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# Minutes of the Easton on the Hill Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting

Held at Easton Village Hall at 7pm on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## Present;

13 residents/village group representatives

7 Councillors; 8 P Bates, P Firth, C Green, I Lawson, C Mountain, J Watson (Chaired the meeting) and S Woodman and Cllr T Nicol attended remotely by phone.

Ward Councillor Helen Harrison

Clerk: Miss Jenny Rice

- **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021.**

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

- **To receive and note reports from;**

1. Ward Councillor, Helen Harrison
2. Parish Council Chairman Tim Nicol's report plus finance report
3. Playing Field Improvement/Management Committee Chairman's report.
4. Other Parish Council committee and working group reports (Allotments, Trees and Greens, Traffic, Planning and Village Plan Working Party.)

The Ward Councillor, Helen Harrison, outlined the new set up with the Unitary Council and her ward role (she is also an Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Well-being), along with Cllr Jason Smithers, Leader of the North Northamptonshire Council, and a new recruit Charlotte Bett as the rural ward Councillors. She explained the projects that are being worked on at NNC level as highways, splitting the Director roles, Green Waste changes, Ukraine refugees rehoming. Cllr Harrison addressed, as requested, the issue of the recent approach by the developer HSL again, for a build of 50 houses in Easton on the Hill. She thought they were overstating their position on this, as the Local Plan pt 2 policy did not state the land was designated and the supply was already met. The Parish Council confirmed there was no planning application submitted as yet and they remained neutral in their opinion until such time as residents were consulted properly. It was agreed to wait until the developers approach the council again for possibly a summer meeting.

The (Vice) Chairman Cllr Jerry Watson presented the Chairman's report and other Parish Council reports were also presented and circulated – attached below.

- **To receive and note reports from village groups**

The village groups presented their reports as below;

1. The Cricket Club and other sports clubs using the pitches
2. The History Club
3. The T21 Birch Tree Café trust
4. The Garford Trust
5. The Village Hall
6. The Horticultural Society
7. Neighbourhood watch
8. Volunteer Action
9. The Little Lane Nursery
10. Friends of the Church
11. Cycle path project

- **To receive comment from residents of the village on any other matters of concern.**

There was a concern raised over the volume, weight and speed of the traffic on the Main Road, A43. It was thought to be very dangerous with some cars overtaking and travelling at over 40mph. Cllr Harrison responded to say it is a police matter and the Police and Crime Commissioner could be involved. Highways would have to approve any measures but maybe a single white line to prevent overtaking would be possible. She said she would contact the Executive Member for Highways to take up the issue. The Community Speedwatch scheme could also be considered and the Parish Council would put this on a future meeting agenda.

Cllr Jerry Watson ended the meeting by thanking the members of the public for attending, the village groups and all volunteers/elected Councillors who give their time and energy to improving the village for all. He also thanked the Clerk for her hard work.

# Chairman's Report

- New council elected May 2021
  - 5 new councillors, 6 stayed on
  - Since then 2 left and 2 co-opted
  - Thanks to all who have stepped forward
- 2021/2 Focus on getting tangible things done, nicely
  - Things that fall in our limited area of responsibility
  - Observing correct procedures and practice (often over-complex)
  - Having proper debate but keeping it civil and brief
  - Observing the 7 Principles of Public Life
- Keeping Finances under control
  - Stick to budget
  - Build back reserves
  - Deliver value for money
- Coping with the pandemic

# Chairman's Report

## 2021/2 Highlights/headlines:

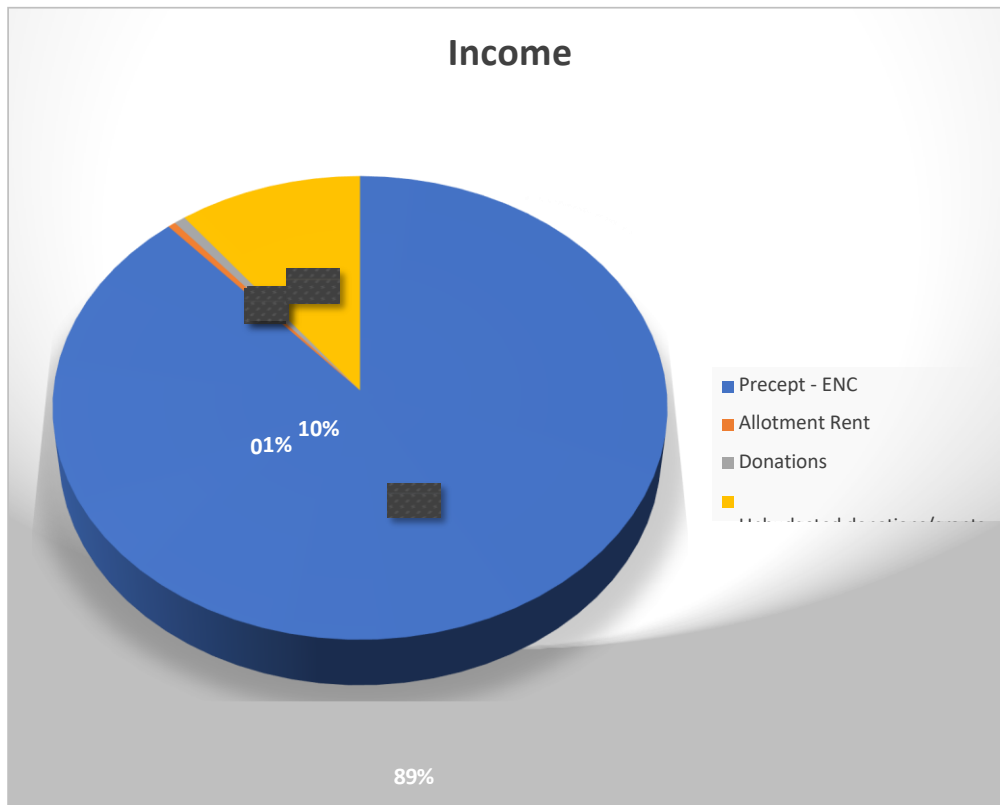
- Great progress on the Playing Field and more to come
- Volunteers getting stuck in – thanks to all; pond clearance, fallen tree removal, speed devices maintenance, grit bin filling, bus shelter painting, etc etc.
- Finances in good shape
- Good “spirit” around the council
- Meetings getting shorter...
- Public always welcome to meetings and taking part in working parties

