

# Annual Report May 2023



## Land, Assets & Infrastructure Committee

Over the last year the Land Assets and Infrastructure (LAI) committee has been getting to grips with its new responsibilities. It took over the work of the previous Highways committee and also took on responsibility for the more formal spaces owned or managed by the Parish Council. The latter include The Green, the burial ground, allotments at Gatehouse Road and Glebe Way are the most significant areas.

The committee also picked up responsibility for developing a flood plan to manage the risk to the community that might arise from the local drainage system in the event of very prolonged rainfall and ground saturation. Working with the County Council's Flood Risk Team a visit by their Floodmobile was arranged in late April. The Floodmobile contained a wide range of equipment and devices that households can install to prevent or avoid damage from flood water. The most impressive and practicable item I saw was an inflatable toilet seat seal, particularly useful and effective in ground floor toilets. Areas identified as being at risk of rising water from the local drainage system were leafleted. The Flood Risk Team reported that attendance was better than usual at these events.

The other key focus of the committee's work is highway safety. We have continued to work on the usual Local Highway Improvement (LHI) programme with the County Council, offering matched funding in order to attract investment, particularly to make junctions safer. The committee continued the previous work of the Highways committee which was to build on one of the themes of the Neighbourhood Plan; this was to enhance the sustainability of the High Street. To this end we fulfilled the client role in relation to the scheme which delivered a raised table across Brook Close on the southside of The Green, yellow line additions at the beginning of Park Lane and the refreshing of road markings along the High Street. We also submitted a new proposal for a similar crossing at the junction of station road and the High Street between The Boot and The Coop. In preparation for this bid, which is still under consideration, we conducted a survey online and encouraged junction users to complete it by handing out, at busy times, leaflets with QR codes to access it. This proved particularly useful and nearly 70 responses were provided. The highway safety work of the committee is not restricted to physical improvements but also involves sponsoring the work of the local Speedwatch group. The committee was able to, secure consent from the County Council to erect the Moving Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) equipment that it had purchased for Speedwatch and to help erect it on the B1049 starting at the southern entrance near the A14 and then moving to the northern approach from Cottenham. These settings provided invaluable information for our 20MPH zone bids revealing some 2700 daily vehicle movements in each direction on the B1049 and 45% of vehicles approaching from the north exceeding the 30 MPH speed limit near the new Park Junior School. Thanks are due in particular to Andy Boylett for his work on setting up the MVAS equipment and extracting the data they recorded.

Two other large pieces of work which the committee undertook during the year were the development of responses to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for a community wide 20MPH zone. This was also informed by an online survey and leafleting with QR codes to encourage participation. This was very successful eliciting some 480 responses which is the equivalent of some 10% of households in the community. This enabled the committee to draft a proposal with a high degree of confidence that it reflected the views of the community. This first proposal was under the aegis of the Combined Authority and would use funding from the

Department of Transport. The second opportunity presented itself when the County Council issued a countywide call for 20MPH zone proposals. Whilst this used a more modest level of local funding the committee felt that we should use the opportunity to reiterate what we had said previously in the first response. However, we were able to develop it further by combining some of the pertinent information from the LHI, Station Rd - High Street, bid particularly relating to accident risks. We were also able to identify responses in relation to particular roads within the community in the event that the community wide 20MPH zone was unsuccessful.

In order to encourage walking and cycling around village the committee commissioned an audit of pedestrian barriers with a view to identifying those that could be safely removed, redesigned or left in place.

A walkabout with colleagues from the Nature and Biodiversity committee at The Green, our allotments and the burial ground have produced a programme of improvements that will also enhance the capacity of these sites to help sustain biodiversity. At The Green a programme of planting water side species in pre-planted coir mats has been commissioned following specialist advice from local experts. This will happen in the coming months and will result in the two bunds or bay areas which contained silt from when The Brook was dredged some 18 months ago being covered in species suitable for water margins.

It has become evident that The Green is attracting a greater footfall both as a route to the two junior schools but also at weekends. It is obviously good that this amenity is being used but it means that we will need to undertake some TLC for the grass surfaces. Our walkabout identified that general seed drilling of the whole green will be needed as the ground has become quite compacted and we will look to see how we can repair the large warm patch opposite the zebra crossing.

