

Brixton Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report



For 2019-2020



Brixton Parish Council - Annual Report for 2019 - 2020

At the Council elections in May 2019 the Parish Council was re-elected unopposed. Councillors Matt Chown and Daniel Brown were elected as District Councillors for the Wembury Brixton ward. The Parish Council agreed its precept of £34,000 in January 2020 to meet the financial requirements of the parish covering a wide range of activities for the benefit of the whole community.

Planning for the future is a critical issue for Brixton parish on the urban fringe of Plymouth. The Brixton Parish Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' at a meeting of South Hams District Council on the 28th November 2019. This concluded the work carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Group since 2015 which included public consultations, events, surveys and open meetings. The group led by the Parish Council continued to meet regularly throughout 2019 to complete the final legal processes including a referendum held on the 15th October 2019. The result of the referendum was that there was a 95.18% vote in favour of the plan. The Parish Council is very grateful to those 316 residents who supported the proposal for the planning in the future for Brixton. The adopted Brixton Neighbourhood Plan protects Brixton village in particular from further development in the countryside. This has been a considerable time commitment for the group members in ensuring that all the required surveys and consultations took place working closely with the District Council. I would like to thank Ray Holland, Jon Capel, Greg Webb, Tony Steer, and Shirley Deeney for their time, commitment and enthusiasm to the process of producing Brixton's Neighbourhood Plan and to Duncan Smith, the Planning Officer at South Hams District Council who has been a great support to us.

The new town of Sherford and planning remains a major item on our agendas. Representatives from the Parish Council - Councillors Wills, Williams, Huxtable, the clerk and I attend regular Sherford Liaison Meetings also attended by Plymouth City Councillors, District Councillors, County Councillors and representatives from the Sherford Consortium. A Parish Council notice board has been located near the school in Sherford and it is intended to hold at least one meeting of Brixton Parish Council at Sherford this year. The Parish Council is represented by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Cllrs Huxtable and Williams at scheduled community surgeries attended by members of South Hams District Council, Plymouth City Council and our MP, Sir Gary Streeter. Cllr Helen Williams is the nominated representative of Brixton Parish Council to the Sherford Community Land Trust and is now a Director of the Trust. This is an important role being part of the setting up of the Trust which will eventually be handed over to the residents of the new town. I would like to thank Helen for taking on this important role and for her tenaciousness in ensuring that the Trust meets all the legal requirements and is appropriately linked to the Parish Council. The Parish Council has supported the residents of Sherford in setting up a Residents Association.

The Parish Council is part of the consultation arrangement with South Hams District Council for reserved matters for planning applications for new neighbourhoods in Sherford. The Parish Council's comments of planning applications for these new neighbourhoods, the development of Main Street across the whole Sherford site and linking the development of the country park to wider Brixton have been taken on board by the Planning Authority.

During the year the parish of Brixton has continued to be under pressure from planning applications for small and large developments. Throughout the year the Parish Council has been consulted by South Hams District Council on over 40 planning applications many of which require a site visit of a minimum of 3 councillors. The Parish Council has revised its policy and procedure for the management of the consultation process for planning applications...and recent adjustments have been made due to the COVID19 regulations. I would like to thank Councillors Ian Martin and Michael Wills for coordinating the arrangements for the Parish Council to respond to planning applications as part of the consultation process with South Hams District Council with informed recommendations and to thank those councillors who sometimes at very short notice attend site meetings.

The projects from the Sport and Recreation Plan i.e. improvements to Footpath 26, changing Monkey Lane in to a pedestrian/ cycle, bridle way access to Sherford Community Park and an outdoor gym at Elliot's Hill remain on the agenda. Plans for Monkey Lane are now being moved forward.

The Traffic Plan Management Group attended by and in consultation with local people and Parish Councillors has met quarterly with Nick Colton, the local Devon County Highways Manager and Andy Potter PCSO to address issues affecting the safety of pedestrians, road users and environmental matters relating to traffic and the roads. I would like to thank Nick Colton and Andy Potter and the local residents for their time attending these meetings and their positive contributions to the discussion on the main agenda items. These include the condition of the roads, drainage, signage and speed in the village and through the lanes. It is good to get together as a community to work out how to resolve issues constructively and collectively, although some take a long time. As a result of these meetings we now have regular monitoring reports providing data on the speed of vehicles through the village, a group of residents has been trained to ensure that work around the roads by volunteers is safe and a resident is Chapter 8 trained which means that control can be taken of traffic locally until the authorities arrive. Speed Watch volunteers regularly monitor the speed of traffic through the village Thank you to Councillors Ian Calvert, Roger Wakeham, Brenda Huxtable, Michael Wills, Richard du Pont and the clerk Kirstie for their support to this group.

