

Chairman's Report on Braishfield Parish Council – May 2025

Introduction

I would like to thank all the Councillors for their work throughout the year which has enabled us to progress and bring certain aspects to a conclusion, and special thanks to Jane Ray as Clerk who is a real asset to the Council and with her wealth of knowledge supports us in our decision making.

We welcomed back Cllr Sally Yalden as a Councillor and also as Borough Councillor for Ampfield and Braishfield. We are pleased to welcome Cllr Alan Dowden, who continues to represent Valley Park and Hampshire County Council.

George McMenemy resigned due to other commitments.

We are very pleased to welcome Tom Sebrell who was co-opted on 1 April 2025.

The Council and the Village

We have many volunteers who support and have contributed to the success of working groups who are now helping to keep footpaths clear. Our thanks to Ian and Wendy Jeffery who keep the Telephone library in order (not an easy task), Carole and Steve Renvoize who look after the wreaths and plant flowers during the year at the War Memorial and Maryanne Benson who checks the defibrillator at the Village Hall and at the Church Room.

On Sunday 9 February we organised with the BVA (Braishfield Village Association) the Volunteers and Clubs Fayre in the Village Hall. It was a great success with around 30 tables representing different groups and clubs and many groups signed up new members. It was a reminder about how fortunate we are to have such a vibrant and varied community.

Communications

The Council website is the main communication point where all the latest information can be found. This not only includes meeting agendas and minutes but links to news, emergency numbers, policies and the Village Design Statement (VDS).

We work together with the Braishfield Village Association to share information in the Braishfield Village News and the Network, and at times on Facebook. The latest example was when SSE had to carry out emergency work at short notice.

Remembrance commemorations

The Armistice Day commemorations were led by the Parish Council.

For Remembrance Sunday, we joined with All Saints' Church and the United Reformed Church for the Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial with the event being organised by All Saints' Church and the Council. We were pleased to have the Scouts, Guides and Brownies represented and Gemma the bugler from Chandlers Ford BB Brass Band.

Carols on the Rec

In December, we organised Carols on the Rec jointly with All Saints' Church, the Village Hall and The Pantry. We were pleased to have about 200 people attending with the Chandlers Ford BB Brass Band playing and Hot Diggerty Dogs serving a variety of hot food.

The sum of £307 was donated to Action for Children.

Flags

We are very grateful to Tim Howkins and Mike Knowles for raising and lowering the flags as agreed by the Flag Officer, Cllr Brazier on behalf of the Council.

Grants/ Contributions

£1167.18	106 money for two new benches at the Recreation Ground
£288.01	HCC equipment for footpath wardens
£1242	HCC Stile to Gates Grant (50% to be paid by Parish Council)
£400	Donation from All Saints' Church towards the cleaning of the War Memorial
£500	Councillor Community Grant from Cllr Sally Yalden for the Recreation Ground hedge
	HCC purchased the whips for the hedge

The Parish Council awarded grants/ contributions to:

All Saints' Church for Burial Ground July 2024 £540 (Tree work) 3 April 2025 £1397.84

Planning

The Council continues to have a planning committee under the chairmanship of Cllr Richard Brazier who also continues to lead on the allocation of s106/ CIL money. We continue with site visits and review both current and retrospective applications in line with the Village Design Statement (VDS) and other relevant factors.

We have recently met some Ampfield councillors so we can share knowledge and good practice.

The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) group, Mark Sennitt, has confirmed they are in the process of drafting the Plan and aim for this to be completed by the end of the summer. There are of course other hurdles.....

We are extremely grateful to Mark Sennitt for taking the lead on the Neighbourhood Plan and to those parishioners who support the work.

In the last year we have reviewed 25 planning applications and where appropriate, applications have been heard by SAPC (Southern Area Planning Committee). Permission for trees to be felled (those in the Conservation Area or have a Tree Preservation Order) are also part of our Planning schedule.