During the year the committee decided that it would revisit scheme of works developed before COVID to improve the area around the Pump

In order to provide a quick and simple way to find, share and save their exact locations What3words signage was installed at The Green, Recreation Ground and South Road Play Areas

We were able to agree with the County Council the installation of planters at the bottom of Bell Hill to replace the temporary red and white plastic bollards now that the one-way system has been adopted as permanent.

Finally , replacement Christmas lights on The Green were ordered and installed providing an enhanced display last Christmas.

***Geoff Moore, Chair, Histon & Impington Land, Assets and Infrastructure Committee***

## **Planning & Development Committee**

Many residents may feel that not a lot has changed in our villages in the last year but 14 times last year the Parish Council Planning Committee have reviewed, discussed and asked members of the public with regards to planning applications for our villages. We have also made additional comments on planning appeals where applicants want to overrule the decision made to refuse their application for development.

Since May 2022 the committee has discussed 75 applications varying from new dwellings to Conservatories, dropped kerbs to Dormers. Some of these applications the committee and residents

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had concerns on. Some were considered by the committee as been totally unsuitable for Histon and Impington.

Two appeals we have been involved with over the last year includes a 4 story apartment block where Station Stores are (refused but applicant appealed this decision) and applications for 15M monopoles for the purpose of 5G network in the villages. With all of these appeals, the involvement of residents has made an impact to these been overruled.

Of course, residents opinions may differ. Those opinions are taken on board at meetings. Before each Planning meeting, we look at comments made by members of the public whom are welcome at not just Planning meetings but can attend almost all Parish Council meetings. To give you a guide, 100% of the comments residents made regarding the 4 story apartment block objected though 2 of the 75 comments made with regards to the 5G Monopoles supported the proposal. Examples of 5G masts in other areas are on the next page.

Inadequate vehicle parking is a common reason to recommend refusal covering 8 of the 15 applications we have recommended refusal on. This itself is something some residents may disagree on. For example, if a 2 bedroom home on a busy road with no off street parking wanted an extension resulting in a total of 4 bedrooms, neighbouring residents may have concerns they themselves would not be able to park nearby and if they are parking on the public highway, they (with some exceptions) have no more rights to park outside their home than anyone else. Parking provision for cars and Cycles is something the H&I Neighbourhood plan covers which states the indicative car parking provision for a 4 bedroom home is 3 spaces as an example.

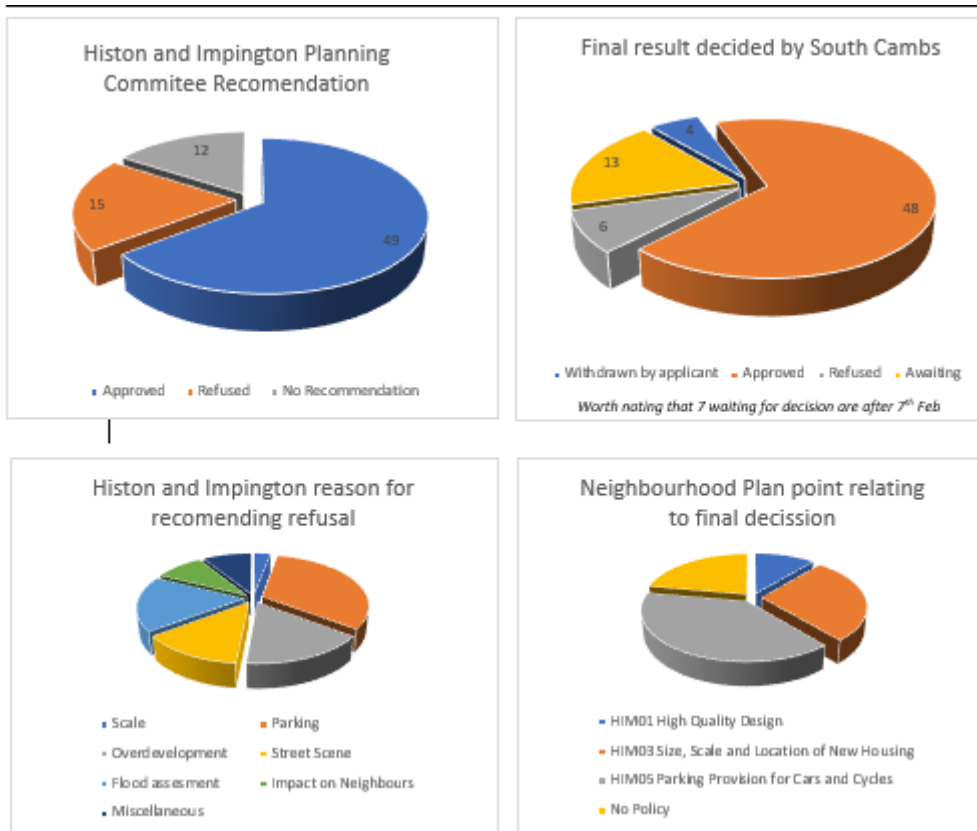
It would be great if members of the public with strong opinions of what changes should happen to our villages in the next decade or two became involved in the next version of the H&I Neighbourhood plan. We need differences of opinion from those residents who are likely to be impacted by potential future changes to Impington and Histon.