# Chairman's Report

## 2022/3 Outlook

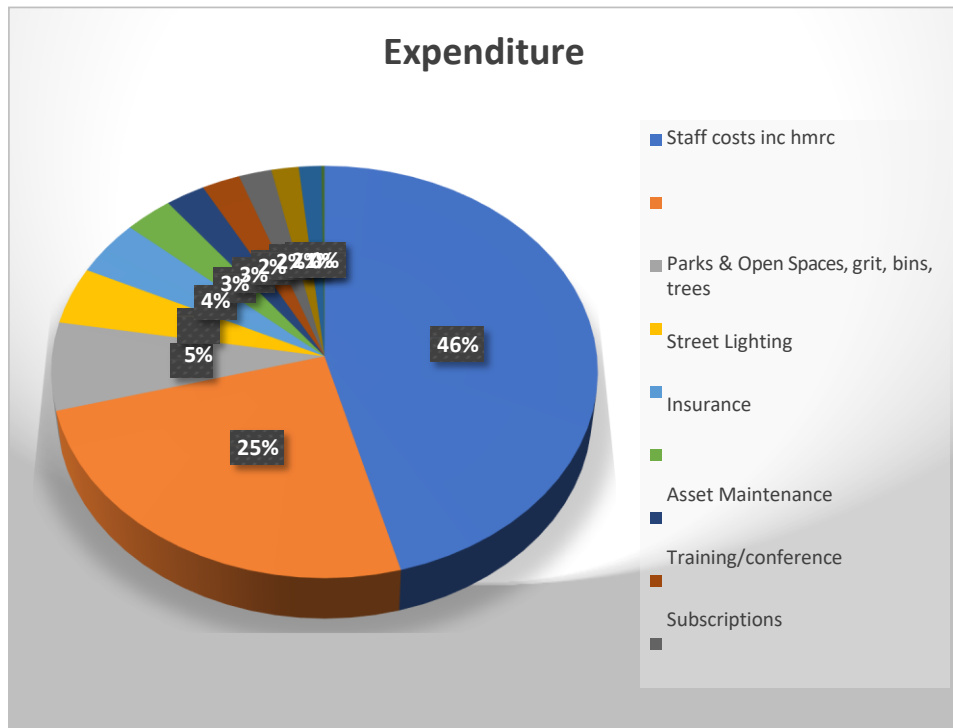
- Playing Field Management Committee to focus on next stage of development with delegated powers and budget
- New pedestrian signage for village attractions
- Attention to residents concerns over traffic on Ketton Drift
- Continued maintenance and improvement of our assets and open spaces
- Better communication/welcome to new residents
- Be transparent in any conversations with developers
- Focus on what is in our remit/power and be clear about signposting

# Finance Report 2021-2022; Income



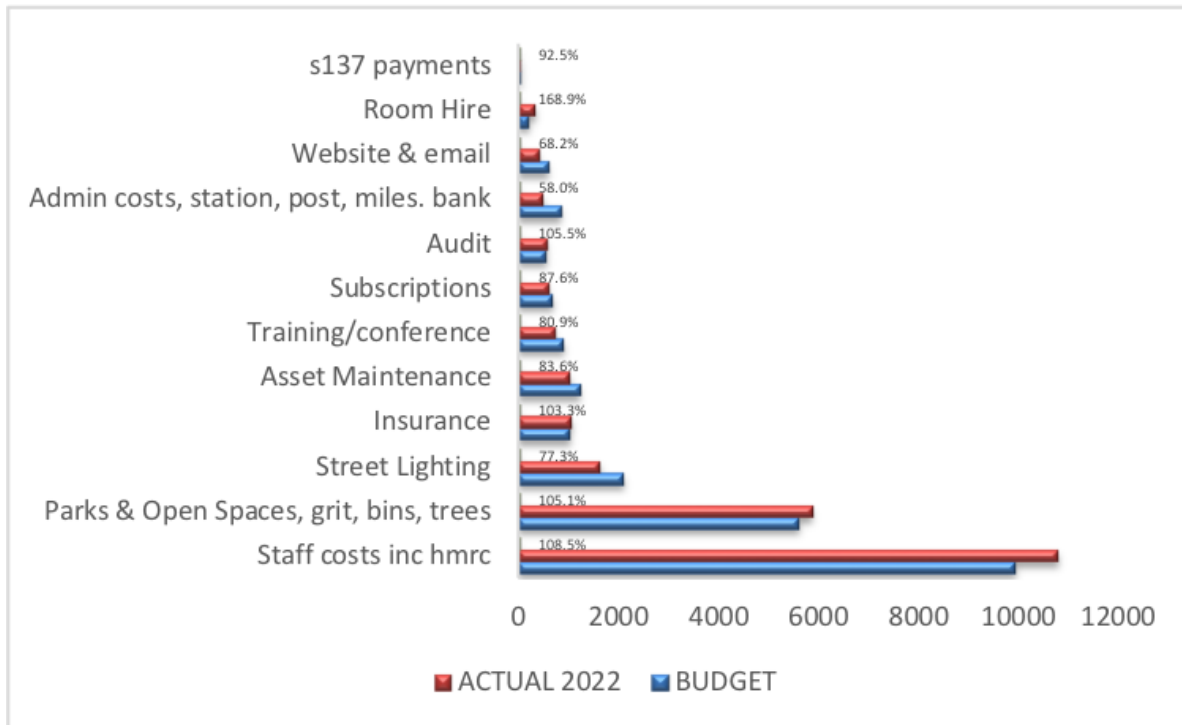
- 2021-22 Total income £38,573, of which precept was £34,148; 89%
- 111% of budget; includes grant for asset mapping, war memorial insurance claim, and contribution from Cricket Club to legal costs
- 2022/3 precept is £35,172, +3%

