

Brixton Parish Council - Annual Report for 2021 from Liz Hitchins
Chairman presented at Brixton Parish Council on the 25th May 2022



Over the past year Brixton Parish Council has continued to function effectively during the uncertainty of the changing times of the pandemic. In May 2021 the Council was required to resume face to face meetings as the legislation for remote meetings ended. Despite much local and national lobbying the Government has not responded to parish and town councils requests for a flexible approach to the use of remote and face to face meetings. The Council resumed face to face meetings in September 2021 using different venues (Yealmpton Community Centre, St. and Mary's Church) to enable everyone to feel safe in meeting spaces. The Parish Council returned to its previous meeting place, the Community Room, at St. Marys School in March 2022.

The highlight of the year for the Parish Council was to be awarded the prestigious Quality Gold Award by NALC for its governance and excellence of its work. Brixton Parish Council is the first parish council in Devon to receive this award. Our clerk, Kirstie Aldridge, played a significant part in collating and presenting the evidence required to demonstrate the high quality of this council's work, its ongoing engagement with parishioners and other local authority councillors and officers.

Maintaining communication continues to be paramount using a variety of processes including through the Parish Council website, regular newsletters, Facebook (2 sites) and three community notice boards located in Sherford, Carrollsland and Brixton Village.

The Parish Council agreed its precept of £36,245 in January 2022 to meet the financial requirements of the parish covering a wide range of activities for the benefit of the whole community including the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. 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.

Over the year the Parish Council has revised and updated its policies and Community Emergency Plan. Thank you to Helen Williams for overseeing the Community Emergency Plan on behalf of the Parish Council

Councillor Brenda Huxtable resigned in November. I would like to thank Brenda for her great interest and commitment to the footpaths across the parish, her extensive local knowledge and for her advocacy for trees and hedgerows. Colin Cocking joined the Parish Council in November but due to family and work commitments left the Parish Council in January. Councillor Stuart Nix has recently joined the Parish Council filling one of our two vacancies

The Council's Business Continuity Plan adopted in 2020 to ensure that the business of the council could continue during the pandemic has been updated in line with changing national and public health policies. Cllr Arran provides independent scrutiny of the financial accounts on a regular basis. The annual performance appraisal of the clerk's work took place in September. I am personally, and as a council we are, indebted to Kirstie, our clerk, for all her work in ensuring the Council operates effectively and efficiently. Training is a priority for the Council. Skills audits and development plans have been introduced for the clerk and councillors.

The work of the parish council has continued through the Working Groups which meet by zoom. These include the Climate Change and Protection of the Environment Working Group, the Traffic Management Group and more recently the Platinum Jubilee Group. The Bee Wild Group, which is part of the Climate Change Group, held a successful community event last

August attended by 50 people. Bird boxes and bee hotels were made to raise awareness about the importance of bees as pollinators in nature. Continuing with this theme 11 pollinating bee friendly trees (crab apple and cherry) were planted on the 26th March in Brixton Village and along the A379 by volunteers under the professional eye of Alex Whish. Two walks were also organised by the Bee Wild Group where Alex Whish gave an interesting and informative description of our local trees their habits and their health. The Parish Council has adopted a policy of 'No Mow May' to encourage insect life on our verges, on some verges wild flowers are being left to grow for the whole season. Thank you to Mark Pope for making Bee Friendly signs displayed around the village based on the winning design for a Bee Friendly competition at St. Mary's School. Daffodils were planted in the autumn and brightened up the village in the early spring. Thank you to the Brixton Bee Wild Group - Jenni Robertson, Shirley Deeney, Heather Compton and Alex Whish for raising awareness of the importance of bees, trees and nature in our community.

Wild life and nature is also the theme for the land at the Old Mill project led by Cllr Parish. The land has been secured by fencing and with the help of volunteers the lower area has been cleared with some planting. Plans are in place for an information board, provided by the South Devon AONB in collaboration with the Parish Council, and a seat to be on the site so that the peace and tranquillity of the area can be enjoyed by all. Thank you to the residents of Torr who helped clear the site on the 5th of March. Street sweeping started again during the year up to 11 volunteers turn out on the first Saturday in the month to sweep through the village. Thank you to all our street sweepers and also to Steve and Sharon at 'The Foxhound' for their hospitality after the mornings work.

