

Brixton Parish Council - Annual Report for 2020 from Liz Hitchins
Chairman presented at Brixton Parish Council on the 28th April 2021



Despite the restrictions imposed on us since March 2020 as individuals and communities, Brixton Parish Council has continued to function effectively during the uncertainty of the pandemic. The Council has continued to meet and be engaged with the community on issues which affect the health and well being of parishioners. Since April 2020 monthly Council meetings have been held remotely using zoom. This has enabled an increased attendance of residents from the comfort of their own homes, particularly working parents and older people with mobility difficulties who have now been able to be present and take part in Council meetings where appropriate. Maintaining communication has been paramount during the year using a variety of processes including through the Parish Council website, regular newsletters, Facebook (2 sites) and three community notice boards located in Sherford, Carrollsland and Brixton Village. All of these are important means of communication especially during the first lock down when a weekly newsletter was published and displayed on the Council website, Facebook and on the community notice boards.

The Parish Council agreed its precept of £34,000 in January 2021 to meet the financial requirements of the parish covering a wide range of activities for the benefit of the whole community. Annual grants have been made by the Parish Council to South Hams Citizens Advice, South Hams CVS, The Samaritans, Ivybridge Ring and Ride, Yealm Brownies, Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm, Yealmpton & Brixton Caring and Brixton Scouts and to St. Marys Church towards the lighting.

Councillors Edd Arran and Terry Clegg were welcomed to the Council filling the 2 vacancies reported on at the end of last year. Cllr Ian Calvert resigned during the year and Jenni Robertson joined the Council following interviews for that vacancy. Ian remains closely involved linking the Council to the 'Love Brixton' Facebook page. I would like to thank Ian for his work for the Council during his time as a councillor. This month Cllr Helen Williams resigned after 6 years on the Council. We would like to thank Helen for the work she was involved with on behalf of the Council with the Community Emergency Plan and all the work she did during the pandemic; also as the Council representative on the Sherford Community Land Trust, attending conferences and linking to IDALC with Cllr Wills. This vacancy will be advertised in due course.

The Community Emergency Plan went into operation at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020 led by Cllr Helen Williams who produced an important community communication 'No one should feel alone'. This flier was distributed to every household in the parish. Helen set up a group of volunteers to collect and deliver prescriptions from the surgeries to residents who were shielding or self isolating. She recruited volunteer local leaders to be alert to the need of residents in smaller community groupings and in the hamlets. As a community we thank Helen for all her hard work, her time, energy and ingenuity during that difficult and uncharted time. We must also thank Julie Eccles who took over the prescription service, those volunteers who collected and delivered prescriptions and the local leaders who helped to make everyone feel safe and included. The prescription service ceased on the 10th July as arrangements were in place for the local dispensary and GP practices to take over. Helen also worked closely with neighbouring parish councils and local organisations supporting people in their homes in particular Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm. The Emergency Plan remained in place until the 12th April 2021 when all work relating to COVID-19 for the Parish Council was stood down. The information collected during this period has been dealt with in line with GDPR requirements. I would like to thank everyone in the community for following the guidelines and keeping yourselves and our communities safe.

Planning continues to be a major item on our Council agendas and it is a critical issue for the community on the urban fringe of Plymouth. The policies in the adopted Brixton Neighbourhood Plan provided guidance and informed support when considering planning applications in the last year. Climate change, the reduction of carbon emissions and policies to improve the environment now influence planning recommendations of the Council, particularly in relation to renewable energy and the management of surface water runoff. I would like to thank Councillors Ian Martin and Michael Wills for coordinating the arrangements for the Parish Council to respond to planning applications to South Hams District Council with informed recommendations. Thank you also to all councillors who sometimes at very short notice attended site meetings when we have been able to have them.

Despite the pandemic, plans for various projects have progressed in the past year. These include creating an environmental amenity on land purchased by the Parish Council on the former Mill site at Cofflete led by Cllr Joe Parish. The site is gradually being improved to be an important community resource; plans are in place for tidying up the lower site and an interpretation board being located there. We have welcomed the support South Devon AONB has given us as a Council in progressing this project. I would like to thank Cllr Parish for keeping this project on track, liaising with other agencies and for his time and attention to detail in moving the project forward

Plans from the Sport & Recreation Plan for Monkey Lane to become a pedestrian, cycle and bridle path to link with Sherford Country Park have slowly progressed. A meeting has been held with the land owners and currently Monkey Lane is included in lanes around Hareston in our plans for these lanes to have 'Quiet Lane' status. During the year funding and a contractor for the restoration of the old wall on Footpath 26 leading down to the parkland at Cofflete were approved and the work is expected to start later in May. The Council has met with Devon County Council to start to plan for traffic calming along Red Lion Hill/Stamps Hill funding of £75K will be available from the Sherford 106 agreement. Currently we are waiting for draft plans from the County Council. Last summer a meeting was held with interested parties to look at car parking on the Green. The Parish Council commissioned a report on how the space around the Green can best be used for parking. Once COVID-19 restrictions allow a face to face public meeting will be set up to consider the possibilities for improvement there.

Cllr Parish has continued to monitor the Brixstix Play Park and is working with South Hams District Council to replace the large play unit which has become unsafe in recent months. Funding for this is through the S106 agreement from the Canes Orchard development. On Elliott's Hill, the owl seat and the stepping stones have been refurbished. Now that the silver birch trees are in leaf this area is looking very attractive.

