

Chair's Annual Report 2021-2022

Despite the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, 2021 was another busy and very productive year for the council, with our meetings able to resume a face to face format later in the year.

I would like to thank our clerk for arranging and managing our council meetings and for keeping our finances in excellent order again this year. Our clerk is a great support to our council and is currently organising the purchase of special issue coins from The Royal Mint to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. These will be distributed to all children attending Lea School and the Playgroup. We are grateful to Cllr David Taylor for his generous donation towards the cost of these coins. The council decided to celebrate the Jubilee in this way as several individual street parties were preferred by residents instead of one larger one on Church Street.

I wish to thank all of our councillors for their hard work over the past year.

Thanks go to Cllr Joy Stevenson for convening the cemetery and memorial grounds working group and all members of that group. The working group, along with several residents have worked incredibly hard to maintain and enhance these community assets and keep them looking tidy and attractive and this includes cleaning and oiling the wooden soldier at the War Memorial. The council was obliged to have a tree inspection completed earlier this year and, following this, Cllr Stevenson is also arranging a working party to complete some of the work to save on the cost to the Parish Council.

A project to build a much-needed new path and handrail at the southern end of the cemetery was completed and it has made the cemetery a much safer place for those who visit it, particularly when it is wet.

I wish to thank Cllr Andrea McDonald for completing the vital safety inspections at Lea Playground and for the work that she has done in rectifying many issues that have arisen from those inspections.

I also wish to thank Cllr Sarah Crossley for convening The Climate Change Working Group and organising the hugely popular "Big Green Event" in 2021. This event organised a wide range of activities which were supported and enjoyed by large numbers of residents. Our thanks go also to our DCC/ AVBC Councillor, David Taylor, who supported the event by giving us a grant and opening the event in his capacity as Mayor.

The Planning Working Group has had a busy year, meeting regularly, and I wish to thank Cllr Steve Farnsworth for convening this group for the Council and compiling our comments.

My thanks also go to Cllr Barbara Wright as, despite a difficult year personally, she has continued to support the PC and is a real stalwart for the parish and a fountain of knowledge.

The Council Facebook page has continued and, although Steve Dewhirst resigned from the Council at the end of December 2020, he kindly agreed to continue to run this for us. I would like to thank him for his enthusiasm in continuing to manage the page by keeping it up to date with articles, photographs, and interviews and for his hard work whilst a Councillor.

The Speedwatch initiative, which started so well in 2019, then being temporarily put on hold in 2020, was able to meet and conduct some speed surveys last year. The issue of road safety is extremely important on our narrow roads and through our villages and so I am delighted that the Speedwatch group will be out and about again soon. I also wish to thank Steve Dewhirst for agreeing to continue to run this group until the end of 2022.

One of our younger residents attended our Parish Meeting in 2020 to request some better facilities for older children in Lea Playground. We initially investigated the possibility of installing a basketball hoop but unfortunately the severe slope of the Playground meant this was impossible. We looked at some of the other suggestions that had been made and, I'm delighted to say that we were able to completely fund and arrange for the installation of a slide, a basket swing and overhead ladder in January of this year. We also funded the cost and installation of some new safety gates for the Playground as our inspections indicated that the old gates were a hazard for children.

Six fruit trees were planted in the Lea Recreation Ground as part of the Queen's Green Canopy as a further celebration of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee year. The planting took place on 11th December 2021 and was attended by 10 people from the community, who set about the task with great enthusiasm. All of the trees were sponsored by local people.

As part of our efforts to add attractive floral displays to our Parish, we were fortunate to receive an anonymous donation from a resident and so used the money to purchase another trough, complete with plants. This has been placed next to the junction of Lea Road and Nightingale Close.

Despite our hopes that work had commenced on the Lea Road closure, the work stopped again in 2021 following further storms and slippage at the site. The Parish Council followed this up with a great deal of correspondence with DCC. After many months of delays, DCC arranged a public meeting to give an update on the project, in conjunction with our Parish Council on 22nd February 2022. Other local councils were invited and over 120 people attended the meeting. Work has now started again on a revised programme of work, and we have been assured that the road will re-open in November 2022. Thank you to our clerk who worked tirelessly to arrange the date and venue; co-ordinate attendees and make sure a banner was printed in time to publicise the meeting. Thank you also to the councillors who distributed publicity to all houses in the Parish and assisted in arranging the Florence Nightingale Memorial Hall for such large numbers of attendees.

I am delighted to welcome two new and enthusiastic new Councillors, Cllr June Dennis and Cllr Siân McKay. Both have already contributed to several working groups and assisted in distributing leaflets publicising the above public meeting about Lea Road.

I am unfortunately unable to attend face to face meetings currently, for health reasons. I would therefore like to extend my personal thanks to our vice chair, Cllr Joy Stevenson, for stepping in and so capably and efficiently running our meetings in my absence. I hope, before too long, to be able to re-join the meetings but meanwhile I will continue to be as enthusiastic and involved in my role as always.

We are looking forward to another active year in our Parish and may I take this opportunity to remind you that we still have one vacancy for a Parish Councillor. Even if you can only spare a few hours a week, we would welcome another member to join us to assist us in caring for this beautiful Parish that we are fortunate to live in.

Pat Ward,

Chair, Dethick, Lea and Holloway Parish Council