**Chairman’s Report – 13 May 2015**

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor John Broxis welcomed all those present.

He first introduced the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer – the only person related to the Council who was paid.

He then introduced the various speakers:

Borough Councillor John Izett, County Councillor Tom Thacker, PCSO Abbey Carpenter , Briony Canning and Steve Pellatt, HCC Highways

He reminded residents that a Parish Council is the first tier of local government and added that the concerns of the ESBG PC are solely with the community and local affairs rather than politics

A Councillor’s term is four years. At which time Cllrs can be elected for a further term or, more generally, carry on with the task, as an election is only necessary in the unlikely event that there are more people wanting to be Parish Councillors than there are vacancies. In fact the PC has been running 1 Councillor short for almost a year. Volunteers please!

The formal duties of a Parish Council are:

Raising money by precept, providing audited accounts, and publishing minutes from the monthly meetings

Then there are the more interesting elements, including:

Providing and maintaining allotments; Looking after amenity areas; Keeping a check on rights of way; Maintaining bus shelters; Providing public seating; Assisting local charity or volunteer groups through grants. The Parish Council is also consulted on planning matters by the Borough.

The Parish Council meets at Ecchinswell Village Hall on the second Wednesday of each month, except August. At the meetings the Cllrs discuss what they are planning to do for the Parish. There is a 15 minute slot at the beginning of every meeting for public participation. This is your chance to have your say, so please come along.

The Parish Council employs two part time litter wardens who do their best to keep Bishop’s Green & Ecchinswell free from detritus which is usually ejected from passing vehicles and sometimes people on 2 wheels wearing Lycra.

This year with the help of Borough Cllr John Izett, we obtained a substantial grant from BDBC from their S106 money pot - to repair the heating system at the Bishops Green Hall. On the subject of S106 money – the Borough currently holds some of our S106 money but doesn’t seem very keen to release it. We are working on this together with Cllr John Izett – who by the way gives this Parish a huge amount of help & support, largely unseen.

During the year the PC also:

Repaired the bench at the playing fields.

Gave a grant to EVH for grass cutting.

Planted an Oak tree at the pond to replace a Jubilee oak which faded.

Made a donation to cover Public Liability at the May Fair.

Regularly checked the Rights of Way and arranged repairs where necessary.

We have updated useful information contacts for residents – including an updated footpath map. There are some here for you to take away.

We have had also some ditches cleared to stop flooding on the Highway. This is the responsibility of the Riparian Owner – but it seems that most land owners fail to take on their responsibilities.

We talk regularly to the Highways department and recently have been discussing the road by the church which is an appalling condition and dangerous. Highways are looking into installing some positive drainage and then resurface that part of the road. This will mean a road closure to do the job.

We have used the Lengthsman scheme (HCC sponsored scheme where we get labour only) to clear ditches & litter pick outside the normal litter pick routes.

Have applied for a grant to re-surface the carpark at EVH. The bureaucracy we have to climb over to achieve this is stunning!

We have supported EVH to find a grant for the upgrading and refurbishment of their play-park.

We organise the Pond Clearance every year, with good support from the Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers and of course our residents, many of whom are regular attendees. We thank you.

And we have exchanged a vast amount of correspondence with the DCLG (Eric Pickles) via Sir George Young regarding the Gipsy & Traveller Law. Currently it does not differentiate a genuine traveller from a person of gipsy ethnicity who has settled. Therefore leaving the planning law open to abuse. I received a letter about 2 months ago saying that following consultation the law will be reviewed. We wait in anticipation.

Another area we are grappling with is Superfast Broadband. Government has adjusted the National Planning Policy Framework for SFB to be included as an essential part of the infrastructure – but it makes no difference to housing which currently exists. No one has been prepared, or is able, to say who will be connected in the current role-out; hence you cannot be sure that we will ever achieve 95% coverage? And what about the other 5%

As with every village, we suffer from some vehicles which travel through at injudicious speed. But many (and I have to say residents too) seem to have forgotten that they are in charge of a 1½ tonne lump of steel – which moves at 13 metres every second at 30mph & 18 metres per second at 40mph If you drive the C155, please become a road block and travel at no more than the speed limit.

With the support of people power (our residents), cooperation from our County Councillor, Tom Thacker, & hassle from the Parish Council we have had the Ecchinswell to Kingsclere road put on the gritting route during icy conditions.

In past times we cleared and brought the much neglected United Reformed Churchyard back up to a reasonable standard. Having done so the Church promised to maintain what is in their ownership – but have failed to do so despite numerous reminders & contacts from the Parish Council. We continue to harry.

I have said this before - I strongly believe that we are privileged to live in such a beautiful and unspoilt rural area, yet only a stone’s throw away from significant towns with road & rail links to the rest of the country. As volunteers making up the Parish Council, we are pleased to help maintain if not improve what we have. But we are not an island. We need your ideas and your input. So please do come along to our monthly meetings when you are able. And give us your ideas & feedback.

Thank you.