

# HATHERSAGE PARISH COUNCIL

## 2019/2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

### Introduction

It was an extraordinary and challenging year - and longer - for the Parish Council, as it was for everyone. Under Covid legislation in 2020 Parish Councils were not required to have an annual meeting or to produce an annual report; this report summarises the key issues dealt with by the Parish Council and its various committees from 2019 but with a focus on Covid-related business through 2020. All meetings, from March 2020 up to May 2021, were conducted virtually. Members of the public attended virtual meetings. Details of how to log on to all meetings – virtual or in-person - are published on the Parish Council website ([www.hathersageparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.hathersageparishcouncil.gov.uk)) as are the agendas and minutes for all meetings. Copies are available on request from the Clerk ([clerk@hathersageparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hathersageparishcouncil.gov.uk)). Face-to-face meetings resumed from 7 May 2021.

The Parish Council continued with the same arrangement of committees; some meet on a regular basis and others are convened as business requires. We post news and updates on the Parish Council Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hathersageparishcouncil/>

Full Parish Council Meetings are regularly attended by Derbyshire Dales District (DDDC) and Derbyshire County Council (DCC) Councillors - DDDC Cllr Peter O'Brien and, up to May 2021, DCC Cllr Judith Twigg. Cllr Twigg stood down in May 2021; the Parish Council thanked her for assisting with many issues raised during her tenure. Cllr Twigg was succeeded by Cllr Alasdair Sutton. Both DDDC and DCC Cllrs provide updates on current issues and feedback from any actions taken since the previous meeting. It is also an opportunity for the Parish Council and members of the public attending the meetings to raise concerns to be referred onto relevant DDDC or DCC Officers.

There have been changes to Parish Council membership since 2019. Three Cllrs resigned – William Eames, Jack Hammerton and Kirsty Kirkham. Four new Cllrs have been co-opted since the start of 2021 – Emily Abbey, Martin Bloor, Sara Furness and Nick Williams – the Parish Council is now at its full complement of fourteen Cllrs. Current Parish Council membership: Martin Bloor, Emily Booth, Sara Furness, Bill Hanley, Bridget Hanley, Tim Hill, Jane Marsden, James Marsden, Rosie Olle, Peter Rowland, Heather Rodgers, James Shuttleworth, Stuart Turner and Nick Williams. All Cllrs are thanked for their hard work and unselfish commitment to the community of Hathersage.

As well as the committee structure that supports the Parish Council to work efficiently there is regular, committed support from many residents of the village. Residents' support is invaluable and helps many initiatives progress to completion - the Parish Council is very grateful for this support and sincerely thanks all those who help in any capacity.

### Notable items dealt with by the Parish Council in 2019

**The Swimming Pool:** a major refurbishment was begun in autumn 2019 with the pool closed for a number of months. As the pool was preparing for a full reopening, Covid struck – in line with national lockdown measures the pool was closed for some periods and, when open, operated at reduced capacity.

**Transport Regulation Order (TRO):** DCC completed consultations with Hathersage residents and TRO measures were introduced. Subsequently residents raised concerns about the consultation process, and some of the measures. As a result, the Parish Council led a review of the TRO in 2020-21, liaising with residents about addressing/revoking specific measures, and proposing further measures. The TRO is now with DCC and DCC Officers will undertake formal consultation with residents, in due course.

**Transport, and parking:** in 2019 Cllrs met with DDDC and DCC officers and with representatives of the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) and the National Trust (NT) to look at possible solutions to issues with traffic and parking. Although no firm proposals were made, the Parish Council continues to explore options. Separately, the Parish Council met with Northern Rail to talk about the introduction of the car parking charges. Following further discussions with Northern Rail those charges were withdrawn early in 2021 – initially as a temporary measure – Northern Rail are keeping this under review.

### **2020-21 – and Covid**

All residents will be aware of the huge changes Covid brought to our daily lives throughout 2020, and into 2021. The Parish Council liaised closely with the District and County Councils on the introduction of social distancing measures and adaptation of measures as Covid measures eased, nationally.

It has been challenging to conduct ‘business as usual’ through Covid. A number of initiatives have proceeded much more slowly or were effectively suspended for a time.

**Swimming Pool:** the Swimming Pool opened in 2020 when lockdown measures allowed but was closed from December 2020 up to late March 2021. Demand for tickets since the March 2021 reopening has been huge. A further factor is the reduced capacity in line with Covid safety measures. The Parish Council and pool management have done their very best to balance the need to ensure pool revenue, and fair access for all, with access for Hathersage residents. It is anticipated that, as all Covid measures ease, and with wider opening of other facilities, pool demand should also ease.

**Seating area, and bus shelter:** in the Autumn of 2020 the promised covered seating area for people waiting for the bus to Sheffield was finally installed; we thank residents for their patience. The Parish Council spent a lot of time and energy getting this right; Cllrs, and residents, were very pleased with the results. More recently a new bus shelter – opposite the George Hotel – has been completed.

