

December 2022 Message from Cllr Jim Goodbourn, Chairman of Long Sutton & Well Parish Council

As we approach Christmas and the end of 2022, a brief update from myself and your Parish Council. 2022 has, to put it mildly, been a year of significant and concerning events both in the UK but also overseas. As a community we have not been insulated from them.

At home, I reflect very much on the success of the Her Majesty, the Queen's Jubilee celebrations within the village, our thanks to all those who organised it so well and then in contrast, of course, our sadness with the death of her Majesty, it feels so soon after. The war in Ukraine continues to dominate headlines and the international agenda, and it says much for the consciousness of our village with the outward recognition of the suffering of the Ukrainian people through overt banners and flags of support, and fund-raising events that have occurred throughout the year. It is a sobering thought that Christmas will be a challenging and very difficult time for all in Ukraine. Closer to home, and not entirely disconnected from the Ukraine conflict, the cost-of-living crisis continues to dominate and as a Parish Council we are aware, that while circumstances will vary, all are affected by it at least to some degree. All combined there are reasons for all to be anxious, but which is offset at least to some degree by the strength of our community. At least we can reflect that Covid has been less of a problem this year compared with last.....thus far.

Turning to comparatively more mundane matters, as a Parish Council, our main focus this year has again been very much in the local development and planning area with the continuing challenges presented by Big Meadow at the forefront. We have, however, made some significant progress with the support of both Hart District Council and our local councillors. Through some not inconsiderable work by the Hart team, on Friday 9th December a hearing at the High Court of Justice took place into the claim filed by Hart against M.E (Long Sutton) Limited in relation to their failure to settle an outstanding financial contribution (this more formally covered under Section 106 requirements) for the provision of affordable homes in relation to their development at Land at Wingate Lane, Long Sutton. The Judge carefully considered Hart's application and resolved to issue an injunction order to prohibit ME from allowing the fifth dwelling at the site from being occupied until the debt is settled. This is in itself good news albeit does not address specifically the concerns with regard to the state of Big Meadow itself but will now make clear to ME that these concerns should not be disregarded and that positive action to resolve all outstanding issues should be completed such that it is in their interests to do so if only reputationally. This, of course, remains to be seen but as a Parish Council we will continue to take all actions open to us to encourage ME to behave more responsibly. The second main area of planning development concern for our village has been the potential for a solar farm that would, in effect, have surrounded the village with consequent detrimental effects. The latest news, whilst informal, appears to suggest that the immediate threat of this may have receded. Notwithstanding, combined with the Action Group, we will continue to monitor this closely.

I also have some good news re the Recreation Ground in the centre of our village. We now have in place with LWC a 7-year lease which will allow continued use of the Ground by the community, inclusive of the tennis and netball court. Cricket, primarily through Odiham and Greywell Cricket Club, will also continue throughout the summer months albeit restricted to one weekend day per week (normally the Saturday) and weekdays other than the Friday evening. I would encourage all to use the Ground which can also be made available for private events by prior arrangement through the Parish Council, not least to de-conflict with the cricket.

Through our Lengthsman, as a Parish Council, we have made every effort to protect the appearance of our village. Much work has been undertaken across the Parish and the pond, in particular. Of note, going forward into 2023, funds for this will be more limited but we will do everything we can to continue to protect our village appearance and fabric.

So, indeed a year of challenging events but also progress with some key issues affecting our community. I suspect that 2023 will prove to be a similar mix of fortunes. I would just end, on behalf of our Parish Clerk and Councillors to wish you all a Happy Christmas with your family and friends, and a prosperous but, above all, a healthy New Year.