**Village Amenities (VAC) Report 2020/21**

The purpose of this Committee is to manage and develop amenities for the benefit of the people of Henfield. We deal with, amongst other matters:

* the provision, maintenance and management of public seats, floral displays, cycle racks and shelters, public toilets, bus shelters, noticeboards, Christmas lights and litter picking.
* the management of the Cemetery in accordance with legislation.
* the organisation of Remembrance events.
* transport-related issues, including Community Speed Watch.

The Committee’s major project for 2019/20 was the refurbishment of the public conveniences and bus shelter. Unfortunately, several incidents of vandalism have occurred since its completion. We are now planning to replace the shutters which enable the bus shelter to be closed more readily, and to install CCTV overlooking the shelter and entrances to the toilets. Since March 2020, these facilities have had to be closed during lockdown periods, in order to protect staff and members of the public; sanitising door handles and additional cleaning measures were put in place when restrictions were eased in the summer.

Following a request from users of the Youth Club, including the nursery, time-controlled lighting has been installed beside their path and car park, with care taken that the light is directed where needed, and not towards homes in Deer Park.

The major project this year has been the process of bringing the extension to our Cemetery into use, using funds which Council have been setting aside for the purpose. The first step has been the construction of new paths in December 2020; the layout of these has been determined by several practical considerations, including the need to protect tree roots and other underground features, to provide the maximum number of grave plots and to make these plots readily accessible. Whilst on site, our contractors have also improved the area around the memorial wall, where the paving had become very uneven. Native trees, already established within the hedge, will now be allowed to grow taller and five new trees have been planted at the northern end of the area during January 2021. We shall be arranging for the central area to be consecrated when circumstances permit; regulations require that we leave some of the ground unconsecrated.

We have also invested in new software to facilitate record-keeping in the Cemetery, which should make it more straightforward for office staff to carry out the Council’s statutory duties and should eventually allow members of the public to access Cemetery records online.

Another project overseen by VAC has been the resurfacing of the car park at the Leisure Centre – again reserves had been set aside over a period of years to pay for this. Council have also contributed towards CCTV at the Centre and have facilitated the process of directing additional Section 106 funding (from building developers) towards the Centre and the Henfield Hall, to assist with refurbishments in both community buildings.

Residents frequently report concerns about motorists driving too fast through our village and we have decided to use further Section 106 funds to purchase two mobile Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), to remind drivers to keep their speed down. We are in consultation with West Sussex County Council about suitable sites for these.

We are always trying to find ways to make the centre of our village more attractive, both for residents and to help our local economy by encouraging visitors. We have been pleased with the way that our flower displays have looked this year and are now asking our contractor to replant the raised bed between the dentist and the launderette in the High Street; we are looking at further ways to brighten up the area in front of the veterinary surgery, although, as we have a relatively short lease on this space, funds will be limited. We are grateful to the volunteers who have refurbished and replanted the raised bed in the Library Car Park, which has also looked attractive this year.

We are proud to be associated with the Remembrance Day events which usually take place in Henfield and know that they are valued by many residents. Unfortunately, this year the commemorations had to be rather limited, but we very much hope that those in 2021 – along with all our other village activities – will be able to go ahead with far fewer restrictions.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of this committee for their continuing hard work and for bringing their considerable expertise to our activities:

Jane Jones

Committee Chairman

Committee members: Cllrs Jane Jones, Mike Morgan, Nita Farrell, David Jemmett, Richard Kendall, Russell Shaw and Chris Simmonds.