



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020-21



WHITEMANS GREEN ALLOTMENTS, PAUL STEVENS, 2020

Andy Burton  
Chairman, 2020-21  
Cuckfield Parish Council

## Introduction – Chairman Andy Burton

Welcome to the Parish Council's review of 2020-21. It's interesting to look back on last year's Chairman's report, written as we headed rapidly towards the first lockdown. As we postponed and then cancelled the Annual Parish Meeting for May 2020, nobody thought we'd be needing to do the same in 2021. However, the last year has highlighted just how adaptable and resilient Cuckfield is, and the Parish Council has been able to continue progressing most of the activities within its business plan (see <http://www.cuckfield.gov.uk/administration/business-plan>), and added some new ones as we refocussed on helping those in need.

Of particular note in the last year has been projects to deliver dozens of Easter food parcels, the reinstatement of the Post Office in the Queens Hall, installation of traffic speed awareness signs designed by local children, new brick paths around the church and the first steps towards a much extended Queen's Hall garden. This is in addition to resolving the considerable issues created by Covid to enable our two community buildings to be opened when we were able, all of which was undertaken by our team of Council staff.

Our primary focus has remained to serve the interests of the Cuckfield area and community and, as ever, we are keen to receive feedback on anything the council does. See [www.cuckfield.gov.uk](http://www.cuckfield.gov.uk) for contact details.

## Who are we?

The Parish Council is the first tier of local government and is formed of ten locally elected residents (non-political) who give their time voluntarily to ensure we can run the Council for the benefit of the whole community. Over the past year we have said goodbye to Christine Jermyn and welcomed Paul Ceccherini to the Council.

Our primary focus is to serve the interests of the Cuckfield area and community. The Parish Council is part of a hierarchy of government and is tiered as below. I mention this for clarity to show who has responsibility and how decisions are made. Where the Parish Council is not a decision maker it acts as a consultee to represent the community in key decisions.

- Central Government defines national policies and statutory law, which are cascaded down to the County Council, District Council and lastly the Parish Council. Mims Davies is the MP for Mid Sussex.
- West Sussex County Council is responsible for services such as Education, Highways, Social and Healthcare services. Your current elected representative is Cllr Pete Bradbury.
- Mid Sussex District Council, with whom we work closely, along with the three Town Councils and Parish Councils form the rest of the Mid Sussex District. They are responsible for planning decisions, housing provision and local amenities such as parks and recreation. Cllr Robert Salisbury and Cllr Peter Bradbury are the elected ward councillors representing Cuckfield in Mid Sussex.





- In 2019-20 the Parish Council ran committees for Assets, Community & Environment, Community Buildings, Finance & General Purposes, Planning and Roads and Traffic. The core activity for the year is summarised in the remainder of this report.

The Parish Council raises the majority of its income through the precept (the Council Tax, collected by Mid Sussex District Council). You can find details of our budget later in this report.

## 2020-21 Council Highlights

This year our activity highlights include:

- All Parish Council meetings moving successfully to online only over the past year. We've had no Jackie Weaver moments in Cuckfield! The government has taken the decision not to allow a time extension of these from May, so it remains to be seen how we will operate in 2021-22.
- Organising an Easter food hamper for families in the village most in need. We worked with the school and doctor's surgery for their distribution.
- Opening the Post Office in the Queens Hall (Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30am to 1.30pm).
- Managing our Queen's Hall and Village Hall during lockdowns, ensuring they have been Covid secure when we have been able to open them. Whilst the loss of income from functions has impacted our finances, we have been able to secure government grants to mitigate this.
- Keeping abreast of developments with MSDC's progress on locations for new District Plan housing allocations. We remain committed to preserving the village distinctiveness for years to come through implementation of our Neighbourhood Plan policies, in the face of extreme pressure from developers who see Cuckfield as prime estate.
- Implementing the London Lane one-way system to mitigate congestion caused by the three-month closure of Hanlye Lane. We then took feedback and learnt lessons we are using for further measures throughout the village. As traffic continues to increase, particularly now that the Burgess Hill Northern Arc has begun in earnest, this will become an even higher priority.
- Replacing the footpaths at the cemetery closest to the Grade 1 listed church in traditional brick pavements.
- Naming the twittens and lanes which did not already have one, with new signs to be erected soon.
- Erecting permanent vehicle speed awareness signs throughout the village, following the children's design competition run by the Rose and Crown.
- Acquiring the 25-year lease for the extended Angela Fox Nature Garden, at the rear of the Queen's Hall. This has now been cleared, landscape architects appointed and new paths and lawns are being installed imminently. The overarching intention is that this will be a great new community space, with room for marquee and performances.
- Clearing space at Horsefield Green ready for the new community orchard, of mixed apple, plum and cherry trees, supported by ISOC. Whilst the wet weather over the winter has delayed this, the first trees are being planted soon.