**Moorland fires and BBQs:** a fire in the Dale quarry led to charges of arson being brought although it is understood the CPS decided not to continue with the prosecution. Residents will be aware of moorland fires in Spring 2021. There has been some uncertainty about the exact position – and messaging – from DCC, DDDC, PDNPA and NT – on disposable BBQs (one of the main sources of moorland fires). The Parish Council is working with all bodies to ensure clear messaging and is also looking to ensure appropriate signage is posted around the village.

**Rewilding:** Hope Valley Climate Action Group (HVCAG) liaised with the Parish Council about plans to ‘rewild’ some verges. The Parish Council endorsed HVCAG proposals. Residents may have noticed the results of the rewilding initiative in some verges around the village.

### **Full Council Meetings and the work of the committees**

Full Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm – held virtually, via Zoom, since March 2020. With government emergency legislation allowing for virtual meetings coming to an end on 6 May, face-to-face meetings at all levels of local government resumed from 7 May. Full Council meets at St Michael’s School with due consideration for appropriate Covid measures. It is always best to check the Parish Council’s website, or the village noticeboards, for meeting details. Members of the public are welcome to attend any meeting. Ten minutes are allocated at the beginning of the meeting for public participation where attendees can raise relevant matters. The Parish Council cannot comment on any matters not on the agenda but comments from the public can be noted – and items can be put forward for the agenda at the next or a forthcoming meeting.

### **The Swimming Pool Committee**

The committee generally meets monthly, on the second Tuesday of the month. Current membership: Cllrs Stuart Turner (Chair), Bill Hanley, Bridget Hanley, Tim Hill, Jane Marsden, Rosie Olle and Heather Rodgers. Meetings are also attended by Pool Management Staff and by the Parish Council’s Responsible Finance Officer. The committee had a very busy year managing the pool refurbishment, Covid shutdowns including furloughing of staff, and the pool reopening and demand for admissions.

### **The Amenities and Recreation Committees**

Joint meetings of these two committees have been held since Spring 2020. Meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of the month. Current membership of the Recreation Committee: Cllrs Jane Marsden (Chair), Emily Abbey, Sara Furness, Tim Hill, James Marsden, Peter Rowland and Heather Rodgers; and additional Amenities Committee members are Cllrs Bridget Hanley and Rosie Olle. Hathersage Playing Field Association members (HPFA) also attend. The HPFA consists of entirely new membership, with ‘old’ members having stepped down in 2020-21. Cllrs support HPFA in planning and fundraising for new playground equipment. Regular inspections – and maintenance and repair - of the playground equipment is undertaken by Alliance Environmental Services. The remit of the Amenities Committee is to consider all amenities of the village and to keep under review the several leases that the Parish Council has in place.

### **Transport Committee**

Meetings of the Transport Committee are convened as and when deemed necessary. Current membership: Cllrs Rosie Olle (Chair), Martin Bloor, Bill Hanley, Tim Hill, Jane Marsden, Peter Rowland, Heather Rodgers, James Shuttleworth and Nick Williams. The committee met more frequently than usual in 2020 to consider TRO proposals, in detail, and to consider Covid highways social distancing measures in liaison with DCC. In 2021 the committee led on the design, rollout and analysis of a transport and parking survey of Hathersage residents. The Parish Council would like to acknowledge the significant time and energies Cllrs Tim Hill and Bill Hanley devoted to this initiative – and the support of one of our newer Cllrs, Sara Furness, in analysing the data. Outcomes will be shared with residents. Early in 2021 Cllrs met with a DDDC Officer to discuss DDDC plans for the introduction of electrical vehicle charging (EVC) points in their car parks – including the Hathersage Oddfellows Road car park. Separately, DCC will be giving some consideration to provision of on-street electric vehicle charging. Outcomes of the Parish Council Transport Survey, particularly in relation to EVCs, will be shared with Officers – giving Officers an insight into residents’ attitudes and expectations. Other issues

considered by the Transport Committee include concerns – and campaigns – around speeding and speed reduction measures; and on proper maintenance of cycle routes.

### **The Planning Committee**

Meetings of the Planning Committee are convened as and when deemed necessary to consider planning applications as part of the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) consultation process. Current membership: Cllr Jane Marsden (Chair), Martn Bloor, Tim Hill, James Marsden, Heather Rodgers, James Shuttleworth and Nick Williams. The majority of applications are small-scale alterations to existing residential properties in the village which have little impact on the village as a whole and the Planning Committee rarely had cause to object. In considering a planning application Cllrs look at whether it is fitting to its setting, and whether there are any issues which might influence the village. Cllrs may not be aware of specific reasons why neighbours or others may object to any individual application. Anybody objecting to an application should direct their complaint to the [PDNPA Planning Department](#) directly - not through the Parish Council- although it is advantageous where objections are copied to the Parish Clerk so the Parish Council are mindful of neighbours' objections and can bear them in mind in considering the application. On some occasions Cllrs' views may not always be similar to those of neighbours but they may still wish to support neighbours if the points they raise are reasonable - and points the PDNPA consider material. The final decision is always with the PDNPA as planning authority.