Quarterly meetings of the traffic management group have met remotely throughout the pandemic with Nick Colton, Neighbourhood Highways Officer for Devon County Council. All traffic issues affecting the parish have been discussed at this meeting. This year new signage has been installed warning motorists of the bend and single line traffic at the bridge at Fordbrook, potholes have been filled and the drainage at Spriddlestone resolved. This group has also monitored the statistics from the VAS speed counters. A considerable increase in the volume of traffic has been noted but the average speed is coming down to around 30mph. Roger Smith, our Community Road Warden, regularly relocates the VAS sign with the help of Shaun Tapper and I would like to thank them both for doing this task. Speedwatch was suspended during the pandemic and there are plans to restart it once the restrictions have lifted. Road sweeping by our enthusiastic group of volunteers was suspended during the pandemic, funding received in 2019 is being used to purchase a shed and additional equipment for road sweeping. The Council has worked in collaboration with the Brixton Feoffee Trust to secure a site for the shed on land in Old Road.

The Parish receives a monthly update from Aardvark on the progress of the restoration of Steer Point Quarry together with information on lorry movements, complaints and the traffic plan etc

The annual P3 meeting was held remotely and the condition of all public rights of way (PROWs) updated. All PROWs have been extremely well used during the pandemic. Thank you to Councillor Huxtable and the volunteers who walk the paths regularly and provide up to date reports to ensure the paths are well maintained and safe. The Council is closely involved with Plymouth City Council, Sherford Consortium and others in moving the plans for the footpath at Dawes Lane forward. The Council has worked in collaboration with the Yealmpton & Brixton WI and the landowner to secure a site for a seat to mark their 100th anniversary at Silverbridge Way. Cllr Clegg has taken on the responsibility of monitoring Silverbridge Way for the Council.

- Climate change and protecting the environment are two of the big issues which face everyone as individuals and as communities. Brixton Parish Council has always been mindful of both these issues being part of setting up the Community Composting Scheme in 2012. The Parish Council is represented by Cllr Clegg on this group Brixton became 'Bee Friendly' in 2018 and making plans to become a plastic free community in 2019. Brixton Parish Council has serious concerns about the water quality of the River Yealm following discharges of raw sewage into the river at times of high rainfall. The Council is leading a group of neighbouring parish councils covering the Yealm catchment area from Cornwood, Sparkwell, Newton & Noss, Yealmpton and Wembury to start to work together with relevant authorities to see what can be done as councils and as individuals to reduce the amount of surface water going to the water treatment works at times of high rain fall. Our progress will be reported on in due course. This all came together at a public meeting on the 22nd April 2021 to consider Climate Change Crisis and Environment Protection and how we can all play our part in the climate change crisis and in protecting our environment and an action plan will be drawn up. From this meeting a group has been set up to look at improving the wildflower habitat along our verges. Wild flowers have been planted by Cllr Robertson in the bed at Chittleburn Hill with donations by Otter Garden Centre. A grant of £400.00 has been received from YCE towards this work. The next meeting of the Climate Change Crisis Group is on Tuesday 8th June at 7.00pm, this is a public meeting and details will be published on the Council website. The Parish Council is represented on the Sustainable South Hams Group, Devon Climate Emergency County Network, The Yealm Climate Emergency and Environment Action Network and Yealm Community Energy – River Yealm Estuary to Moor (YEM) Wildlife Corridor proposal.

During the year, the Parish Council welcomed monthly updates at Council meetings from Alison Nix who is the nominated representative for the Council on the Sherford Community Land Trust and Gary Barlow, Chairman of the Sherford Residents Association as house building at Sherford has now started in Brixton and the South Hams. Representatives of the council attend the quarterly Sherford Liaison meetings.

Regular liaison between the local Police and the Chairman has been set up and has worked well dealing with urgent issues and updating when necessary.

The Parish Council continues to support St. Mary's School as an important community resource for our children, their families and for the community

The Council introduced a Business Continuity Plan in 2020 to ensure that the business of the council could continue during the pandemic. The Council's policies have been reviewed and updated annually. Cllr Arran provides independent scrutiny of the financial accounts on a regular basis. The annual performance appraisal of the clerk's work took place in September. I am personally, and as a council we are, indebted to Kirstie, our clerk, for all her work in

ensuring the Council operates effectively and efficiently; and for the additional work required for the Council to apply for Quality Gold Status with the National Association of Local Councils. Training is a priority for the Council. Skills audits and development plans have been introduced for the clerk and councillors.

I would like to thank our 2 District Councillors Dan Brown and Matt Chown for their attendance at our Council meetings and following up issues on behalf of the parish and individual parishioners. I would also like to thank Devon County Councillor John Hart for his support throughout the year.

During the year, as Chairman, I contributed to the National Association of Local Councils' published national guidance on how parish and town councils can work towards becoming dementia friendly. This guidance can be found on the NALC website. In September I put my name forward to become a director of Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) and was elected onto the Board in October 2020. Since then Brixton Parish Council has become a member of the DALC County Committee where wider issues affecting town and parish councils across Devon are raised and, where appropriate, forwarded to NALC.

Finally I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their hard work, time and commitment to the work of the Parish Council acting always in the best interests of the people living in Brixton Parish. It is important to remember that we are all volunteers. I would particularly like to thank Councillor Michael Wills, our Vice Chairman, for his support and advice and his great support to me as Chairman and Kirstie Aldridge our clerk for continuing to move the Parish Council on so effectively.

In conclusion I would like to thank those residents who regularly attend the Parish Council meetings throughout the year. Your continued support is very welcome and important to us. We hope that you will continue to attend our meetings and bring your friends whether it is via zoom or face to face.

E. Hitchins

April 2021