

## **Loose Parish Council**

### **Review of 2017**

We continue to play a proactive role in the improvement and protection of Loose Village and the surrounding area. Listed below are some of the highlights of last year's projects.

#### **Environment**

A group of residents and councillors planted additional oak trees in Brooks Field so we now have 14 different varieties. Many thanks to everyone who came to help on the day and to the Kent Men of the Trees who kindly donated them. The saplings are all doing well but unfortunately one tree was stolen so we had to replace it. A lectern to provide information on the different trees will be placed at the Kirkdale end of the field. The artwork has just been approved.

Loose Amenities Association did a brilliant job removing the bull rushes and weeds from the stream. Many thanks to Derek Corbett for organising the work party and to everyone who worked so hard over the three weekends. It all helps to keep the stream a beautiful feature of the village.

We purchased a planter for the island at the top of Old Loose Hill. This has been planted up with spring flowers to make an attractive display at the entrance to the old village. We had to do this to prevent people using the island as a parking space which was a hazard for motorists and pedestrians.

The gates in the cemetery have been refurbished and repainted. Safety checks and inspections on the gravestones, war memorial and walls continue on a regular basis. The benches around the village have been sanded down and re-varnished for everyone to enjoy.

We are finalising the purchase of a defibrillator that will be stored in the red phone box on the village green in front of the post office. This will be a good central location with easy access for the village and surrounding streets and accessible at all times. Thanks to our Kent County Councillor for funding this important project.

We have organised two 'clean up' events in the spring and the autumn to pick up and dispose of litter strewn around the neighbourhood. Many thanks to everyone who turned up to help. Together, we make a very valuable contribution to keep our streets clean and tidy. The next spring clean is on Saturday April 21<sup>st</sup> 2018 in the afternoon and we are going to be setting up an ongoing volunteer system shortly. We will be asking residents to 'adopt' a small area of Loose and keep it litter free.

#### **Pavilion and Playing field**

Broadband has been installed in the pavilion and a pull down presentation screen has been added to the main hall. This will make it a more attractive venue for business meetings. The internal lighting had been upgraded to save money on electricity bills. We have upgraded the CCTV and external lighting around the

Pavilion to offer greater security to the building and the playing field. We regularly conduct inspections around the playing field and children's play area, making adjustments and replacements as necessary. Periodic repairs are made to the hedges, wooden fencing, gates and barriers around the field. Bookings at the Loose Parish Pavilion have been very encouraging over the past year, all of which helps towards the upkeep of the playing field and the excellent community facilities.

## **Neighbourhood plan**

The Steering Group and many task groups met frequently throughout the year making good progress with the Loose Neighbourhood Plan (LNP).

Further public engagement took place at the Duck Race and Parish Fete and more views were collated.

The Consultation Statement was approved by the full council in December. This weighty 165 page document, details all the comments received from stakeholders on the pre-submission draft plan and how we have considered them. Many have been incorporated into the plan.

A draft 'Basic Conditions Statement' was completed in January. This document identifies how our plan conforms to the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Local Plan.

An informal submission will now be made to MBC for their comments. Following this we should be in a position to finalise everything and make a formal submission in March. MBC will then arrange for it to be made available for a six week period of public comment and consultation.

We encourage everyone to make their views known at this stage.

## **Planning**

The Planning Committee has met every two weeks throughout the year and made recommendations to MBC on 62 applications. Typically, these are house extensions, applications to build inside gardens (backland developments) and tree works. We generally follow the MBC Landscape Officer's recommendations on tree works.

Several retrospective applications have also been considered.

There has been one large application for 14 dwellings to the rear of properties (Nos.53 – 71) on the east side of Linton Road. The planning committee opposed this application and it was subsequently turned down by MBC. The location was not an allocated site within the MBC Local Plan.

It remains our policy that each application is considered on its merits within the framework of current planning legislation.

## **Events**

The principal purpose of the Events Committee is the organisation of the annual Village Fete and the increasingly popular Fun Dog Show. Once again, with the help of good weather, the fete was a success, raising £1785.82 for the Community Hub project. Although the Committee is part of the Parish Council, it has the benefit of having several non-council members who provide invaluable help and resources. We were exceptionally grateful to have a number of members of the North Loose Residents Association helping us with car parking and other aspects of the running of the fete plus providing useful suggestions at the follow-up review meeting. As the fete is supported by residents from both LPC and NLRA areas (as well as further afield), this cooperation bodes well for the future of events in the parish. New members who would like to be involved in the planning of our next event on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 are very welcome! We are again very grateful for sponsorship from Nellsar Care Homes, Vets4 pets and Albany Funerals.

## **Staffing and administration.**

Jan Capon, who had been our parish clerk since 2004, decided to reduce her workload and become our Responsible Financial Officer managing budgets and other financial matters. We were delighted to welcome Kim Owen who took over the role of Clerk from Jan in August. She manages the main Clerk's duties with overall responsibility for the administration of the Parish Council meetings, Planning and Events committees and the Human resources board.

Liz McLaren remains as Deputy Clerk covering in the Clerk's absence and managing the administration of the Environment, Pavilion & Playing Field and Community Hub Committees.

Anne Rigby continues as Communications and Media Clerk managing all booking enquiries for the Pavilion, updating the Parish Council website and liaising with the press for editorial coverage. A new website was launched this year giving more information and better search facilities.

## **Delivering local services**

The parish council financial year runs from 1 April to 30 March. A separate financial report on how we managed to deliver all the above services will be published after this time.