- We continue to be frustrated that, after several years now, Taylor Wimpey is unresponsive in completing the necessary work which will enable us to take over the Buttinghill open space, with Mid Sussex District Council seemingly unable to hold them to account. Similarly, they are unable to resolve the Denning Place entrance gates on Broad Street, which block the views towards Haywards Heath and do not have planning approval.

Additional details can be found in the committee activities below.

The above successes would not be possible without the great work undertaken by the Parish Council team, led by our Clerk, Sam Heynes.

Regrettably, we have needed to take the decision again to cancel the Annual Parish Roadshow this year.

## **COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

### **Assets, Community and Environment Committee – Cllr Andrew Symonds**

The Assets, Community and Environment Committee has responsibility for the assets owned by the Parish Council. This includes the allotments at Whitemans Green and Courtmead Road, the Skate Park, the cemetery with its war memorial, and lastly the public toilets in Broad Street car park.

This committee also takes on the sites from developers when they have moved on. Horsefield Green is one of the most recent but unfortunately the Buttinghill site remains unresolved due to delays with the developer and planners resolving outstanding issues.

This year was an active one with a major investment in the brick paving installed to replace the crumbling and uneven tarmac around the Holy Trinity Church. The war memorial was cleaned and we aim to organise repainting the names washed out by the cleaning process within the next year.



BRICK PATHWAYS AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH



MATTHEW GALLAGHER MEMORIAL BENCH, NEWBURY MEADOW

The Parish Council have also acquired a bench to remember Matthew Gallagher, our cemetery registrar, who died tragically early in 2019. This is now situated in the Newbury Meadow part of the cemetery.

The two allotment sites are popular and currently have a waiting list. Plans are afoot to split some of the larger plots at Whitemans Green into smaller plots to enable more people to start gardening.

The skate park has been subjected to mindless vandalism recently and we look to residents to report any such activity that they might observe to the police.

Another initiative undertaken this year is the naming of some of our anonymous footpaths and twittens. This was reported in Cuckfield Life monthly magazine and the name plates are currently in production.

We were unable to repeat our successful "silver tea party" for senior residents this year but look to repeat it when all the COVID restrictions are lifted.

The ACE committee strives to create and maintain an environment and community that is valued and attractive to all who live in Cuckfield and we are willing to engage with the residents where this can be enhanced.

### **Community Buildings Committee – Cllr Andrea King**

This unusual year has provided challenges for everyone and running our Community Buildings has been no exception. We have been able to spend time on routine maintenance and fortunately the Village Hall has been open for much of the time as Cuckfield Preschool has continued to run, although all other hirings ceased.

Most hirers who use the Queen's Hall have not been so lucky and weddings in particular have been cancelled, causing much distress to all concerned. The museum has also been closed. We are optimistic that things will soon be back to normal and at the moment we are hopeful that classes will start returning from late April.

You may have noticed in our Business Plan that we are considering the future of the Village Hall as the building is tired and could be improved, providing a hall that is better suited for the needs of the community. To this end we have organised a Working Party of Councillors and other interested parties and discussions have started about what we might do. This is very much a feasibility study with no timeline agreed and if we decide to go ahead there will be public consultation.

During this year we have also been busy with plans for the Angela Fox Nature Garden, which will be on the land next to the Queen's Hall garden. It is a very long-term project and we do not expect to complete it for several years but we are anticipating that it will be in a fit state for basic use later this summer and allow hall users to spread out across the area giving much more space available for wedding receptions and parties. Sadly, the weather was against us over the winter and it has been much too wet to level and plant the ground though we have been able to remove trees and cut down overgrown hedges.

Initially it will be mostly grass but we have appointed garden designers and are looking forward to seeing their ideas, which we will share with you in due course.

We are very pleased that, thanks to the efforts of Councillor Laing and our Clerk, we have managed to persuade the Post Office to open a branch in the Queen's Hall for two mornings a week. Obviously, a full-time business somewhere would be better but this has been much appreciated by the community and we were very glad to be able to offer the hall for this use.



POST OFFICE AT THE QUEEN'S HALL, CUCKFIELD

Throughout the year our staff have been very industrious in ensuring that both halls are Covid safe for all users and we are most grateful for their efforts.

### **Finance and General Purposes Committee – Sam Heynes (Clerk)**

2020-21 has been a challenging year financially for the Parish Council due to our loss of income, whilst expenditure largely remained unchanged. Finance information for 2020-21 is listed below.

- Roads & Traffic – expenditure included the trial one-way system on London Lane during the summer of 2020, the costs of this were covered by a mixture of the

precept and reserves allocated over previous years towards traffic calming schemes for the village.

