in parts of the village that are at risk are aware of the current situation. As alerts or warnings are received the details are posted and regularly updated on the PC website, the details are also sent out on the e-bulletin when possible and are usually posted on some of the village Facebook pages.

If you have any queries on community safety issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr. Colin Boylett, portfolio holder for Community Safety.



## ETCHINGHAM COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

Co-Ordinator; Colin Boylett 01580 819532 07483 211838

[etchingham-speedwatch@gmail.com](mailto:etchingham-speedwatch@gmail.com)

<https://www.communityspeedwatch.org>

The first thing to point out is that Community Speedwatch is **NOT** about getting people fined, it is an educational tool designed to remind drivers to drive at appropriate speeds in speed limit areas by regular deployment of CSW operators with speed detection devices.

However, vehicles recorded over the speed limit by more than the margin in the ACPO guidelines are referred to the Police, the vehicle owners receive a Police warning letter, persistent offenders may also get a visit from a Police Officer and possible further action may be taken.

The Etchingham group has now been operating since January 2014. Unfortunately, due to illness, personal issues and volunteers moving away, the number of volunteers available sometimes drops to a very low level, reducing the sessions that can be run. We always need more people to join the group, this can be done on the national CSW website [www.communityspeedwatch.org](http://www.communityspeedwatch.org) just follow the instructions to register.

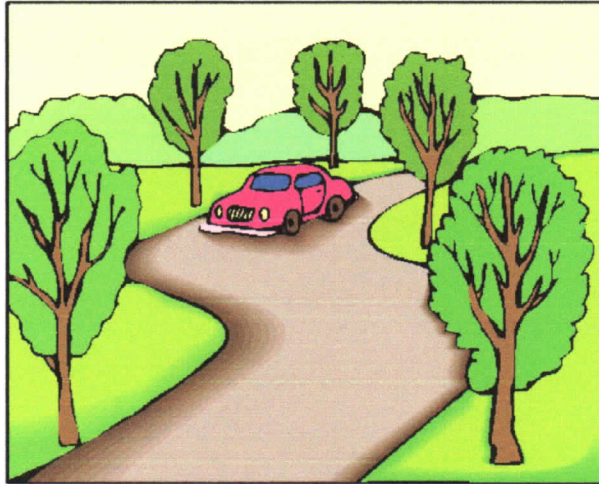
We now deploy Body Worn Video (BWV) on our sessions, the BWV is Police issued and used in accordance with the Police policy for BWV use. The camera is **NOT** recording all of the time, it will only be switched on to gather evidence if an aggressive or abusive situation arises, such incidents are rare, but do occur occasionally.

If the group has a few more volunteers available more sessions can be run each week, or alternatively the same number of sessions without using each volunteer too often. The equipment is easy to use and only very basic training is involved, so anyone who would like to consider joining the volunteers, even if it is only for an hour occasionally, do it now, first go to the CSW website and sign up.

**REMINDER** – The speed on the road signs is the **LIMIT not the TARGET!**



Cllr. Colin Boylett – Portfolio holder for Community Safety and Speedwatch Co-ordinator.



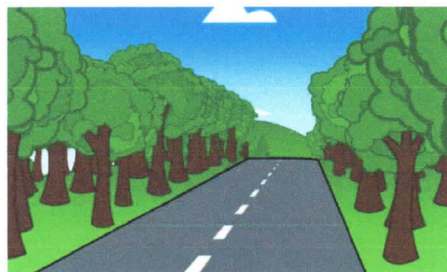
## HIGHWAYS

All repairs and maintenance on the roads in the parish, including the verges, pavements and signage is the responsibility of East Sussex Highways. There is a dedicated highways website and all reports of items needing repair or maintenance should be made on the website <http://www.eastsussexhighways.com> .

If you do not have internet access, or you consider the fault/repair requires urgent attention, you can phone your report to **0345 6080193**

Use the contact methods above to report issues relating to roads, pavements or verges as soon as you are aware of the problem. Please also bring it to the attention of the Parish Council send the details to the Parish Clerk or one of the Councillors who hold the Highways portfolio, currently Cllrs John Barnes and Colin Boylett, or speak to any Parish Councillor.

If it is something that might require discussion at a Parish Council meeting, make sure it is reported to the Clerk at least ten days before the next meeting to make sure it is in time to be added to the agenda, and for Councillors and the Clerk to research information.





# Parish Council website



[www.etchinghamparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.etchinghamparishcouncil.org.uk)

In 2019 the council decided to use a web developer that specialises in Town and Parish Council websites to create a new Council website. The developer, NetWise, manage all the technical aspects of the site and guarantee the site complies with all current legislation, the Council is responsible for uploading all the content and documents.

