

All quiet on the planning front this month, but interesting news from Cllr John Izett that the Borough is planning a Local Help to Buy scheme for first time buyers. This surpasses the national scheme in that it isn't limited to the purchase of new build homes. We will pass on details, expected in Summer 2019.

For walkers, good news that we have funding from Hampshire CC to start replacing stiles with kissing gates. The ESBG PC will fund 50% of the materials and the manpower is provided by Sydmonton Court Estate. Improvements to bridges are also planned, widening and adding handrails where needed, which should improve accessibility throughout the area.

The recent variable weather has taken its toll on roads in the Parish. Flooding is hiding the potholes so on both issues we are liaising with the Borough Council to speed up repairs. Our Lengthsman Scheme also includes provision for clearing culverts and surface drains so short and longer term fixes are happening.

*Duplicates from last month:* [We would like your ideas on how to brighten up our Parish with flowers, shrubs and trees. We already have offers of free bulbs and seeds, and can buy more if you tell us what would be suitable and where they should go]

Fed up with the throwaway society or want to do more to avoid waste? The Borough Council has announced grants of up to £5,000 for projects that reduce household waste. This could be for repairing and sharing garden equipment, training on how to compost effectively, and so on. Read more at [www.hants.gov.uk/waste-prevention-community](http://www.hants.gov.uk/waste-prevention-community) and send ideas to the Clerk (details below). We can help shape ideas and submit applications.

The very popular May Fayre takes place on 5<sup>th</sup> May at the Royal Oak. The Parish Council is sponsoring the event which is in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind and Ecchinswell Parish Church. Soon after, on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, is the Parish Council's Annual Assembly. This is always well attended is an easy way to put forward your views on local issues. Details of the time and agenda will be posted soon.

Continuing good news from the Bishops Green Village hall. Bookings are on the rise and Basingstoke and Deane Council have awarded £2,000 and services of a team to help form a new youth group. £1,000 has come from our Borough Councillor Derek Mellor for refurbishment of the toilets and there will be equipment coming to add to the meeting room and play facilities. You can follow news and events on the Facebook page (search Bishops Green Community Association).

Do you want to be famous? The BB2 series Back in Time contacted our Clerk to seek families with at least two children to feature in their new series. Visit [walltowall.co.uk](http://walltowall.co.uk) and click on Take Part to find out more.

Our next Parish Council meeting is at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April in the Bishops Green Village Hall. We welcome visitors and any questions or suggestions. And we still need two new Councillors! Email the Clerk if you want to hear from us: [clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk).

Cllr Elaine Kearney