# Finance Report 2021-2022; Expenditure



- Staff costs and open spaces maintenance nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  budget
- General reserves (not shown here) stand at £12,415 in April. £3,000 budgeted in 2022/3 to build back to target of £15,000 (6 months)

# Finance Report 2021-2022; Expenditure vs budget





- Overall expenditure 99.4% budget
- Savings in street lighting (LEDs), Asset maintenance (volunteer labour), admin, training.
- Increase in staff costs and open spaces (tree surgery)





Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>History &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Protect the unique history and heritage</b> of our rural village community by safeguarding the legacy we have been bequeathed</li> <li>● <b>Share and communicate with visitors and residents</b> the history and heritage of our community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Church Guide (joint venture between the Friends of the Church and the History Group)</li> <li>● Village Trail (the History Group)</li> <li>● Priest's House Opening /temporary exhibitions (Priest's House trustees and the History Group, and others)</li> <li>● Village Archive</li> <li>● Church as an "alternative venue" (Friends of the Church ongoing project)</li> <li>● Web-site development- dedicated History Group section.</li> <li>● Village archive online</li> <li>● Peace Garden website</li> <li>● Books on Easton (there are at least 3 publications)</li> </ul>	<p>The thriving History group continues to curate the history of the village and provide information, largely online.</p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> 


Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>The Natural Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a <b>documented, mapped wildlife walk</b> around the village linking our rural paths and walks</li> <li>• <b>Plant trees and shrubs</b> in sensible places and maintain them</li> <li>• <b>Involve our local school and enterprises</b> to sponsor environmental improvements and projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The churchyard is being maintained to environmental standards and has won awards.</li> <li>• A project to create a circular walk has been investigated</li> <li>• 140 Trees were recently planted on the playing field area</li> <li>• The Horti Soc have planted many bulbs on verges and in the centenary tubs</li> <li>• The Priest's House, the "Ramblers Rest" development by CIPS and the Labyrinth all have created new planting opportunities</li> <li>• School closed 2017</li> <li>• Little Lane Nursery maintain Buddleia Grove</li> <li>• Birch Tree Café have planted several shrubs and trees</li> <li>• CIPS have created Ramblers Rest</li> </ul>	<p>The circular walk will be a slow burn- local landowners do not support.</p> <p>Instead, a Cycle path is being developed (small team headed by Jo Willis)</p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> 

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>The Built Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any <b>future housing development should be sensitive and proportionate</b> to the character of the village and aligned with East Northants Council Local Plan, Conservation Area</li> <li>The Parish Council should <b>ensure that the village maintains its unique and widely appreciated character</b> and protect the Conservation Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Planning committee applies these principles on an ongoing basis</li> <li>The Parish Council has decided not to repeat the village plan or create a Neighbourhood Plan, at least for now, but the 2017 Plan is still relevant and is referred to.</li> </ul>	<p>2 major developers or their agents are or have explored developments.</p> <p>Gladman, (land north of Stamford Road) has been rejected.</p> <p>HSL (land south of Stamford Road) is pre-planning but discussions are current. <b>The Parish Council adopts a neutral stance in advance of wider consultation.</b></p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> 

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>Recreation and Leisure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan to relocate the Sports Fields and Playground closer to the village and upgrade the facilities to the highest possible standards. This should include a new pavilion, with changing rooms and provide a modern community owned space for meetings and gatherings. <b>Or, if relocation proves unattainable, to redevelop and upgrade the existing site</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Playing Fields could not be moved, and instead, <b>major upgrades to facilities have taken place and more is planned.</b> This involved clarifying registered ownership.</li> <li>A new body, the <b>Playing Field Management Committee, (PFMC) with delegated powers from the PC, is just starting to manage the space on an ongoing basis.</b></li> </ul>	<p>More new play equipment is on its way, and further fundraising and grant applications will be undertaken by the PFMC.</p> <p>A proposal to lay on mains power to the pavilion is in preparation</p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 100px;">  </div>

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide <b>clear and up to date information above existing public transport services</b> which serve the village and wider area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stamford and North East Northants Call Connect 4S is still operational and must be booked. Signs are in the Bus Shelter, which has itself been repaired and painted by volunteers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information is readily available online and at the Bus Shelter</b></p>
<b>Traffic/Roads and Paths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Upgrade traffic street furniture and village lighting</b></li> <li>• Develop and deliver a <b>sustainable solution to the parking problems in the vicinity of the Post Office</b> which presently creates excessive wear to the immediate environs</li> <li>• <b>Ensure appropriate speed awareness and enforcement</b> throughout the village. In the longer term reduce the speed limit, within the village centre, from 30 mph to 20 mph</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>up-grade to the majority of street lighting has been completed</b> and is realised significant savings. More lamps will be converted to LED over time. The PC manages this</li> <li>• <b>Extending the layby at the shop is not practical</b></li> <li>• Parking will always be an issue given increasing car ownership and our narrow streets.</li> </ul>	<p>The Parish Council has <b>no power to impose Parking or speed restrictions</b>. The Northants Police have a policy of not enforcing a 20mph limit.</p> <p>The Traffic Working Group manages the speed devices, signage, and parking advice and will continue to encourage better behaviour and improve advisory signage where possible.</p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> 

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
<b>Education</b>		No recommendations made in the Village Plan	The Garford Trust objects are being widened to benefit the whole village
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a <b>village guide for all residents</b> listing important information and contact details for businesses, local groups and other opportunities to contribute to village life</li> <li>• Take account of our local business community in its decision making, to ensure that local goods and service providers are not disadvantaged by Council policy or practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some piecemeal activity but <b>we haven't produced a definitive guide for some years</b></li> </ul>	<p>We <b>believe the village website and other online search tools provide much of the needed information</b> but we will look to improve and consolidate the presentation online.</p> <p>Ongoing- and there are stronger links with CIPS, Birch Tree Café etc</p> 