Towards the end of 2021 we became aware that the original village website, funded by the Council, was becoming unstable and in need of replacement. Mindful of extra costs involved in setting up a new website, it was decided to add some 'village' sections on the Parish Council website for most of the information on the old site to be moved to.

Any village information that you would like to see added to the website should be sent to [admin@etchinghamparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:admin@etchinghamparishcouncil.org.uk) for consideration, it should be noted that all text on the site has to be typed into the pages or in a readable PDF or Word document, scans of posters or documents cannot be added to the site.

Cllr. Colin Boylett, portfolio holder for Council Communications.



## VILLAGE VOICE COLUMN

Every week in the Bexhill & Battle Observer you will find the “Village Voice” section, with weekly contributions provided by a local resident in each village with news and information from their village.

For several years I have been the village correspondent for Etchingham and I am always looking for news and information to include each week. I can include any information about your clubs and organisations, events, fund raisers, special news and anything that might be of interest to other village residents. I do not have any limits on article size, so send anything you want, I may need to adjust slightly to meet the newspaper requirements regarding style etc. but can normally use anything you send.

If sending details of your event or fund raiser send the details as soon as you have them available, then I can include in the column well before the event to give people a chance to put the date in their diary, then include again a few times nearer the date, if you wait until the week before it will only get mentioned once.

I normally require your information to arrive by 10pm on Monday to include in the Friday edition, e-mail is the best method to use to avoid errors during copying, but you can get the details to me by phone or deliver to my home address.

Colin Boylett 01580 819532 07483 211838

[colin.boylett@gmail.com](mailto:colin.boylett@gmail.com)

2 Park Farm Close, Etchingham.



# Etchingam CE Primary School

Annual Report 2023-24

## Terms 1 & 2

We began the year on a very positive note following an extremely successful Ofsted inspection. The school was judged to be a Good school with an Outstanding grading for Behaviour and Attitudes and for our Early Years provision. We are very proud of this outcome and it is a testament to the hard work of staff. It was an excellent report, particularly at a time when the benchmark for 'Good' is at the highest level it has ever been and we were acknowledged as having exceeded this in two areas.

We welcomed new pupils to the school as they began their Reception year with us. They had a wonderful start as they learnt 'All About Me' whilst they settled into school, learned rules and routines, made new friends and explored who they were in the world.

The children from Years 1 to 6 all engaged with their new Learning Journey, 'Divide and Conquer', through which they explored key knowledge from important events in British History including about the Battle of Hastings which is particular to our own local area, the impact of the Romans and Anglo-Saxons on Britain, through to consideration of whether the historical representations of the Vikings was fair.

Christmas events were in full swing at the end of Term 2. The children enjoyed a wonderful Christmas Fair which the Friends of Etchingam School organised – it was a great success and Father Christmas' grotto was truly magical! This was enjoyed alongside a fabulous production of 'A Bundle of Joy' by our Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils as they celebrated the Nativity story. We hosted a Christmas Reading Event where children shared their favourite seasonal books after the annual Christmas school dinner. We collectively took part in a Reverse Advent calendar and collected a huge number of food contributions which were donated to the Hastings Food Bank and of course the community enjoyed the traditional Carol Service at the church which was a most fitting send off at the end of term.

## Terms 3 & 4

In Terms 3 & 4 our youngest pupils learnt about 'The World I Share' as they explored developing friendships, understood the importance of keeping healthy, became more aware of the past linked to themselves, their families and communities, and explored what people's lives are like in other countries.

The children from Years 1 to 6 embarked on their second Learning Journey, 'Go Wild'. This topic focused primarily on learning progression in Geography as they explored key knowledge as they considered 'What will happen if the rainforests disappear?'; 'Why is the Amazon so important?' and 'What is the most amazing thing about the Amazon rainforest?'.

We had a wonderful Reading Afternoon Tea for World Book Day where parents were invited in to the school for tea and cakes, to read with their children. We celebrated Red Nose Day with a danceathon in the school and ended the term with a wonderful Easter Service led by Rev. Tom.

## Terms 5 & 6

During these terms our youngest pupils will engage with the topic 'More than me' as they learn about where they live, who they live and work with and their place in History. They will be preparing for their transition to Year 1 later on in Term 6, as we also prepare to welcome our new school entrants.

The final Learning Journey for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is 'Changing Times'. Through this the children are thinking about big questions such as, 'How has exploring space been useful for the human race?', 'How have the Tudors influenced life today?' and the ever more pertinent, 'How does war change a country?'.

We are also preparing for exciting events such as sports day, the end-of-year play and of course our services to say goodbye to our Year 6 leavers as they prepare to move on to secondary school.