Liaison with the Police

Cllr Yalden keeps us informed of changes affecting Braishfield and we understand there will be two PCSOs appointed. We hope to arrange for a visit from them so we know more about how the Police Force operate in the countryside.

Roads, Highways and Footpaths

We continue to have ongoing concerns regarding the state of the roads and we ask that all residents report any problems relating to roads, right of ways and footpaths to Hampshire County Council.

Eight replacement gates have been ordered and will be fitted over the summer by HCC and a group of volunteers for Footpaths 5, 6, 7, 8 and 14. We have a Volunteer Warden Group with 14 people signed up to the group.

As a result of the data collected during the traffic speed monitoring exercise, it was decided to invest in a movable speed signage system being located at strategic points in the Village. This has been in place since August/ October 2022 and the data is showing that there is still a significant number speeding. An extra post has been fitted for Crook Hill and after the latest data has been evaluated, we will take forward having a Speed Watch Group using handheld equipment. We do welcome more volunteers to the Group.

The Parish Council's large footpath map and flyers in the Pantry continue to encourage walkers. The two groups set up by TVBC continue to regularly walk in Braishfield.

Lengthsman Scheme

This scheme provides us with access to a handyman who can undertake minor tasks under our direction. This scheme continues to work well. We will now be paying some additional costs incurred by HCC with our share of £15 a year.

Community Resilience

The emergency planning group includes the Parish Council and other volunteers from the wider community. Its focus is to respond to any emergency in the village whether caused by extreme weather or by failures of infrastructure. We have been attending Resilience meetings organised by TVBC which provide excellent up to date information from various sources including SSE.

We are now reviewing the storage which may be available in the Village Hall for equipment already purchased and will bear in mind the Government warning that families need to stockpile food and water to help build national resilience amid fears of prolonged power cuts, cyber-attacks and floods.

£5000 of the SSE grant unused by the Parish Council has been given to the Village Hall towards the solar panels with the agreement of SSE.

We are planning a meeting of our volunteers with Michael White from TVBC. Our plans will be reviewed every six months to ensure they are kept up to date.

As a Council we have been mindful over many years to have plans in place should the need arise and these plans will be published and shared with HCC, TVBC and Parishioners.

We are very grateful for the work being done by volunteers.

Recreation Ground

The Recreation Ground is one of the major responsibilities of the Council as sole trustee. We have continued to ensure that the trees, ground, equipment and the car park are kept to a high standard thus satisfying health and safety regulations. We are grateful for the support given for keeping the benches in order and for making use of CIL money for new benches.

We continue to host the Football Club and receive an annual payment of £613 from the commercial lease.

Sadly, the Trim Trail that has been in the Recreation Ground for many years needed to be dismantled and removed for safety reasons as the repair costs were prohibitive.

We are hoping to have a tree planted to replace the one by Braishfield School which was vandalised.

The safety sign for the play area and signs for the Recreation Ground provide a reminder of guidelines and we continue to monitor those who use the Rec for their Dogs' recreation and who do not take away what they leave behind.

A dog bin was moved towards Crook Hill and this appears to have had a positive impact to problems in the village even though these do still occur in Church Lane.

We were unsuccessful in our grant application to TVBC for the resurfacing of the car park and replacing the fencing in 2024-25. However, some of the potholes were filled by a mystery contractor doing a local job.

We also took forward the opportunity to plant a mixed native hedge – 50% Hawthorn and 5 – 6 other types of hedging plants. We look forward to replacing the southern end with a similar native hedge.

During this very dry spell, we thank Cllr Stubbs and Tim Howkins for keeping the hedge watered.

War Memorial

The Council is also sole trustee for the War Memorial and at the present time we have a surveyor regularly monitoring the movement of the memorial.

We were pleased to have the War Memorial cleaned in November 2024 with Poppy wreaths remaining until after VE Day on 8 May 2024.

To sum up, there has been a lot going on in Braishfield and I would again like to express my thanks to everyone who has given of their time and support.

Cllr Jane Bennett
Chairman, Braishfield Parish Council