The Planning Committee did object strongly to an application by the National Trust, early in 2021, for the development of Greenwood Farm as holiday accommodation. Cllrs objected on the grounds of:

- a significant increase in traffic and the safety of traffic accessing the site;
- loss of a farm – in contravention of the Trust's own mission statement;
- loss of the historic nature of the property;
- sustainability – noting the development would be wholly car-dependent

Cllr Tim Hill also attended the PDNPA meeting at which the application was being considered, to further voice Parish Council concerns, however the application was granted.

### **The HR Committee**

Meetings of the HR Committee are generally held in tandem with meetings of the Swimming Pool Committee. Current membership: Cllrs Bill Hanley (Chair), Bridget Hanley, Jane Marsden, Heather Rodgers and Stuart Turner. The committee is responsible for ensuring due process is followed in recruitment and in staff management. In conjunction with the Parish Council's HR Consultants (Bhayani), a comprehensive Employee Handbook was produced and approved. The committee dealt with all aspects of managing the furloughing and unfurloughing of pool staff through the 2020/21 Covid lockdowns. The committee also oversaw the recruitment of a new Clerk in February 2021.

### **The Finance Committee**

Current membership: Cllrs Jane Marsden, Heather Rodgers, Peter Rowland and James Shuttleworth. The Responsible Finance Officer, Chris Cave, attends all Finance Committee meetings. The Finance Committee's prime functions are to prepare a detailed income and expenditure budget on which the Council sets the annual precept. Actual income and expenditure is monitored by the full Council against this budget on a monthly basis.

The Council's Statements of Accounts and Annual Governance Statements for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 received unqualified reports from the external auditors. The Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 are due to be submitted to the external auditors in June.

The Council's precepts (the amounts collected through the rates) were £57,000 for 2019/20 and £58,000 for 2020/21. The precept for the current year remains at £58,000. In both years the Council remained within its budget despite the pool suffering periods of closure due to Covid lockdowns. The Council's policy of having the pool ready to open as soon as allowed together with the ability to open before indoor pools resulted in exceptionally high usage, helping to maintain income at a sustainable level.

The Council's policy for many years has been to put money to reserves to cover anticipated exceptionally large items of expenditure without the need for sudden increases in the precept or borrowing from third parties. This policy, together with grants of £50,000 from Sport England and £61,000 from Derbyshire Dales District Council, enabled the recent major works at the pool to be carried out.

These reserves have to be justified to the external auditor each year and if considered unnecessary would result in the Council being ordered to reduce the precept. The next major expenditure will be the renewal of playing field equipment whilst further improvements to the pool are being considered.

### **The Burial Ground Committee**

Current membership: Cllrs Sara Furness, Tim Hill, Jane Marsden, Heather Rodgers and Peter Rowland. This committee rarely has the need to meet but a site visit/burial ground inspection will be undertaken in Spring 2021.

### **Website Working Group**

Current membership: Cllrs Bill Hanley and Rosie Olle. The website – and the Parish Council Facebook page - is the place to go for information about the village. The Parish Council thanks Mr John Dalton for his technical support.

### **Memorial Hall**

The Memorial Hall is run by a Management Committee which is separate from Hathersage Parish Council. The Parish Council recognises the work of the Memorial Hall Management Committee for their efficient running of the Hall. The Hall has been closed for the majority of 2021, in line with Covid restrictions. Although open again, the Hall is in use as a Covid vaccination centre and it is unlikely to be fully available for hire until Autumn 2021.

### **Going forward and the focus for 2021/22**

At the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 meeting Cllr Jane Marsden was confirmed as Chair and Cllr Heather Rodgers as Vice Chair; committee membership and committee Chairs and Vice Chairs were subsequently confirmed.

**Visitor management:** this has been an ongoing issue not just in Hathersage but across the Hope Valley. Pre-Covid, the Parish Council liaised with PDNPA and NT about problems with traffic and car parking in the village and surrounding area. In 2020, with the temporary lifting of Covid lockdown measures, the village experienced a surge in visitors - and associated issues of traffic, parking, litter and social distancing. A further significant increase in Peak Park visitors was anticipated over Summer 2021, with ongoing Covid restrictions on international travel. PDNPA were looking to convene a Hope Valley visitor management working party to include representation from the

Parish Council – a welcome opportunity to take a strategic look at all aspects of visitor management.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** the Parish Council agreed, in 2020, to create a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a lengthy process and the Parish Council will look at the detail of the process, through 2021.

**Staff changes:** Steve Wyatt, who had served as Clerk since 2019 – and as Assistant Clerk prior to that - left the Parish Council in February 2020. The Parish Council formally expressed thanks to Steve at the February meeting of full Council. A full recruitment process was undertaken and Maura Sorensen, who had been serving as Assistant Clerk, was appointed as Clerk.

Maura Sorensen (Clerk for Hathersage Parish Council).

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