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a <b>village guide for all residents</b> to help raise awareness of the facilities and public and private services already in place which could meet the needs expressed</li> <li>• The Parish Council to work with others to explore how <b>better use may be made of existing buildings, such as the Church, the school, the Village Hall</b> and local land</li> <li>• The PC will work with volunteer groups to explore how best to meet the identified social needs of the community that fall outside its capability and capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <b>above- no single guide produced</b> as yet</li> <li>• The school has become <b>Birch Tree Café</b></li> <li>• The <b>School Hall development</b> is being progressed by Easton Garford Trust</li> <li>• There is an <b>early stage plan to adapt the church for more flexible use</b></li> <li>• The <b>Village Hall is being well used</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Continual updating of the village website, thanks to a volunteer</b>, provides much of the information</p> <p>Wellbeing is taken into consideration in all relevant council decisions but no specific plan exists to extend our remit.</p> <p>The VP recommendations are being followed on an ongoing basis</p> 

Topic	Recommendations 2017	What's been done	Up-date 2022
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a <b>village guide for new residents</b> listing important information and contact details for local businesses</li> <li>• The Village Survey highlighted that the shop and post office was the place where most residents regularly visited within the village. A larger noticeboard is recommended at this location</li> </ul>	<p>See above- Employment/Health and Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A new, larger PC noticeboard has been installed</b> in the Bus Shelter, and more space is available for general communications</li> </ul>	<p><b>“What’s on the Hill” has been running monthly for nearly 10 years and reaches 354 recipients.</b></p> <p>A definitive guide/directory of services for the website will be developed.</p>

Thanks to the Village Plan Working party for monitoring progress across this 5 year plan.



## PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE REPORT 21/22 PLUS APRIL

FINANCE REPORT 21/22			
<b>NOTES</b>			
•	<b>The regular, basic budget is 99.37% spent at the end of the year, so just within budget</b>		
•	<b>The receipts are at 112% as they include 4k of additional receipts for Asset Mapping Project, insurance claim for war memorial and</b> a contribution from the cricket club towards the solicitor costs of a lease of land to the cricket club		
•	<b>Project/irregular spend included election poll charges and money towards the solicitor costs of the lease of land (from earmarked reserves)</b> also a repair to the village clock coming from the general reserves.		
•	<b>Budget lines over +/- 15%</b> Room hire includes cost of Zoom in addition to extra committees and hire charges, planning and PFIC Admin costs - less printing of papers for Cllrs, less mileage Street lighting is seeing full savings from LED lights Training costs are less due to less training attended, plus less changes of Councillors Asset maintenance is 84% spent, more jobs done FOC and have not included clock repair of £1075, from gen res Website/email costs lower due to less changes needed		
•	<b>Playing Field receipts 21/22 total £26236. This includes;</b> £3347 hire income, £20621 grants and £2267 in donations		
	<b>Playing Field payments in 21/22 total £20223 including a £10k payment for play equipment, offset against a grant recd last year.</b> It is easier to look over the last 2 years and forecast to end of April 2022 - the playing field receipts vs payments will be around £500 credit (this takes into account the phase 2 equipment going in, but no unforeseen expenditure regarding this)		
•	<b>Cash reserve levels at year end are £44600 but this includes earmarked reserves of £33910; for play equipment, election build up, info board</b> and war memorial repair. An old budget line of £150 for VPWP has been absorbed but is there if required.		
	At the end of March, cash reserves are therefore £33910 earmarked and £10690 general, however.... In April, there is £2886 grant left to be claimed and a electrical testing bill to pay of £1215, leaving adjusted general reserves of £12415 The remaining balance at the end of phase 2 of the playing field project will need to be transferred to the PF budget too.		
	<b>UPDATED POSITION AS OF 22/4/22 FOR THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING</b>		
	<b>CASH BALANCE END OF MARCH 2022</b>		£ 44,610.00
	Transactions since	income	£ 262.75
		April expenditure	£ 1,480.39
		Balance in bank	£ 43,392.00
<b>Notes</b>	<b>going forward</b>		
	1 Equipment invoice to pay for £30,000 plus vat		
	2 Precept to be paid in end of April, £35172		
	3 Woodland grant to come £2550		
	4 Augean remainder of grant to come, £2886		
	5 Insurance claim money to go towards memorial £3235		
		balance	50765
		basic budget spend	25000
		projects	10000
		reserves	15000

## **Easton on the Hill Parish Council**

### **Annual Planning Committee Report 2021-22**

After the Council Elections the Planning Committee was formed with all new Councillors: James Hamilton, Ian Lawson, Claire Mountain and Jerry Watson. Their first meeting was on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 with valuable guidance from clerk Jenny Rice. When Counsellor Hamilton left the village he was replaced by Counsellor Simon Woodman. All members of the committee have completed their initial on-line planning training.

Including April 2022 twenty-five planning applications have been discussed and responses sent. We have made our own planning application this April to rebuild the Polish War Memorial destroyed at Spring Close during the storm on 31st October 2021. It is of an improved design and to be moved closer to the road with an interpretation board.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> April the Committee Meeting hosted a presentation from HSL and ARC4 survey producers on residents housing survey results. They indicated that North Northants were likely to plan for the building of 50 new houses in the village. The committee remaining neutral said that they would report to the full Council and that it was possible that a presentation could be made to the village concerning developer's proposals in due course.

There were three meetings where we had public attendance.

The Committee works well and is learning together.

Councillor Ian Lawson

### **Parish Council Traffic working party report**

There are 5 speed activated speed signs in the village 3 owned and maintained by the Parish Council.

All 3 are now solar charged.

We have added about 5 more approved locations, so we can cover a larger part of the village and aim to move 2 of them around more, leaving the one on the A43 as it is.