Brixton Parish Council is represented on a variety of groups relating to Climate Change and is one of the riparian parishes in the catchment of the River Yealm leading on the improvement of the water quality of the River Yealm

The Traffic Management meeting attended by the DCC Highways Officer continues to address the issues of road and traffic safety across the parish. The Parish Council has made an application to Devon County Council for a 20 mile an hour speed limit through the village; and is currently waiting for proposal from Devon County Council for traffic calming on Stamps Hill and Red Lion Hill. There are plans to trial the lanes to the east of Sherford as Quiet Lanes. The improvement to the road surface of the A379 remains outstanding and is the subject of discussion with our Ward Councillor, John Hart. I would like to thank Roger Smith, our Community Road Warden, for all his help and support on traffic matters and for the regular relocation, with Shaun Tappers help, of the VAS sign working towards ensuring drivers keep within the speed limit. New volunteers have been recruited to Speedwatch thank you to Jim Eccles and Roger Smith for their persistence in making sure that this valuable road safety speed check is fully operational again in the village.

The P3 group has met virtually monitoring the public rights of way in the parish. The wall on Footpath 26 has been restored and is a fine example of the skill of the stone mason. The work has still to be finished once a tree in the wall has been removed. Consultation has taken place on the relocation of PROWs in the Sherford development. Thank you to those volunteers who monitor the condition of the footpaths and report any issues to the Council so that immediate action can be taken. The Council is closely involved with Plymouth City Council, Sherford Consortium and others in moving the plans for the footpath at Dawes Lane forward.

Planning continues to be a major item on our Council agendas and it is a critical issue for the community on the urban fringe of Plymouth. The adopted Brixton Neighbourhood Plan provides guidance and informed support when considering planning applications. Climate change, the reduction of carbon emissions and the improvement of the environment continue to influence planning recommendations of the Council, particularly in relation to renewable energy and the management of surface water runoff. Planning applications for Sherford, because of their complexity, are usually the subject of a separate meeting of the Council with

input from the relevant Planning Officers. I would like to thank Councillors Ian Martin and Michael Wills for coordinating the arrangements for the Parish Council to respond to planning applications to South Hams District Council. Thank you also to all councillors who sometimes at very short notice attended site meetings.

Cllr Parish has continued to monitor the Brixstix Play Park. The large play unit has been replaced and currently we are waiting for a part before the new unit can be used. The swing has also been replaced. Thank you to Cllr Parish for taking the lead on this project and the land at Cofflete Mill project.

Cllr Arran has taken on responsibility for the appearance of the Green. The Council in collaboration with the Brixton Feoffee Trust, Brixton Community Association and Brixton Composters purchased new planters this year which have been planted in colours suitable for the Platinum Jubilee. Thank you to Edd for his careful tending of the Green where productive results are beginning to show ready for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Thank you to Julie Eccles and Joe Parish for looking after the two phone boxes and checking the defibrillators there.

With his responsibility for Silverbridge Way, and representing the Council on the Brixton Composters Group, Cllr Clegg regularly updates the Council to ensure that Silverbridge Way is in good condition at all times for all users and that there is a good working relationship with Brixton Composters. Thank you to Cllr Clegg for ensuring that these 2 community assets are regularly updated on our agenda.

Councillor Robertson has brought issues affecting the residents of Carrollsland to the attention of the Council. These include speeding traffic on Staddiscombe Road, lack of signage and the need to protect the trees and the green space in the interest of health and well being of residents. I would also like to thank her for looking after the planting in the box at Chittleburn Hill which is not an easy task.

Aardvark continues to provide the Parish Council with a monthly update on the progress of the restoration of Steer Point Quarry together with information on lorry movements, complaints and the traffic plan etc.

A Working Group was set up to plan for the Platinum Jubilee and this will be reported on next year... needless to say that the bunting is up.

During the year, the Parish Council welcomed monthly updates from Alison Nix, the nominated representative for the Council on the Sherford Community Land Trust. Alison has recently resigned from this role. The Council will be advertising for a resident of Sherford to take on this role in the meantime I as Chairman of BPC attends these meetings. Thank you to Alison for her attendance and reporting back to the Parish Council.

Regular liaison between the local Police and the Chairman has been set up and has worked well dealing with urgent issues and updating when necessary.

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

I would like to thank our 2 District Councillors Dan Brown and Matt Chown for their attendance at our Council meetings and following up issues on behalf of the parish and individual parishioners. I would also like to thank Devon County Councillor John Hart for his support throughout the year.

I am now in my second year as a Director of DALC and regularly attend the Board meetings and the County Committee where wider issues affecting town and parish councils across Devon are raised and, where appropriate, forwarded to NALC.

Finally 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 living in 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 support 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 whether it is via zoom or face to face.

E. Hitchins

May 2022