## Gallery





## Playground Fund Raising

The new playground equipment in Queen's Garden was installed last year, it does not mean we do not need to continue fundraising, all play equipment has a limited life, in the future it will need repairs and eventually will need replacing again.

Etchingham Recreation Ground Trust (ERGT) a charity *Registered Charity No. 1093289* set up to manage Queen's Garden will continue fundraising, the Parish Council is the Trustee body.

One of the fundraising efforts creates a steady regular stream of funds, that is "Give as you Live" (GAYL), you can help raise funds when you spend money online, at no extra cost to you, by joining "Give as you Live" join at <https://giveasyoulive.com/join/ergt>, then when you shop online, log in to Give as you Live first and use the link there to go to the site you are buying from, a small % of the purchase price will be donated to ERGT, at no cost to you. Over 6,000 websites are registered with Give as you Live, not just shopping, if you are booking a holiday or hotel, or buying insurance, check the GAYL site first, some holiday firms give generous donations, it does not cost you extra.

All you need to remember is that once you have registered for GAYL make sure you sign into your account at GAYL and use the link there to visit the site you are buying from.

Make a donation <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/support-our-playground> if you are a UK taxpayer please opt for Gift Aid so the fund gets an extra 25% from HMRC.

Cllr. Colin Boylett 01580 819532 email; [etchinghamplaygrounds@gmail.com](mailto:etchinghamplaygrounds@gmail.com)



# Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation

Hello again lovely villagers and especially our supporters! Another year has passed since our last assembly and much has happened in the village!!

For those of you that may be new to this great village and are seeing this for the first time, ETSR (Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation), is a Registered Charity. Its main function is to raise much needed funds whilst managing and developing the hire of the facilities that Etchingam Community Halls have to offer. The Trustees and Administration Team comprising of members of Etchingam Parish Councillors, Paulette Barton, our Clerk and Olga her trusty assistant toil tirelessly to maximise all opportunities available to the team to ensure the on-going success handed over to us from the previous administration a couple of years ago. Firstly, we run what we call the 100 Club where willing villagers commit to £5 per month to enter a draw to win one of three cash prizes (totalling £135 each month). This has been very successful to date bolstering the funds we have available to support our commitment to the local community. If you would like to know more about this hugely important part of our fundraising activities, please contact [admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk). Give it a go - If you're not in it - you can't win it !!

Secondly and perhaps the most labour intensive (although it is a labour of love), ETSR hire one or both of the halls out to individuals, various clubs, associations, events, parties and, when required, the local authorities (Local and General Elections being a prime example). During the height of the dreaded COVID crisis, can you remember back that far ??, the facility was being used full time as a vaccination centre. Since Etchingam Parish Council took over as Trustees well over a year ago we have managed to increase our funding through the above and the charity's financial position is healthy.

Notwithstanding the above, ETSR are always aware that there are plenty of additional opportunities to tap into - New clubs, existing and new companies, Corporate Events to name a couple, that we would welcome in the future. One of our goals is to entice potential new hirers by making everyone aware of the competitive pricing and the excellent facilities (kitchen, bleacher seating, large car park etc).

This year we are busy planning an exciting SILENT AUCTION for later this year and a new idea - a SPRING FAIR to embrace all of the local arts and crafts, organisations and businesses that wish to be involved for Spring 2025.

As Chairman I personally would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Trustees, Etchingham Parish Council, and most importantly the fantastic admin team of Paulette and Olga for their continued and robust support. We are also very lucky to have Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green one of our District Councillors who is also our County Councillor, and the second District Councillor being John Barnes, as our staunch supporters.

Looking forward to the forthcoming year we are hopeful of a regular letting of the music rehearsal/recording facilities and we hope that this will bring in additional interest in musical and artistic performances.

On a serious financial note, alongside the school, we have had to endure a catastrophic failure with the School heating system and the costs involved in the repair work has had a serious detriment to our financial position plus, with ever increasing energy costs, high maintenance and running costs we envisage for the forthcoming year, it is going to be a challenging one. Any ideas any of you, our villagers may have to generate additional funds in the long or short term would be greatly appreciated.

As briefly mentioned above, this year we are hoping to host a Silent Auction where local businesses can promote and donate items for you all to bid on AND WIN !! Another idea we have is to attempt to organise a Summer Craft Fair so I would ask any small businesses in the area to contact ETSR with a view to holding a stall. This is planned for Spring/Summer 2025 as we realise diaries are already getting quite full for this year. We have the great benefit that if the good old British weather is not kind to us, we have the large indoor facilities available to use !!

As Etchingham Parish Council is the new Trustee, please contact ETSR through the Parish website or if you'd like to talk over these options or wish to take a closer look at the facilities on offer with either or both of the halls and the ancillary rooms then please do contact us on [admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk) or 01580 819048. Let's see what we can do.

