

Report from the Chair of Linton Parish Council (Annual report)  
2021. Bernard Cresswell

In the vain hope that we could have a proper meeting the decision not to was delayed to the last minute. So as we did last year we now have a set of reports to give some overview of what has happened that affected Linton 2020 / 2021.

There would normally be opportunities for questions and answers and so you can still ask questions as I'm happy to respond to queries via email. Unfortunately, with two rather demanding little boys, uninterrupted phone calls are a luxury and they've decided sleep is a luxury!

Contributors who were able to supply something are attached and listed at the end of this report.

As always the Parish Council needs to have your views so we can act in accordance whenever we can. It's the absence of messages that drives me to give some updates on matters via our Parish Newsletter that Kath Cooper spends time putting together and volunteers deliver to every house in Linton. This along with other updates on the Parish website means you're kept informed as best we can. Please tell your Councillors what you're thinking.

Although we have not been able to hold our usual Parish Council meetings, we are still busy behind the scenes, as outlined in our newsletters (also on the website). We hope to resume normal service after the summer break. Zoom meetings are a strange affair if you've not videoed call someone before there is some etiquette! Check your background as it's a bit revealing of domestic circumstances and a distraction. Had to smile when ward councillor Richard Webb joined us and behind him on a shelf was Postman Pat Teddy, well of course there would be!

There will be reports from other contributors and some points I might overlap with but hopefully not duplicate.

Maidstone Local Plan

The "Call for Sites" made by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) identified seven locations in Linton have now been removed from their final report.

This paragraph was in last year's report, however we are not aware of any update...."One thing that MBC has done is to write to the Home Secretary (January 2020) requesting some deviation from the government's hard and fast annual targets for homes and that these should be looked at over a 10 year period. One reason given for this "ask" of the Home Secretary is to allow for "Garden City" developments, where appropriate, that normally takes some years to create but could easily satisfy the end target number of homes, but fail the year on year annual target."

### Planning and Developments.

The Medical Centre is on its way with the land now built upon.

The Hillside development. 13 residential homes is well underway with some now it seems lived in, so we have included our new residents in our latest newsletter and upon request supplied a welcome pack. It's worth reminding all that MBC denied Linton any of the funding due under this residential development scheme. To remedy this, A Firmin Ltd agreed to fund projects in Linton, so a big thank you to them (see Highways).

Polytunnels at Rankins Farm: As reported in the summer newsletter there was a planning application to have them covered all year round that means a removal of a planning condition in the interests of visual amenity. The Parish Council objected and the application was withdrawn, no reason given.

Given the huge scale of the tunnels it maybe subject of another planning application and if the last one is anything to go by it will be at the last minute or after the date they are suppose to be uncovered, which is November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Annoyingly planning applications to amend put on hold any breach of conditions attached to the original permission.

### The Planning Process

Rather than duplicate my piece from last year's report I think it's worth revisiting but I'll simply invite you (I'm such a tease) to go to our website for it in my 2020 Annual report. Linton Parish Councillors and other Parishes have problems attending these meetings due to some agenda procedural changes but, due to Covid (like so many things), it

has yet to be resolved. This is being taken forward by one of our Ward Cllrs Richard Webb.

Planning applications in Linton have calmed down a little. Where appropriate we put our case forward to MBC that we feel the application, if approved, is not within our interpretation of what is acceptable in the countryside, our conservation area or Linton.

There have been some appeals by applicants to the Planning Inspector where we and MBC have objected. Those applications have been refused on grounds varying from not in keeping with the locality through to likely to harm wildlife.

### Highways

The project to improve the safety of the A229 in Linton instigated by us and funded A.Firmin Ltd is now complete. There will shortly be a traffic speed survey carried out (delayed to September) so at present the Linton SpeedWatch activity is on hold so that a realistic snap shot can be had by KCC and us.

