

Framfield Parish Council – Annual Report

We have seen a few changes over the past year. Following our persistent campaigning at East Sussex County Council (ESCC) regarding matters such as footpaths and roads, we appear to have established a better communication structure for getting concerns addressed. We continue to work closely with the local authorities and our County and District Councillors. A new ESCC Highways Steward has taken on responsibility for our area, and I have joined him and our County Councillor on site visits to inspect and highlight key issues.

Although we meet and discuss matters regularly throughout the year, it has become increasingly clear that reduced funding and resources are affecting how and when certain issues are resolved. As a result, many works are now more targeted and prioritised according to risk and cost.

We are pleased to report that we have now moved away from our previous street lighting contractor (ESCC). Our new provider has been a breath of fresh air - efficient, responsive, and proactive. We have gone from a 30–40% failure rate to a 99% working system, which benefits everyone. We await the results of a strategic survey report that will guide future replacements, but we already anticipate significantly lower costs than previously forecast.

The long-awaited reopening of Shawford Bridge on Gun Road has also taken place. The new structure is performing well, and the improved flow capacity has alleviated some of the localised flooding concerns.

The Parish Council remains in a healthy financial position, allowing us to freeze the parish precept for another year. With housing development works now underway, we have begun receiving substantial staged Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds from developers. These funds are ringfenced for specific types of projects and come with a five-year deadline for use. While that might sound generous, the processes required to deliver eligible projects can be lengthy. For example, the B2192 Lewes Road speed reduction scheme has been in progress for over five years and remains unfinished, which can be challenging to manage from all aspects of project management.

We are currently exploring potential uses for CIL funding, including improvements to our open spaces and play areas, and a proposed speed reduction scheme through Blackboys High Street. Both projects are in early concept/development but are being actively progressed.

As the Sole Trustee of the village halls, the Council continues its work to reduce our environmental footprint. We've expanded the use of LED lighting, installed timed and sensor-controlled fittings, and replaced paper towels with energy-efficient hand dryers. Our halls remain vibrant community hubs, well-used by parishioners and visitors alike.

We've also completed the replacement of all bins in the recreation grounds with dual general and dog waste units. These larger, sealed bins have been relocated in line with current health and safety requirements and have been well received. The increased capacity has noticeably reduced the number of dog waste bags left on the ground or on top of the bins, and the sealed design helps minimise odours.

As in previous years, the Council is thankful for the continued support and constructive input from the vast majority of our residents. Sadly, a small minority have persisted in posting derogatory, misleading, or abusive comments, often (but not always) online, and sometimes anonymously. We continue to encourage open dialogue and are always willing to listen to genuine concerns. However, personal attacks on councillors or staff are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Where necessary, we will take steps to safeguard the wellbeing of those who serve our community.

I would like to thank our staff and fellow councillors for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. I also want to extend sincere thanks to the many volunteers who help keep our community thriving, whether through the Village Market, litter picking, or supporting the elderly and vulnerable. Your efforts do not go unnoticed.

Keith Brandon
Chairman, Framfield Parish Council