- Finance & General Purposes – income was higher than originally forecast due to the receipt of several Covid grants.
- Environment – income was higher than forecast, sadly due to an increased number of burials at the cemetery. Expenditure was also higher than forecast, due in the main to the replacement pathways around the Holy Trinity Church.
- Queen's Hall – income way below forecast due to the closure of the hall for most of the 2020-21 financial year, caused by Covid. Expenditure was also lower than forecast due to a reduction of the budget for the Angela Fox Nature Garden.
- Cuckfield Village Hall – similar to above, hall hire income was lower than forecast due to Covid, however expenditure was also lower than forecast as a result of the reduced usage.

Looking forwards to 2021-22, further investigation into traffic calming options for London Lane will take place, together with continued development of the Angela Fox Nature Garden; we are hoping it will be ready to use for weddings by July this year. Proposals for the potential demolition of the existing Cuckfield Village Hall on London Lane will be prepared, with high level design proposals and costings reviewed by Council. Due to the costs of such a large project, a decision to proceed would be closely linked to results of a consultation across the village.

For more details of the plans for the remaining 2 years of this Council's term, please see the Business Plan.

	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Roads &amp; Traffic</b>			
Income	£2,000	£555.84	-£1,444.16
Expenditure	£10,350	£12,438.44	-£2,088.44
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Planning</b>			
Income	£0	£0	£0.00
Expenditure	£2,500	£1,987.90	£512.10
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Finance &amp; General Purposes</b>			
Income	£241,167	£263,692	£22,525
Expenditure	£217,599	£209,079	£8,520
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Wellbeing</b>			
Income	£73,945	£81,076	£7,131
Expenditure	£81,870	£91,504	-£9,634
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Queen's Hall</b>			
Income	£45,500	£17,675	-£27,824

Expenditure	£58,698	£41,742	£16,956
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Cuckfield Village Hall</b>			
Income	£26,000	£14,559	<b>-£11,441</b>
Expenditure	£18,900	£12,693	£6,206
	<b>2020-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Net</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Total Income	£388,612	£377,559	<b>-£11,053</b>
Total Expenditure	£389,917	£369,445	£20,472

<b>Reserve Movements</b>	<b>Current Value 2020-21</b>
Memorial Repairs	£4,000
Traffic Calming (London Lane)	£22,427
Grants	£200
Horsefield Green Landscape & Pond	£28,858
Horsefield Green 10 Year Fund	£104,375
Allotment Deposits	£3,650
Council Elections	£214
CVH Refurbishment	£9,042
Planning Committee Reserves	£999
Cemetery Pathways	£14,413
South Street Railings	£0
Allotment Maintenance	£444
Stage Curtains	£2,300
CCTV	£0
Nature Garden	£590
Lychgates	£1,000
Legal Fees	£250
<b>Current Reserves Total</b>	<b>£178,352</b>

### **Planning Committee – Cllr Steve Oversby-Powell**

Since we published our last report in 2020 the Parish Council has reviewed approximately 100 planning applications of various types, in respect of 80 or so sites. These range from simple requests to reduce or remove trees with preservation orders or in conservation areas, through to applications to build completely new properties on 'greenfield land'. Responses are passed through to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), who are the Local Planning Authority.

Most of the applications that we see are of a high quality, and are proportionate to their surroundings, so it should come as no surprise to hear that approximately 90% of the cases scrutinised at our planning meetings do not raise objections.



Of the remaining 10%, a number are submitted multiple times as homeowners or developers modify their plans. Considerate applicants/agents often take our comments on board and modify their plans before determination by MSDC.

All of the applications we have seen in the last year have been small in scale, and this has been quite welcome, as smaller applications are generally more locally considered than larger sites by major national house builders.

Aside from considerations around impact on existing residents, our decisions are guided by our Neighbourhood Plan (<https://www.cuckfield.gov.uk/administration/neighbourhood-plan>) and the Mid Sussex District Plan (<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3406/mid-sussex-district-plan.pdf>).

The most common reason we do object to an application is in relation to our Neighbourhood Plan policy CNP 1 (below);

#### **Policy CNP 1 - Design of New Development and Conservation**

New development in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted where it:

- a) Is designed to a high quality which responds to the heritage and distinctive character and reflects the identity of the local context of Cuckfield as defined on Map 3 - Conservation Areas and Character Areas, by way of;
  - i. height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation, design and materials of buildings,
  - ii. the scale, design and materials of the public realm (highways, footways, open space and landscape), and
- b) Is sympathetic to the setting of any heritage asset and
- c) Follows guidance in the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and
- d) Respects the natural contours of a site and protects and sensitively incorporates natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site, and
- e) Creates safe, accessible and well-connected environments that meet the needs of users, and
- f) Will not result in unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution, and
- g) Makes best use of the site to accommodate development.