So far, the Neighbourhood Plan has (in all likelihood) backed up our recommendation to refuse 15 planning applications the committee had concerns with.

Charts on the next page include our recommendations and final recommendations made by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning.



5G Masts on Kings Hedges Road and on entrance to Fen Ditton



***Simon Jocelyn, Chair Histon and Impington Planning and Development Consultation Committee***

## Nature & Biodiversity

The Nature and Biodiversity Committee is a new committee which started its work in May last year. To help scope its workplan, it held a community workshop and other consultations, at which people gave their views on the role of the Committee overall and on projects they would like to see to enhance nature and biodiversity.

As a result of these consultations, site-based projects are now being further discussed and taken forward with residents groups and more ideas are welcome! Progress so far has included adding new “no mow” verges and other areas to the Parish mowing regime to encourage plant diversity and wild flowers; trialling a new management regime of Manor Field (next to the Orchard ) to manage it like a hay meadow; working with the Land, Assets and Infrastructure Committee and volunteers from HI Green Spaces on some new planting in the brook bunds on the green; and working with HI Green Spaces and the Enviro-volunteers on hedging in Doctor’s Close under a Natural England funded project. The Committee is also looking at management of the “WI Woods” in Histon, which were planted on land owned by the County Council. We have secured permission to remove some invasive Holm Oaks and are discussing longer term management with the Council.

The Parish Council was able to take up the Six Free Trees offer from South Cambridgeshire District Council, obtaining a total of seven trees, one large and six smaller ones. HI Trees led the planting of six of these at Manor Field, three silver birch trees and three field maples, and the local Cubs group helped with the planting. At the Recreation Ground, a single oak tree will be planted in memory of the late Queen.

More biodiversity projects in the coming year will include the launch of “Project P12” in the Histon & Impington Neighbourhood Plan – “to identify and catalogue the biodiversity within the community and ways to enrich species diversity and population levels”. The Committee has also agreed to develop management plans for all of its sites, and it will need to act on the results from the recent tree surveys for all Parish Council owned sites and is looking for a volunteer tree office to support its decision making (more details [here](#)).

The Committee also leads on wider sustainability for the Parish Council. It held a “Climate Fresk” training event in February, attended by a group of Parish, District and County Councillors and local residents to look at the fundamental science behind climate change and empower action. It is looking at an energy efficiency survey which was undertaken on the Recreation Ground pavilion, to see if there are any improvements that can be made to the building to reduce the carbon footprint of the facilities, and exploring other possibilities such as solar panels over the car park.

The Committee has recently approved funding for a “Histon & Impington Eco Fest” on Sat 10<sup>th</sup> June at Histon Baptist Church. This event is being run by HI Sustainability, along with HI St Andrews’ Churches Histon and Impington, Histon Baptist Church and Cambridge Carbon Footprint. It will launch with a day of stalls, talks and activities, and aims to inspire and inform the community of both small and significant actions that they can take to tackle the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. Thirty days of action will follow through June and into early July. Lots of community groups and local businesses are involved and more information will follow in the next few weeks.

Finally, the Committee is also responsible for Public Art and has also agreed to support two possible Public Art projects in the villages. The first is the installation of a bench in memory of Pat Fleet, and the second is the creation of a scheme similar to the Blue Plaque scheme to recognise local residents and the places that they lived in the villages

***Sarah Smith, Chair Histon and Impington Nature & Biodiversity Committee***

## **Wellbeing, Recreation & Leisure Committee**

The brief of our Wellbeing Recreation & Leisure Committee renamed from Sport & Recreation last year was as with many of our re-organised committees to take on broader function working cross-functionality with all committees and with our residents and stakeholders to bring a greater understanding to Histon & Impington Parish Council of requirements for our villages.