We have used the street doctor site to report highway type problems and some have been done and some are still pending.

Councillor Woodman, on behalf of the Traffic/VAD Working Group

### **Trees & Greens -Cllrs Bates,Green,Holwell & Mountain**

Trees and Greens working party continue to maintain and improve the green spaces within Easton-on-the-Hill.

The cluster of storms in late 2021 caused significant damage to trees within the village

- High Street & Racecourse Road was cleared and tidied using largely Parish Councillors

- Tree crushed the Polish War memorial in Spring Close. Professional tree surgeon was employed to remove the fallen tree and several other Poplars that represented a potential future hazard
- Spring Close will require a full tidy-up, including the pond area and when the new war memorial is installed possible new paths etc.
- Millennium Gardens – Some brambles have been removed, work ongoing using DofE volunteers
- DofE volunteers have cut various hedges etc.
- Cllr Woodman had ordered and organized the planting various woodland trees as part of the jubilee celebrations. As they continue to enhance the playing field environment.

Cllr Chloe Green, on behalf of Trees and Greens Working Group

### **Report from the Playing Field Improvement Committee (PFIC), April 2022**

At the time of the last Annual Meeting, work was about to commence on installing new play equipment – which followed on from the first steps of demolishing the old “changing rooms” building and starting to fence off the new areas.

The equipment was duly installed, catering for children of different ages, but we were aware that still more needed to be done.

A second grant application was submitted to Augean in May, and this was also accepted in August, for a total of just over £21,000: these funds are being used to purchase and install further play equipment including items for older/teenage children (a Zip Wire, for example). These should be arriving over the next few weeks.

Also in May, we received confirmation of a small grant of £750 from the Maud Elkington Trust, which was put towards work on the woodland area. More of that later.

Around this time, the Parish Council were approached by Wittering Premi-Air Football Club to use the area of the field adjacent to the cricket pitch for practice and matches. An approach was also made by Macca Sports to host multi-sports academies during half-term and summer school holidays. Both of those were accepted, with a formal agreement in place with the football club: both of these arrangements have helped to bring in rental income, to support the on-going maintenance costs of the area.

In September, we delivered another “community up-date” to all village residents: it’s important that we keep on with our fund-raising as grants require some form of match-funding. So far, the village has contributed around £10,000 which is gratefully acknowledged.

Wooden fencing has been installed around the playpark and car park area, with thanks due especially to Kevin Cox and Cllr. Woodman who put in a lot of hours on this, along with other volunteers. In addition, Cllr. Sam Cherry donated “crash nets” at the Ketton Drift side of the field, to help prevent footballs disappearing into the Drift and beyond.

As mentioned above, work commenced on the woodland area – initially a lot of clearing, but then construction of a pathway, hand-made hurdle fences, and a stone circle. This was further enhanced by the donation of wooden picnic benches by Alex & Cinzia of The Blue Bell.

An ambitious plan to install a bike/scooter track (known as a pump track) was put into a grant application to Mick George, but sadly this was declined. The plan has not been dropped, nor the idea of the Multi-Use Games Area, but these require serious amounts of funding, and we will have to raise a lot of money ourselves to meet any matching requirements.

Earlier this year, another working party helped to plant a great number of trees in different areas: obviously, it’s going to take a long time for these to mature, but they are in the ground now so hopefully one day village residents will be able to admire them.

Signage will soon be ordered and installed, together with an information board at the woodland area.

In terms of the formal status of this sub-group, it was agreed that a Playing Field Management Committee was needed to oversee the day-to-day running of the facilities. Over a period of months, Terms of Reference were drawn up and agreed, and have come into effect from this month. The make up of the Committee is a minimum of 3 Parish

Councillors and a total members of 10 maximum and 6 minimum made up of Councillors and Non Councillors. So far, we only have 2 members of the public, so may we take this opportunity of inviting anyone who has an interest in helping the village to develop to come forward and talk to us.

**Completed so far**

2<sup>nd</sup> Augean Grant applied for and successful  
Wooden fencing around the car park and playpark  
Goal posts for the use of villagers donated  
Woodland area “mapped out” and commenced  
Trees planted  
Further revenue streams investigated and applied  
Village fundraising campaign continues

Once again, thanks to everyone who has helped in any way, whether through contributions to fund-raising, helping on working parties, or simply just using this great community asset.

Deborah Davenport, on behalf of the PFIC/PFMC

**Annual Parish Meeting - Easton on the Hill Horticultural and Crafts Society Report 2021**

Jan 2021 - A virtual AGM via Zoom with limited attendees. Current committee re-elected the as 2020 wasn't the year for recruiting new committee, and unfortunately neither was 2021 as will be reported later.

2021 Activities – Seed ordering, plant fayre, Junior Horti Easter Activity pack and allotment strips allocated members. Monthly newsletters were sent to members with tips and advice for the coming month.

Marquee - Marquee was loaned out to village events. The marquee has since been sold and passed onto Friends of Easton Church.

Annual Show – The 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual show was held at the single location of the village hall with a slimmed down version of the usual schedule. While the exhibitors themselves were low on numbers its clear that the show is a popular event for visitors. Visitors voted on their favourites in each category with President John Oram having the difficult task of overall 'Best in Show'.

Teas were served in the Blue Bell garden, kindly offered by Alex, and these teas appropriately supported the costs of the show this year which will mainly be engraving.

## **Committee and Membership 2022**

Following the well communicated struggles, for want of a better word, to find new recruits for the officer roles and the findings from the questionnaire, that was distributed to members and the village, it was clear there is a passion and appetite for the society and the long standing annual show. For this reason and to ensure the continuation of the Society and Show the Society revised the constitution of 2009. Main changes are to officers, now reduced to 3 main officers, and membership fee, now a free of charge subscription to receive updates from the Society (Membership as of 2022 AGM - 131 Members and 21 junior members). The show will continue and is proposed to be a smaller version.

