

Ewelme Parish Council – 2006 report

The past year has been quietly productive. We have largely accomplished what needed to be addressed from the 1998 Village Appraisal, which leaves us ready to think about the next 10 year plan. How do we all want Ewelme to evolve?

The main achievements have been the recreation facilities, the pavilion, the road verges and hopefully the potholes. Speeding has been a serious matter, and plans are in hand to tackle it.

The extra notice board at Green Lane seems to be useful, and we are of a mind to put up an information board for the Common at the car park.

The Kings Pool management plan was a low-key but important initiative, and the common management plan likewise.

We are exploring if and how to implement a low-cost housing scheme with perhaps some four dwellings, but that's in its early days and we are making haste slowly.

Lack of access to broadband services has become important over the past year because it is beginning to create the "haves" and the "have-nots". Popular wisdom says it is the way to reduce pollution and commuter travel, enable working from home, help children access educational facilities, give small rural enterprises a competitive edge and so on, but that's not reflected in rural reality.

It's beginning to affect the value of houses, and BT has finally admitted that some post codes will never be able to have it because it's not BT's job to provide it in uneconomic places. So, we and other communities are challenging that as unacceptable discrimination at local and national government levels.

The Parish's finances are in very good order, thanks to good forecasting and generous grant aid from many sources. We have improved our processes and we do now have "Standing Orders". However, we are not intending to change our open meeting style where those who turn up are always encouraged to have their say.

We are delighted that we have good community contacts with RAF Benson. Although families come and go, they are still part of our community for the duration of their postings here.

We have been somewhat disillusioned by witless vandalism and criminal damage, but we see some hopeful signs.

So, after another year, we look forward to putting the next village plan together (if ORCC can find the funds to help us) and we are very glad of the positive offers of help from several residents.

This is the last year for this Council, and as I have done before, I urge more people to stand for election in May 2007. Communities need changes of representatives and we always need younger people to shake things up a bit.

This past year has been rewarding, and we look forward to seeing the rejuvenated recreation facilities really earning their keep.

My personal thanks go to all the Councillors and especially to our Clerk, Sue, who puts in a great deal of work for us all.

Neil Blake - Chairman