

ES&BG News – June 2017

There was a wonderful turnout at Ecchinswell Village Hall on Wednesday May 10th for our Annual Parish Assembly with over 50 people there – many thanks to those who came. The meeting started with the newly re-elected Chairman, Tim Hall, giving a summary of the highlights of the year which included the launch of our new website and the resurfacing of the Ecchinswell Village Hall car park. He also informed the meeting that our clerk, Doreen Gascoine, will retire soon. Doreen has worked tirelessly for the parish for 10 years and Tim and the assembled company thanked her for her hard work. We wish her well in retirement.

In a report from the local police we were encouraged to use 101 to report any non-urgent incidents. Our two beat officers patrol the area regularly and find the information from these calls very helpful. This summer the police will be focusing on anti-social behaviour and thefts from cars in our local beauty spots. We were all reminded not to leave valuables in our cars when out for a walk.

John Izett, our Borough Councillor, explained the budget issues facing the council and how the council proposes to minimise council tax rises. He gave an overview of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan which includes a new housing development at Manydown and a re-vamped leisure park with a designer retail outlet. He also raised the issue of possible changes to the frequency of waste collection. The detailed proposals are on the council website and your feedback can be registered there.

After the recent local elections, we now have two County Councillors for our parish. Tom Thacker was re-elected to represent the south of the parish. The councillor for the north is now Derek Mellor. Both were at the meeting and Tom explained Hampshire's spending priorities. The precept will increase by 5% and the main priority will be care for the elderly. Other priorities include care for vulnerable adults and children, schools and road maintenance. In response to a question about broadband access in the south of the parish, we were encouraged to write to Tom and our MP (once the general election is over) about the problem.

Following these reports, we had two presentations about Neighbourhood Plans; one from BDBC Planning Department and one from Sue Adams who chairs the Kingsclere Neighbourhood Plan committee. Both presentations enabled us to see what is involved in drawing up a neighbourhood plan and Sue's presentation gave a realistic idea of the breadth of research and the level of commitment required from the planning team. Undaunted, some members of the parish expressed a willingness to get involved. We will need more! One question raised was, "Why have a plan, if the borough council are not planning to allocate housing in the parish?" Without a plan, or an idea of our vision for the future of our parish we have no credible response if an unsuitable development is proposed in our parish in the future. It is becoming apparent that we need to find out what people want and need. The parish council is keen to move on this issue watch this space!

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday June 7th at Ecchinswell Village Hall**, a week earlier than usual. Do come and join us to share your vision for the parish or bring any other issues to our attention.

Cllr Marian Dain