**Show Chairman** - Marion Cutforth

**Treasurer** - Barbara Connolly

**General Secretary** - Joy Forster

### **Easton-on-the-hill report from Neighbourhood Watch**

Due to covid lockdowns it has hindered progress in revitalising schemes as it has been difficult for Co-ordinators to mingle or visit prospective members. However interest in Neighbourhood Watch has been good in your village, as you currently have 76 members.

As membership is now online, due to the introduction of the General DATA Protection Regulations, schemes are running much more effectively and efficiently. Members can choose the types of alerts that they wish to receive and membership is not lost should a Co-ordinator retire. The work of the Co-ordinator is to be the point of contact for members and I know from feedback from other schemes that is greatly appreciated.

The new administrative system, version 4, allows Co-ordinators to have a much closer relationship with their members as they have the facility to send messages, even attachments. At a glance the Co-ordinator and the Deputy too can see who has joined the village scheme and the facility to edit details of a scheme encourages new membership. In recent times Neighbourhood Watch has had a much closer relationship with the police and do act on concerns raised. Joint Action Groups (JAG) have been invaluable, an opportunity to discuss problems and/or receive up-to-date information from the police and the various departments of the local council.

I would encourage everyone to join Neighbourhood Watch. It is the largest crime prevention organisation in the country and is motivated by a sense of a community spirit. The national [www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk) website has a lot of information to help keep you safe and worth investigating.

Neighbourhood Watch celebrates 40 years in 2022 and proves that it plays its part in today's society.

### **Friends of Easton Church**

As with most groups in the village, the Friends of the Church have had their activities adversely affected by the pandemic. We have though been able to continue regular maintenance of the churchyard and know this has been appreciated by the many villagers and walkers using the churchyard for regular exercise.

Work on re-wilding some areas of the old churchyard is proving very successful in widening wildlife diversity and together with the delightful display of spring flora is making the churchyard a local 'destination'. Northamptonshire Gardens Trust recently featured an article on Easton's progress in Rewilding God's Acre.

The Peace Garden continues to provide a welcome amenity space.

Now that restrictions are lifted, The Friends are able to resume activities in supporting the use and preservation of our beautiful church. A music concert will take place on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April and we will support the Jubilee Celebrations in June.

The Friends will shortly undertake a project to look into improvements to the interior of the Church and consider the provision of facilities such as toilets and catering amenities.

Robert Woodfield

Chair – Friends of Easton Church

### **Easton on the Hill BBB Club [Formerly the Bowls Club] Annual Report**

The name was changed to be more inclusive and stands for Bowls, Beer and Banter. In fact, it has not been a serious Bowls Club since Ken Rawson saved it from oblivion. The green is not good enough to host visiting teams and most of the current players do not take the game very seriously! We have also introduced other activities at the club to add interest e.g. Petanque [Boules], Lawn Darts, Swing ball, Archery and Pole Frisbee. Usually, members bring their own picnic lunch and a BBQ is available. At a recent committee meeting it was decided to reduce the membership fee to £10 a year. This entitles members to turn up and use the facilities whenever they wish [subject to the occasional hiring out]. A programme of 'Club' days will be published shortly which are on Sunday's.

The roof of the clubhouse and shed have been repaired. Maintenance of the walls should start shortly. We encourage visitors to join us at this special location with the wonderful view over the village.

Ian Lawson  
BBB Committee member

### **Easton on the Hill History Group Annual Report**

We recommenced our talks on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 after a long gap due to Covid. These continue to be popular and average 30+ attendees. As ever the subjects are varied and have included: The Easton Iron workings, Unknown facts about D Day, Death in the Garden and the Hunt for Margaret Beaufort's Collyweston Palace.

Although we now have a website linked to the village's it is early days and there is a lot of work to do and build up the archive.

We continue to help people with their enquiries. A recent one was a lady in Australia who is related to a convict transported to Tasmania. His brother lies in our churchyard having been hung at Oakham prison.

We try to encourage villagers to give us more details of village history and hope to record details of villagers we have lost in more recent times.

Ian Lawson, Chair History Group

## **EASTON ON THE HILL VILLAGE HALL**

**Registered Charity No 272834**

### **ANNUAL REPORT FOR PARISH MEETING – 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022**

This report focuses on activities for the last twelve months up until the end of April 2022.

This last year has been another year impacted by the Covid pandemic. The Hall fully opened in June after lockdown and it took several months for bookings to get off the ground. We suffered a few cancellations around Christmas due to higher Covid numbers but for the last five months the Hall has been just about breaking even. Income this year has been approximately £14k (incl. £8k of Government Covid Grant Scheme), awaiting annual financial results for full confirmation and details. Hall income is now c. £4k for the year 21/22 (20/21 was only £479). Hall usage in 2021/22 is now approximately 570 hours.

Marketing has been our major focus for the last 12 months and comprehensive research was conducted on our positioning, competitor analysis, pricing and attraction strategies

The pricing review showed that we were much cheaper than all local halls and venues and to break even the hall would need to increase its usage by over 50%. The trustees agreed a price increase with a village and non-village rate. This has had no adverse impact on bookings and weekly hirings. The available WiFi now advertised to all users and free of charge

We now have an established Facebook page with 106 Followers. We have also launched our own website as well as having a presence on the village website. Facebook and the website are used to advertise our events as well as use of local press where appropriate.

In order to publicise the hall, we have conducted a leaflet drop to all homes in the village as well as to cafes in Stamford, Little Lane, CIPS, Wothorpe Nurseries and other local businesses.

To drive business, we have piloted a programme of hall managed events including craft workshops, film nights, children's Christmas party. This has met with mixed response. Three workshops were very successful, however, sadly we had to cancel the children's Christmas party due to a high level of Covid cases and other events including the film night we have had to cancel due to a very low take up and lack of ticket sales.

In 2021 we conducted village research and one of the key messages from the research was the need to be able to sell alcohol and improve the way that this is managed to make it simple and less onerous a process. We are pleased to report that the hall was granted an extension to our premises licence to include the sale of alcohol, and this is now available to villagers and to village clubs, societies and activities. The alcohol licence is for the benefit of the village.