Brixton Composters continues to be successful in the collection of green waste and creating an income for use in the community. Applications for funding are welcome. Councillor Richard du Pont represented the Parish Council on this group until February.

I would also like to thank Councillors Brenda Huxtable and Roger Wakeham who monitor our footpaths. We are grateful to local residents who walk the paths and provide the P3 group (Parish Paths Partnership) with quarterly written feedback on the condition of the paths; so that repairs can be made without delay ensuring that the paths remain safe and accessible. They also attend the P3 meeting with Councillors and the County Footpaths Officer. Fly tipping continues to be a problem for the parish... through good liaison with Tim Pollard, South Hams Locality Officer fly tipping is dealt with promptly.

Throughout the year, except for the months of August and January, a dedicated team of volunteers has met on the first Saturday in the month to sweep the main street to improve the appearance of the village followed by a hot drink and a chat in the Foxhound. Thank you to the band of volunteers who have made the village look smart. We are complemented by people travelling through the village about its appearance. Thank you to Cllr Wills and his wife, Jennifer, for maintaining the Green in the past year. The telephone boxes on The Green and at Fordbrooke are looked after on behalf of the Parish Council by Julie Eccles and the Parish family respectively. I would like to thank everyone who has given their time to improve the appearance of the village. The phone boxes now house defibrillators for the benefit of the community. An open consultation meeting was held on the 10th March to hear views from local residents on ideas to improve the parking around the Green. This will now be taken forward by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council is part of the Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm linking Brixton with the parishes of Wembury, Yealmpton, Newton & Noss and Holbeton which is in now in its 9th year and during that time has linked to over 120 people with dementia and their families across the 5 parishes. The project continues to make significant progress around the Yealm for people with dementia and their families helping people with dementia and their families remain involved in community life reducing the devastating impact of loneliness and isolation that dementia can bring to the individual person and their family. During the COVID19 crisis closer working links have been established with the Parish Council

Councillor Roger Wakeham until his resignation in November 2019 represented the Parish Council at the Hele Trust. Cllrs Michael Wills and Helen Williams represent the Parish Council at the Ivybridge and District Association of Local Councils by. Annual grants have been made by the Parish Council to South Hams Citizens Advice, South Hams CVS, The Samaritans, Ivybridge Ring and Ride, Yealm Brownies, Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm, Yealmpton & Brixton Caring and Brixton Scouts and to St. Marys Church towards the lighting.

The Parish Council continues to support St.Mary's School as an important community resource for our children, their families and for the community.

The Parish Council receives a monthly update from Aardvark on the progress of the restoration of Steer Point Quarry together with information on lorry movements, complaints and the traffic plan etc

In January 2020 the Parish Council completed the purchase of the land at the former site of the Old Mill at Cofflete. Since then Cllr Parish on behalf of the Parish Council has been implementing the project plan with tree removal, stone wall restoration and boundary fencing. A group of interested parishioners will take this forward under the leadership of the Parish Council to create an environmentally friendly amenity space.

Reflecting the Parish Councils updated environment policy to work towards becoming plastic free led by Cllr Parish remains high on the Parish Council's agenda. Further public events are planned subject to COVID19 requirements. In collaboration with neighbouring parishes through the Yealm Climate & Environment Action Network Brixton Parish Council plans to set up a group to develop a local Climate Change Emergency Plan to reduce the impact of climate change in our communities by reducing our carbon footprint, planning low level schemes such as wild flower verges, promoting bee friendly areas as well as developing a plastic free approach throughout the community.

The Brixton village website, funded by the Parish Council and the Feoffee Trust, has been replaced by the Brixton Devon website funded by the Parish Council, Brixton Feoffee Trust and Brixton Community Association. The new website continues to be a source of information about what is happening in the Parish. I would like to thank Graham Searle for keeping the website up to date and relevant until the 1st April 2020. The parish council posts notices on the 'I love Brixton' Face Book page so that we have as wide an audience as possible. I would like to thank Councillor Ian Calvert for helping to promote the work of the Council on the Facebook page. The Parish Councils own website holds all the information about work of the parish council ensuring that it is easily accessible and transparent. The Council continues to fund its own Brixton Parish Council App. I would like to thank Kirstie, or clerk, for all her hard work in maintaining the website and App modernising and updating our communications. A quarterly Parish Newsletter has been produced. The Welcome Pack has been replaced by all the information on the Brixton Devon website.