We look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible to make the future the success we envisage

Many Thanks

Trevor McGregor (Chairperson)

May 2024

#### **Patrons**

Tom Avery  
Robert Bathurst  
Harry Hill  
Charles Moore

**Trustees: The Etchingham Parish Council**

Contact: Email: [admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk) Tel: 07855 239848

Correspondence Address: Etchingham Trust for Sports and Recreation, Etchingham Community Hall, Parsonage Croft, Etchingham  
East Sussex TN19 7BY

Registered charity number: 1076642



## **Report on Etchingam Festival 2023**

We had a very successful Festival in 2023 and audience numbers were back to pre COVID levels.

It was very good to see many new faces , several of them new Etchingam residents. However, our costs rose considerably (as happened generally) and we were very grateful for the grant that we were allocated by the Parish Council.

We continued our liaison with Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra and they provided two stunning concerts : A mesmerising performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons and an excellent evening of Operatic arias and duets for our Supper Concert.

We were delighted to host the Sacconi String Quartet and very lucky that a sponsor allowed us to include Michael Collins with them. Michael has been described as the best clarinettist on the planet and certainly lived up to expectations.

We celebrated the Coronation with tales of mishaps and triumphs from previous Coronations and Florian Mitrea playing Beethoven's Variations on God Save the King and Rule Britannia.

This year's Festival runs from 29th June to 7th July and will feature Stravinsky's Histoire d'un Soldat, The Zemlinsky Clarinet Trio, Piano solos and duets and Dime Notes for our Jazz Supper.

We shall also have another visit from Trinity Music Academy to hear some of their amazing young musicians again. Last year we were all stunned by a 15-year old boy giving an incredible rendering of the Moonlight Sonata.

Do come and join us.



# Putting the Annual Village Fete together

There are few local events as pleasant as Etchingam's annual fete. The buzz of the crowd, the strains of familiar old melodies played by the band, the chatter in the tea tent, the excitement of the dog show and the opportunity to meet old friends, all enjoyed with a Pimms or a cup of tea on a sunny afternoon.

But stop a moment; it may look as if it just happens, in fact it has taken months of careful planning. It starts with a meeting soon after Christmas after circulating the news to the village and held in the Club as these things are best discussed with a drink in hand, diaries out and finding a date which doesn't clash with other local events.

Next is booking the band and that cements the date as a brass band gets very busy in the summer. June the 8th in Queen's Gardens this year.

Now we're off- who helped last year, who might we approach this year, who's not going to be on holiday. Here are the priorities: are we sure we have someone willing to run the tea tent? Where's the water and electricity coming from? Who's ordering the loo? Who's going to be the voice on the loudspeaker at the fete? What's going to be run from the church? Who'll run the dog show and where's the judge coming from? Long lists by now are being prepared.

Our volunteers are absolutely key to the success of the day, putting up and dismantling marquees and bunting and running stalls and sideshows we can't manage without a crew of helpers- hint here, are you free to help on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2024?

Over the years, the Improvements Committee has collected a store of table tops, tables, chairs and equipment for use on the day and we also need enough kind volunteers to put everything up and tidy away afterwards, so that we can concentrate on what's on offer on the field.

By the next meeting most stallholders have been booked and volunteers found willing to run sideshows - although the more people helping makes it possible to organize a bit of a rota so there is a chance for everyone to take a break. We appeal for raffle prizes, bottles for the bottle tombola, entries for the cake and photo competition, cake makers for the tea tent, books for the book stall and this is where advertising comes in! E bulletin, Battle Observer, Parish Magazine, all carry information about the big day. Word of mouth in our village plays an important role so we hope everyone hears what's going on from friends and neighbours as well.

We're nearly there now; anxiously watching weather forecasts, village hall booked just in case. Coconuts ordered? Who's buying the beef burgers and the pork joint for bowling for a pig? Are the cups and saucers washed? Have we got enough tables and will the grass be cut in time?

So, there it is and we're off to another great fete that looks as though it's just happened that way.

Could you be someone who'll be with us in the team to make it happen next year?

Mary Barnes  
Annette Childs

## The Village Christmas Play

Last Christmas it was a delight to see the annual village play come together and give so much enjoyment. Playwright Will Moore and I were thrilled at the dedication and effort put in by so many members of the village. There was a mysterious animated clock, a disgruntled band of local hooligans, a travelling circus and a donkey. There were old hands on stage and newcomers—our youngest being seven, and the eldest over eighty. Tickets sold out quickly, so next time perhaps will merit two performances. On that topic, for this Christmas expect an Agatha Christie-style whodunnit, set during the infamous village fete Dog Show. Familiar faces will appear on the stage this December, and some new ones too.

Hannah Moore