Health and Safety remains a key priority. This year we conducted an in-depth risk assessment of the clock winding procedure which resulted in the purchase of a new safety ladder, and we also provided ladder training to several trustees and key users of the hall. In addition, we have provided safety strapping for the ladder and also for the table storage. The emergency lighting has been replaced so that it is fully compliant with current legislation and the emergency exit has been widened and made more accessible, many thanks to the owners of the School House for working with us on this.

Ongoing maintenance and improvements have included treatment of woodworm in the clock tower, all windows being thoroughly cleaned, electric screen fitted by kind donation, new fridge installed in the kitchen.

It has been agreed with the PC that the Village Hall will now have responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the clock. The clock has been repaired this year which was funded by the PC. The PC will continue to fund the annual service

Our desire is to work closely with Garford Education Trust on the development of the school hall and we do not want to see ourselves in competition but to build a partnership where we can work together to both benefit our village community. We are awaiting a response from them on setting up an initial meeting to explore our positioning and how we work together.

Our plans in place for 2022 include holding more joint events, for example with the Horti Soc and FOSH, running more hall managed events, to follow up leads for more regular weekly hirings and to target local providers of exercise classes and other activity groups in the area.

We look forward to a busy year where the hall continues to build itself at the heart of our village community as a centre for socialising, meetings and village and local events.

### **Easton Garford Educational Foundation**

*It's been another eventful 12+ months for the Garford Trust. Turning the clock back to September 2020 briefly, all residents of the village were invited to a series of meetings at the school to introduce T21 and their plans for the café. Also, the Garford Trust's goal of updating the objectives and charity structure to reflect the school closure, while retaining the focus of supporting educational needs in the village. The presentations by both T21 and the Garford Trust were warmly received.*

*During the 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown in January 2021, with generous support from EATS and Stamford Kiwanis, the Garford Trust ran a grant campaign to support home schooling. This resulted in a number of village families benefiting from new tablets, laptops, desk/chairs and printing supplies. Other grant awards in the year included contributions to uniform.*

*In April 2021 the lease agreement with T21 was concluded, enabling the café project to formally commence and deliver a fantastic new amenity in the village. Meanwhile the Trust's other tenant, the Little Lane Nursery continue to be successful.*

*Alongside the café and the nursery, the Garford Trust will retain the hall as an additional community space in the village for educational purposes and to generate income for further grant giving. To bring a new lease of life to the hall, we were successful in our application in January 2022 for a Grantscape grant. The grant will enable us to transform the hall with new heating, flooring, entrance, toilets and kitchen. We are currently working through the last set of queries to access the funds, appoint the contractor and then agree a start date for the works.*

Steve Forster, Trustee.



## **Volunteer Action**

### **How you can help us and how can we help you?**

#### **Some background:**

- VA has been in existence almost 25 years.
- It provides a Car Scheme and a Befriending operation.
- It is based in Fletton House, in Oundle, but also covers Thrapston and almost 50 surrounding villages up to the Lincolnshire border.
- In Fletton House we have two small offices, with four permanent part-time employees and about 7 office volunteers.

#### **The Car Scheme**

- We have about 600 users (who we call “members”), mainly older people, but also those with short or long term disabilities (membership is currently free).
- We have 75 active volunteer drivers.
- Drives are booked at least two days in advance and cover a wide range of destinations.
- Around 50% of the drives are for medical reasons. The other destinations are diverse and cover, meeting friends, shopping, hairdressers etc.
- Drives are charged at 45p/mile, and our drivers will wait for up to an hour (two for hospital trips).
- Our drivers receive 45p/mile for the journey including from their home to the pick-up point.
- All villages north of Oundle are under-represented. We do have 2 drivers in Easton-on-the-Hill but none in Collyweston. There are just 8 registered members in Easton (6 in Collyweston) and only 4 of them have used us in the past 18 months (5 in Collyweston). Our northern drivers are particularly useful as we support patients registered at the Wansford surgery who may live over the border in Cambridgeshire.

#### **Befriending**

12. Until the Pandemic, befriending was face-to-face only, usually in the members’ homes. As a result of the pandemic we now offer, in addition, a telephone version of the scheme which has proved immensely popular.
13. There are about 100 people in our two schemes supported by about 70 volunteers but just one befriender lives in Easton and one member in Collyweston.
14. The schemes are free.

#### **Finance**

15. We receive annual support grants from North Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire Highways and the NHS, all for the car scheme only.
16. With the reorganisation and creation of the new NNC, we cannot be assured of this funding going forward.
17. We get regular donations from individuals and institutions together with some irregular legacies.
18. We also have fundraising activities such as our 100 Club, the Oundle Jigsaw and quiz sheets.
19. Over the last five years we had three years in surplus and two in deficit. This current year we have our largest projected deficit.

#### **Pandemic**

1. We kept going during the pandemic but had to scale back the Car scheme to medical drives only.
2. We started telephone befriending, and telephone shopping (now being wound down).
3. At times we had to work from home (making use of our VPN) which enabled us to continue a seamless service.

### **So how can we help you and you us?**

1. By publicising VA and its services – you may know of people who might not know if they are eligible for drives or be unaware of the befriending schemes.
2. By encouraging volunteers – especially drivers and face to face befrienders. There is no minimum commitment – e.g. some drivers are happy to drive most days whereas other prefer a more casual commitment. Befrienders are asked to visit or call a minimum twice per month.

### **Report from The Little Lane Nursery (Easton on the Hill)**

The Little Lane Nursery arrived in the village of Easton on the Hill in 2018 – originally opening in the former preschool building, catering from children aged from 2 years+. The first year of operation was tougher than we imagined – although we had initial influx of children, in particular children from our Stamford nursery, we found that numbers of new children joining dried up. We found many families did not routinely move children from a nursery that they started at as a baby, therefore the only way to create a more sustainable business we needed to be able to offer nursery care from 6 weeks of age, right up to preschool.