An update of the Community Emergency Plan has been completed by Councillor Helen Williams who leads and regularly meets with the Community Emergency Team of councillors and local residents. Cllr Williams has represented the Parish Council at County meetings planning for emergencies and developing resilience in the parish. She has set up appropriate

training for the team of volunteers. I would like to thank Cllr Williams for her diligent and enthusiastic approach to this important part of the life of our community. Since March 2020 as a result of the COVID19 crisis the Community Emergency Plan has swung into action led by Cllr Williams. It ensures that during lock down and beyond volunteers have been recruited to make sure that self isolating residents were able to continue to receive their medication and that food deliveries were made. Local voluntary community leaders have been enlisted to look out for people in their area to ensure that no one is left feeling cut off or unhelped. The community appreciates all the work Helen and the volunteers have done pulling the work together and ensuring all residents were safe at during this unprecedented time.

In our Parish Plan 2012 we emphasised the importance of improving links for Carrollsland with the Parish Council. The Parish Council notice board at Carrollsland provides a link to the wider parish.

The Parish Council continues to have a good working relationship with the Police PCSO Andy Potter. We welcomed his attendance at our meetings in 2019 and thank him for the efficient handling of crime and disorder issues we have brought to his attention... particularly where he has made personal contact with local people about their concerns. However it is clear that the Police are under considerable pressure and cannot provide the service we expect particularly in an emergency. New arrangements are being introduced by the Police for a Councillor Advocate Scheme. Attendance at Parish Council meetings by the PCSO ceased in January 2020

I would like to thank Councillors Dan Brown and Matt Chown, our ward District Councillors, who regularly attend and report to the Parish Council meetings. I would also like to thank Devon County Councillor, John Hart, for continuing to take the time to attend meetings and his interest in the parish particularly the roads and the developing new town of Sherford.

Our qualified Clerk, Kirstie Aldridge, has continued to grasp the work of the Parish Council with enthusiasm, confidence and clarity. The Parish Council is now a quality parish council and has put itself forward for the Gold Award ... so far we have been unsuccessful. However, we have received helpful feedback from the accreditation panel. It describes Brixton as 'an active council which must be congratulated for doing its very best for local residents with limited financial and staff resources. There are active councillors, a dedicated clerk, exciting projects on the go and thorough and effective procedures in place'. The detailed feedback will be taken on board as a further application for the Gold Award will be made later in the year Our thanks go to Kirstie for all she has done in the past year in continuing to lead on the administration, governance and financial controls for the Council.

At the end of 2019 Cllr. Roger Wakeham resigned from the Parish Council and Richard du Pont resigned in February as he has moved out of the area. I would like to thank Cllrs Wakeham and Du Pont for their work representing the Parish Council on various bodies and for their input into planning applications in particular. We miss their contributions and wish them well for the future. The 2 vacancies have been advertised and there is a delay in reappointment due to the COVID19 regulations.

COVID19 has presented all parish councils with new issues to be dealt with to ensure that our work is up to date and transparent. In lock down we continued to meet through virtual parish council meetings using ZOOM. The meetings follow the usual format. At the first virtual meeting of the Parish Council a COVID19 Business Continuity Plan was adopted providing guidance for the governance of the Parish Council in these unprecedented times. During the period of the lock down the Parish Council produced a weekly newsletter.

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their hard work, time and commitment to the work of the Parish Council acting always in the best interests of the people of Brixton Parish. It is important to remember that we are all volunteers. I would particularly like to thank Councillor Michael Wills, our Vice Chairman, for his support and advice and his great support to me as Chairman and Kirstie Aldridge our clerk for continuing to move the Parish Council on so effectively.

In conclusion I would like to thank those residents who regularly attend the Parish Council meetings throughout the year. Your continued support is very welcome and important to us. We hope that you will continue to attend our meetings and bring your friends.

Finally as a Parish Council we have continued to make good progress in a time of change. The uncertainty of COVID 19 presents a whole new range of challenging and uncertain issues for us as individuals and as a community to address to ensure that we continue to make progress at the same time as keeping safe from the virus. So the challenges from now on are going to be considerable for all of us but I am sure that Parish Councillors and local residents will work together in the best interests of the Parish now and for the future

Thank you

Liz Hitchins
26nd May 2020