I am excited by the opportunities and challenges of this Committee. I am also excited by the new perspectives and expertise of our current Councillors to bring to a resolution. This committee has been frustrated that our deliverables have not been as focused and speedy as we would like them to be. However, we are beginning to find new ways of delivering solutions.

I list some of these deliverables below:

- Co-opting all key Recreation users to our WRL Committee so they can bring their perspectives and those of their teams to the Parish Council table. We will work together and use data to gather your wider requirements and increase understanding of what matters to our villages.

- Improvement of Parish Council land to support increased usage and recreation by STIR. See our Parish Council website for the proposed design.
- Anti-Social Behaviour – This has increasingly been an issue for our Parish Council Staff and as a result we are looking at identify a resolution to this issue as a priority. This is something that has been happening especially at our Recreation Ground for some while, but we are seeing an increase since COVID.
- Challenges in accommodating all teams and organisations in our current Pavilion, which is because of the work done by many on our local Sports clubs to encourage and support increasing numbers of residents of all ages taking part in many of our village sporting and recreational activities.
- Improving Parish Council Facilities and ensuring that our Operational Budget, Capital Spend and Income is consistent and fair across all our sports teams and allows our facilities to be maintained to the highest value possible.
- Working with our Recreation Development Group to improve and create facilities throughout our villages that meet the requirements of our residents for and of the future.

Last and by no means least putting Wellbeing of our residents at the very heart of Histon and Impington Parish Council across all our committees. Our committee carries the name Wellbeing, but it is the responsibility of the entire Council. This is something of which we were importantly reminded by Cllr Davies at our last meeting and of course something he has supported for over 20 years.

We will work with Cllr Davies and all organisations supporting Well-being in Histon and Impington to support all the excellent work underway and to plan for the future.

***Yvonne Murray, Chair Histon & Impington Wellbeing, Recreation and Leisure Committee***

## **Finance, Governance & Legal Committee**

As with all other Council committees this year, the Finance Governance and Legal (FGL) Committee has added to its responsibilities by adding governance and legal to the original finance function of the committee.

It has been a busy year in which considerable time has been spent by FGL reviewing current Council policies to enable them to begin to deal with the larger grant applications and donation requests. This review is very much a work in progress, but a significant and important start has been made.

We have also been working with the office to put in place consistent charges for our recreation users. This allows us to review and consider the budget for the “Recreation Development Group project”, which is currently underway and led by Councillor Davies.

Over the year, Council has made several significant donations/grants, with a significant amount of funding granted to purchase the Abbey Fields land, which then received significant support through grants. The grant for Abbey Fields was agreed at the February Full Council meeting after much work from the FGL committee members and discussions with the charity in order to acquire significant additional and essential green spaces for our community.

The committee has just approved a significant piece of work to centralise our workload and project list for all Committees. This exercise will give us a snapshot of our projects at all stages of development, allowing Council to become more efficient and improve the delivery of our projects. Council's investments in MS365, a much more collaborative IT system, has allowed consideration of this project which also aims to help streamline the workload of our staff and council teams.

New precepts and budget setting processes were initiated this year, placing Council's focus on a longer-term plan and budget, and consideration of reducing the reserves we hold. We have taken the decision to reduce our reserves in line with the recommendation from our internal Auditor. This was a positive step and was well received by Council, as the process and reporting gave our Council members the ability to understand what HIPC's precept could look like over the next 5 to 10 years. FGL plans to develop this process further for all our committees to drive our central budgets. We plan to start to work on budgets earlier, allowing us to increase our collaboration with Histon and Impington communities and include their views in Council's final budget and precept work.

With a move to the 'Scribe' accounting system, this year initiated and implemented by our Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), Theresa King, we are seeing massive positives in terms of transparency, time-savings, and increased reporting to Council. FGL Committee is grateful to our RFO for all the work put in over the last year for this significant change in our accounting. The change has gone through very smoothly and is already beginning to bring benefits in more transparent charging and budget by Council as a whole.

***Edd Stonham, Chair Histon & Impington Finance, Governance & Legal Committee***