A consequence of that survey might reveal if there is anything else that could help design out the speed problem we all face; whether simply pulling out with our vehicle onto the road or crossing it.

As for the latter, we have (hopefully) strategically placed some "sympathetic to the surroundings" pedestrian signage on the church side of Linton Hill to direct pedestrians to cross where there is better vision up and down the road to aid for a safer crossing up by the Alms Houses on Linton Hill.

Landscaping outside the church was planned during the above safety improvements but KCC highways costs escalated and so are put on hold pending additional funds.

It will be noticed that rumble strips at the gateway entrances to the village area on Linton Hill and further down near the junction with Redwall Lane have not been installed, this was a last minute decision as it came to light that KCC Policy did not permit it.

Linton Crossroads due for modification still only exists on the planners' drawing board. Hence the lengthening tail backs down Linton Hill. The only positive of this is to be able to cross the road!

### Berry Gardens at Wares Farm.

There is some good news in that they have made progress in reducing their light and noise pollution and their HGV night time numbers is nowhere near that put forward in the revised planning application. This is mainly due to the removal of the need of the night shift workers.

Many will have noticed the site they vacated across the road from their new site has been taken over by another fruit packhouse. This explains why we now see more HGVs in the vicinity of and along Redwall Lane, in particular Fowler Welch.

Litterpicks... This is organised by the Parish Council and thanks go to Cllr Julie Urquhart for arranging the regular (every 2/3 months) event and a band of volunteer Litter pickers, plus Berry Gardens, who help clear our Parish of rubbish and vehicle crash debris! In theory the breakdown vehicles that attend to these collisions are responsible for clearing the crash debris but in practice we all know that does not happen. What's to be done? Put simply it's fly tipping by leaving rubbish behind and it's reported through the MBC phone number or via their website.

Our gratitude goes to Cllr Patrick Gerrish of "Highleaf Ltd" in Wheelers Lane who sponsors our litter picking kit and on hand to collect the bags for a central location that MBC then take away. Patrick stepped in when MBC withdrew from supplying the Litter picker and gloves! Thank you Patrick.

Litterpicking by us volunteers has now resumed. The Parish Council was able, hopefully will resume, the supply of refreshment for our well-deserved volunteers. It should be noted that Local business pre pandemic also "refreshed" our volunteers (Berry Gardens). I look forward to the day when normal service (post pandemic?!) resumes along with many other good things in Linton such as the coffee mornings and cream teas!

### The first time ever!

Linton Park "The big House on the hill" opened its gardens for charity under the National Garden Scheme, what a great place to wander. Hopefully this might be an annual event, fingers crossed. Linton Park for centuries had been the big house in the area and the main employer for most of Linton and beyond. Hence the most significant household name

being Cornwallis. It was they who helped pioneer basic education and created the concept of school meals, all in little Linton!

If you want to know more about Linton we have our own appointed volunteer archivist David Sendles, who is also the Chair of the Village Hall and other good causes. To make contact visit our website and he can be found under [Lintonkent.org](http://Lintonkent.org) Village Hall/ Linton Archivist.

### SpeedWatch

I'm its coordinator. Not surprisingly there's nothing to report as we have not been out. That said, we are now well short of volunteers since, as with life, people move on. So, if your curious please get in touch, you are needed! Although we can resume activity, we have held off until KCC carry out their speed survey (pencilled in for September). It's important that we have a realistic snap shot of speeding vehicles.

Parish News.. This is produced through the generosity of time and energy given by others. Thanks goes to the Church Council in the form of Kathy Cooper, who spends time arranging and editing the material. Plus Cllr Peter Lewis who prints off all the newsletters and then there's the small group of "paper" boys and girls who enable this to be delivered to every house in Linton.

As with most things that are good about a community it relies on volunteers, so if you think you can help in some way or not sure how, just get in touch. And don't forget to frequent our website ([Lintonkent.org](http://Lintonkent.org)): Explore it, there's useful stuff including how to report potholes through to obstructed public right of ways.