In 2019 we secured one of the former classrooms within the former Easton Garford School, this particular room had a great outdoor covered area and flowed from one building to another. We set about transforming this former classroom into a cosy, home from home environment for children aged from 6 weeks to 2 years of age. It was amazing the transformation from blank canvas to a cosy, inviting area room, sectioned into two age groups, complete with its own sleep/sensory area.

From the moment we became a full day care setting, open all year round, catering from 6 week to 5 years of age, the business took off at an incredible rate and has continued to do so (so much so we currently have a waiting list, with no places available until September 2023!). So much so, that in 2021 we further expanded with the addition of some classroom space in the form of a purpose built unit in the grounds of the nursery, including our very own shepherds hut role play area. These expansions over the years means that we cater for a total of 44 children in total per day and we will not look to increase this number as our business model is very much for a small, home from home setting. We currently employ 19 members of staff and have 76 children on roll with 20 of these children living in the village of Easton on the Hill.

When the Easton on the Hill resident families were asked if having a nursery within the village influenced a move to the village they said:

“yes absolutely - the convenience & the fact it is such a wonderful nursery was a huge factor in our decision to move here”

“The Little Lane Nursery was definitely one of the main factors for moving to the village. We decided on a nursery before we deciding on where to live, so when a house came up in the village it seemed ideal”

“We had moved to the village before planning on children, so we couldn’t say this was a driving factor. However, once we had decided on having a child, the resource of an in-village nursery, which was highly praised by friends, was extremely welcomed and strengthens the village resources and appeal exponentially”

“Without a doubt having little lane on our doorstep is a huge benefit to our family. We didn’t have children when we moved to the area but we wouldn’t be able to live somewhere that we didn’t have access to childcare like this”

“We already lived here when you opened but as soon as the baby room opened we moved Austin in and it does play a part in us thinking of moving out of Easton. Having the nursery on the doorstep definitely helps us!”

In June 2021 we had our first Ofsted inspection, gaining a Good grading all round, with a glowing report from the inspector, something that we are extremely proud of:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50167381>

Over the years we have lovingly brought the abandoned wooded area (Buddleia Grove) adjacent to the nursery back to life, we have spent a lot of time and money clearing the site and creating an area that the children can undertake onsite forest school sessions. We have just erected a stunning yurt tent in the forest area where children can take cover when the weather is not so nice.

It is hard to put into words how much we love being part of the village – the children thoroughly enjoy utilising so many aspects of the village in our various pushchairs, walking wagon or turtle bus, whether it be the much improved park areas, the peace garden, looking at the seasonal village decorations (Christmas or Halloween pumpkins) or simply enjoying a country walk meeting some of the animals.

We would very much like to open up the nursery one weekend when the village has an event on to allow the local villagers the opportunity to come in and see what we're all about and to ask us any questions.

Many thanks, Victoria Banfield Proprietor The Little Lane Nursery

### Easton on the Hill Cricket Club

The cricket club enters the 2022 season in Division 2 of the Hunts cricket league. The league matches are played on a Saturday afternoon - all spectators welcome.

The club is in a reasonable position financially, after support from the government through Covid, however fundraising is always a high priority as the club runs at a loss of around £2.5k per year.

To that end we always appreciate hugely the attendance of villagers at our Friday evening T20s and gala weekend matches, organised by Ian Coupe. Please look out for the dates of these in village communications.

In addition to supporting the club by attending these games and using the bar whilst there, we are also always on the look-out for village-based players - we now, unfortunately, only have two such players representing the club on Saturdays and this is not a healthy position for a village club!

Contact captain Nick Mainstone on 07530 816488 if you're interested in joining the playing ranks!

David Wheatley, Chairman.

### **Birch Tree café – T21 charity**

Firstly, I would like to thank the residents of Easton for making our 20 or so young team members so welcome and supporting the café; as trustees we have been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity shown to our young people by the village.

While we are delighted with the success of the café, (sales are double what we expected) the crucial thing for us as trustees is that our young people have a secure environment in which to develop their full potential and have opportunities that were previously unavailable to them.

In terms of what has happened since we opened in mid January, we have employed another 3 members of staff for the cafe (making 5 in all plus an Activities Manager), we have achieved a 5-star rating for Hygiene, our Google Reviews are scoring us at 4.8/5, and we have over 1800 followers on Social Media. Our ASDAN Accreditation for our training has been awarded and we are about to start our horticulture programme which is eagerly anticipated by many of our members.

We are aware that our success comes with some impact on the village especially in terms of parking on New Road. We are in discussion with Highways and with our neighbours to best mitigate this, and some progress has been made and we hope better road marking will help further in future. Thanks to the village hall for making their car park available to our staff and volunteers when it is not otherwise in use.

Over the last two years, life has not been easy for anyone, but much more difficult for our vulnerable young people who have often struggled to understand the restrictions. To see how they have grown in confidence in the short time we have been open is absolutely wonderful and in no small part due to the welcome they have had from the residents of Easton on the Hill.

Thank you.

Maggie Scott, T21.

### **Cycling path project**

Cycle path from Easton to Collyweston and Duddington, and linking into Fineshade Wood, and onwards into the quiet rural lanes of North Northamptonshire.

The concept is to provide safe cycling on shared pathways, and therefore avoiding riding along the A43. Also, for the first time, Duddington will be connected by footpath to Collyweston. Horse riders will also benefit.

So far progress has been limited, but meetings have taken place with a North Northants Councillor, County Highways, Sustrans, Burghley Estate, County Greenway Officer. We have agreement in principle to support the project from the 3 Parish Councils

We are awaiting quotations for a feasibility study into several route options, and will soon be applying for funding to pay for the feasibility study.

This study is the key to making final decisions on the best way forward, and to be the major backup document for applications for construction funding.

Our target for 2022 is to get the feasibility study funded, and completed.

Jo Willis, project lead.