

## **Chair's Report for 2021 – 2022**

This year has seen a gradual return to 'normality' following the pandemic, and the parish council has finally returned to full functionality after two years of disruption. The facilities at the Hall are now in regular use and monthly face-to-face formal parish meetings are once again taking place in the room upstairs.

A successful 'Mini Hullabaloo' was organised in October 2021 to let our residents know that we were back in business, and to demonstrate the wide range of activities on offer at the Hall. Councillors also used this event to showcase the Hall's newly-refurbished kitchen.

In December two festive-themed coffee mornings were held to encourage retired residents to venture out and to talk to us about the sort of activities they would like the parish council to facilitate. The coffee mornings were well received, and we are now planning to repeat them at regular intervals throughout the year. We are hopeful that a resident or group of parishioners will take on the running of these sessions soon.

Prior to the pandemic we secured a grant from Gloucestershire Council to fund the coffee mornings and a range of other activities. Further activities are now being planned, including guided walks, taster sessions in Tia Chi, yoga and keep fit classes, as well as film nights or matinees

The current Hucclecote surgery is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be replaced by a larger and better equipped facility. We are delighted that after much effort, including continued pressure by our Councillors, a site for the new Hucclecote surgery has finally been secured. It is hoped that this, along with a planned new Brockworth surgery on the Perrybrook development, will help to ease the difficulties residents have been experiencing.

New information boards have been installed at the Horsbere Brook Nature Reserve and on Larkhay Road to more clearly identify the local public footpaths, and to remind the public of the Countryside Code. This part of our parish is delightful Green Belt space and is well worth exploring.

Better signage directing people to the Hall and parish office has also been installed to help raise our profile, and to identify the Hall as a central hub for the community.

An application to fine tune the parking restrictions in Cranham Gate through a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was started prior to the pandemic. Although the pandemic delayed this initially it is now progressing well, and some roads, where parking problems have been experienced on Coopers Edge, have been added to it. Residents will be consulted on the proposed restrictions soon.

All the new homes planned for Coopers Edge have now been built, but progress with final road surfacing has been painfully slow causing much anguish for many of our parishioners.

Some streets were constructed more than a decade ago but were the last to have final road surfacing work completed. The parish council has continued to put pressure on the builders to get this work completed and to ensure it is done to a high standard. Site meetings highlighting areas that needed further attention have taken place. The planned link bridge to provide access between Coopers Edge and the Business Park has once again been delayed which has impacted on the work to improve an area of Wotton Brook that is prone to flooding at this point. The parish council has continued to apply pressure to get the work completed as, during periods of heavy rain, the Brook comes close to bursting its banks. We understand this work is likely to take place this summer.

The new Coopers Edge sports fields and changing facilities near the motorway were completed more than a year ago. The housebuilding consortium that paid almost £2m for the facilities is keen for them to be quickly 'adopted' by Tewkesbury Borough Council, so that an operator can be secured to manage and maintain the pitches. The parish council is also keen to see the facilities adopted, so that local people can make use of them.

Sadly, despite lots of prodding from the parish council, the formal legal process of 'adopting' the facilities is taking Tewkesbury Council an age, and we are still not clear when they will be handed over and fully operational. In the meantime, the facilities have suffered vandalism and the sports fields are not being well maintained.

Plans for a new shop and two takeaways on Coopers Edge have recently been approved. When the proposals were discussed at our parish meeting, we suggested that a safer pedestrian crossing should be included on Lobleys Drive.

Tewkesbury Borough Council's Community Governance Review led the parish council to consider how this impacted on Coopers Edge. Following discussions with Brockworth parish council we responded with a suggestion that Coopers Edge should eventually have its own parish council. Tewkesbury Borough Council initially dismissed this, citing lack of local interest. We challenged its decision by setting up a survey to test local views. This clearly showed that the vast majority of Coopers Edge residents were in favour of having their own parish council.

The parish council has formed a good relationship with Ecclesiastical Insurance (now part of the Benefact Group), which has its HQ on the business park. The company's staff assisted us with tree and bulb planting to improve the Wotton Brook corridor, and the company also funded the installation of new seating and a picnic table.

In 2021 the parish secured a grant from the county council to help cover the costs of installing a new Trim Trail. We have identified the appropriate equipment and suitable locations, but the project has sadly been delayed by the complications associated with Tewkesbury Borough Council's 'adoption' of some of the public open space alongside the Brook. As soon as this is resolved we will get the equipment installed.

Just before the beginning of the pandemic we managed to plant a number of trees and developed some 'trial' wildflowers beds. Work on the beds has continued and plans to extend and improve them in the future have been developed alongside more tree planting. These initiatives chime well with our plans for making the parish much greener in the future.

Noise pollution from the M5 continues to be a significant issue for many of our parishioners. Numerous meetings with Highways England have taken place to try to improve noise barriers and plant noise-absorbing trees in the worst affected areas. We were extremely disappointed when recently several trees were felled near Belmont Avenue creating an increase in road noise pollution. The Parish Council has objected to the felling and is pressing for a programme of replacement trees to be planted.

In March we organised a 'Community Conversation' to find out what residents wanted us to consider as part of developing a strategy for addressing the challenge of Climate Change. The event was well attended, and a wealth of exciting ideas emerged. Over the summer months a small Action Group will investigate these further and draw up an Action Plan setting out exactly what initiatives it recommends the parish undertakes.

During the construction of the Cranham Gate development, the housebuilder (Bovis Homes), deposited a large 'mound' of soil and other material at the rear of the bowling club. Technically we understand Bovis is required to remove this, but we are concerned that the thousands of large lorry movements that would be required would cause lots of disruption to our parishioners.

The parish has been exploring with Bovis an alternative solution. This would involve re-landscaping the mound area and creating a range of new amenities including a small woodland, a community garden or allotments, and possibly some additional parking for the sports facilities. Once the landscape architects have drawn up a detailed proposal we will consult with residents.

As we go forward, we plan to make further improvements to our locality for the benefit of our parishioners. For example, we are discussing setting up a regular 'repair café', and we are in negotiating for a 'pop up' pizza van to make use of our car park one evening a week.

Our recent recruitment posters have led to one new parish councillor and two others who are interested in applying. Next year will be an election year for Parish Councillors so I encourage anyone interested in joining the council to get in touch.

In conclusion I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow councillors and office staff for their continued support and dedication to Hucclecote Parish Council.

I commend this report to the parish.

Brenda Bentley  
Chair of Hucclecote Parish Council