Village Hall – The Parish Council are owners and Custodian Trustees of the Village hall and its land, and we supply a representative, Cllr Pat Burden, to the Managing Trustees, who reports back. The roof is now showing signs of a much needed overhaul, see attached report by our Village Hall Chair David Sendles.

Allotments There is a report covering this. All I would add is there have been issues with the development site surface water as a result of the works. It's created surface water spilling into the trench where the surface water pipe runs and spills out onto the pavement on the north

side of Wheelers Lane. It's difficult to manage this "fluid" situation whilst building work takes place, that said Fernham Homes respond quickly when these problems arise.

### Finances

We continue to balance the books and this is greatly helped by those who volunteer (examples in this report)..... I say Thank you.

### Other matters:

Flooding: "Riparian rights" landowners have responsibilities where watercourses adjoin their land that include keeping them free flowing. There is a hotline with the environment agency to report when they are obstructed. As we all know this is An increasing climate change problem and is particularly relevant to anyone in a low lying area.

Playground: this will at some stage be subject of a small revamp as a consequence of the Hillside (Vicarage Field) development.

CCTV Church car park: Paid for by A Firmin Ltd as a result of the Hillside development. This is subject to an annual contract paid by the Parish Concil to ensure system is operating correctly should the Police require access.

Parish Councillors: play a role, in varying degrees in most areas that impact on Linton, apart from some mentioned above we have the "the Friends of Linton Church" a charity set up to help towards the upkeep of our iconic building Linton Church (St Nicholas). All in all we have an impressive Linton community due to our volunteers.

If you're curious about all these events and others then please get in touch as we are always in need of people who can lend a hand in one way or another..... Check out the website for the famous Linton Walkers that will have you tramping in places you never knew existed on your doorstep and further afield, plus they always have a body of those we cannot do without..... Volunteers!

It is worth mentioning that Linton Parish Councillors are not paid or claim expenses and have lives to lead with commitments and responsibilities like everyone else. So it's at this point I want to thank

the following Councillors who have done their bit and made a difference on your behalf. Jerry Whitmarsh and James Smith. And our new and re-elected Parish Councillors Pat Burden, Peter Lewis. And a big shout out to....our Cllr Julie Urquhart and her family for a special thank you. It was her idea and drive to instigate the help for the vulnerable in our Parish during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### Recognising good work

This is one area that I particularly enjoy is the opportunity to publicly acknowledge those deeds that individuals carry out that go above and beyond for our benefit and others. It is a small way we can say thank you and as I did last year, this year will be no different as we single out those that give more than expected.

This year it's been a real challenge for everyone but for one household it was on another level, to be precise their home was flooded, not once but twice! Yet they organised the help for the vulnerable in Linton from temporary lodgings during the Covid 19 Pandemic, led by Cllr Julie Urquhart.

The following will receive certificates of appreciation from Linton Parish Council and residents for an amazing job done through the Pandemic:

Cllr Julie Urquart, Lizzie Wilson and Cameron Wilson.  
Camilla Hayes, Nicola Davis and Emma Lamb

This year's Parish elections resulted in us being short of Councillors. If you're mildly curious get in touch as it's never too late to join as we can co-opt you. (Sounds like being press ganged, honest it isn't!)

Please all stay safe and keep your distance.... And if you've discovered the joy of our local footpaths for daily exercise then why not walk some more?! See the Parish website and what the Linton Walkers are up to.

Bernie Cresswell  
Chair, Linton Parish Council

As mentioned at the top of this report here is a list of contributors and their roles upon which they report.

**Ward Councillors Report -**

**Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid**

Chair of Linton Village Hall Management Committee- David Sandles

Village Tree Warden and Footpath Officer-

Cllr James Smith

Allotment Manager -

Cllr Julie Urquhart

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator-

Cllr Pat Burden

Parish Website-

Cllr Peter Lewis