POLICY CNP1 - DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION, CPC NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, 2014

A key component of this is maintaining the distinctive character of the village. So, if you are a landowner reading this, perhaps click on the link above before your developer talks you into an expensive 'full-fat, profit-max, but never-mind-the-local-environment' proposal.

Current significant threats to village distinctiveness come from:

- Proposals (as part of MSDC's housing allocation) for another major development along Hanlye Lane
- Over-development of small plots, unrelated to scale of adjacent properties
- Developments within the coalescence gap between the village and Haywards Heath (as is being proposed along Hatchgate Lane)
- Developments within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

### ***District Plan***

Towards the end of last year MSDC responded to consultation documents from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on the 2 topics of “Changes to the Current Planning System”, and “Planning for the Future” White Paper. It is important that they are actively engaging with central governments, and we support them in their efforts (as we responded to MHCLG ourselves) because, whilst politicians of all parties parrot buzz words like ‘Localism’ the reality is that for the most part national planners’ concerns about local wishes appear to be inversely-proportionate to the size of a proposed development.

This is particularly apparent in the consultations, where government is seeking to bind local authorities to deliver even higher housing targets, derived through another ‘algorithm’ which is based simply on demand and doesn’t properly consider the demographic, geographical or environmental constraints of an area. The assumptions in the White Paper would have significant detrimental implications for a rural district like Mid Sussex given that a considerable proportion of the District is covered by National Park or AONB designations, leaving the remaining areas to take the brunt of all development and leading to an inevitable detrimental impact on the quality of both the towns and the rural areas not protected.

The Parish Council will continue to argue strongly to defend our Neighbourhood Plan policies, which aim to protect our settlement distinctiveness and environment.

### ***Burgess Hill Northern Arc***

This development is so large that it has a strategic impact on MSDC’s overall housing target. Whilst it reduces this pressure on Cuckfield in planning terms the secondary effect of it will be increased congestion through the village, as new residents access Crawley and Gatwick. With the Northern Arc only just commencing and many businesses still seeing the impact from Covid, the true effect of the development on traffic in the village will take some time to be appreciated. In some mitigation, it is good to see the improvement works to the A2300 progressing (between Burgess Hill and the A23).

### ***Penland Farm***

This development by Redrow Homes of 210 properties on the North Western boundary of Haywards Heath continues, eroding as it was always going to, the gap between Haywards Heath and Cuckfield. Looking on the positive side, the development did at least provide a much safer new roundabout and Redrow Homes can at least thank Covid-19 for significantly reducing the traffic flow, and near certain gridlock on the North Western approach to Haywards Heath, when they built it!

If there is one takeaway from this development that we would like MSDC’s planning department to take on board, it is to insist that crucial infrastructure works (i.e roads and roundabouts) are constructed as a condition of planning **prior** to the houses being built – not as an afterthought which then causes avoidable disruption to thousands of people for months on end.

### ***Planning Enforcement and Issues***

Whilst only about 10% of planning applications elicit an objection from the Parish Council (or refused by MSDC), there is a small percentage of cases that find their way into an ‘Enforcement’ process. In many cases, these appear stalled or are taking numerous years to be resolved by MSDC. Some examples include:

- *Denning Place*. The Appeal Permission for the Denning Place development on Broad Street was granted on the condition that views of the countryside would be maintained as stated by the applicant. The applicant has then blocked those views they had agreed would be maintained and further contravened planning rules by building outside of the agreed development boundary. NO CHANGE FROM 2020
- The *Buttinghill* drainage pond is still in a state of collapse, and Taylor Wimpey are continuing to do all they can to avoid doing anything about it. CPC cannot take this land over formally as intended public open space until this is resolved. Discussions with Taylor Wimpey and MSDC continue. NO CHANGE FROM 2020
- The *Courtmead Road* 'Play Meadow' saga rolls on with no end in sight. At least the iconic views to the Downs across the site have been returned (albeit through Heras wire fencing now) thanks to the efforts of local residents and Councillors Bradbury and Salisbury.
- *Cuckfield Golf Club* – Whilst this ultimately falls within the remit of Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council, due to its proximity and the potential implications for the village, we make a point of scrutinising these applications. A particular issue this year has been the multiple developments undertaken which required, but did not have, planning consent. This has then caused difficulties as enforcement actions and retrospective applications are required.

### ***Cuckfield Parish Council working with Mid Sussex District Council***

Once again, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the team at the Mid Sussex Planning Department and both Councillors, Pete Bradbury and Robert Salisbury, for the assistance they have provided with numerous cases over the past year.

### **Roads & Traffic Committees – Cllr John Dickie**

The main focus of the Roads & Traffic Committee continues to be seeking viable ways to control both the flow and speed of traffic through the village. Given the layout of roads through the village, the former has always been a challenging trade-off between the needs of residents and businesses in the village on one hand and a desire to reduce a proportion of the through traffic on the other. This issue is likely to become ever more acute as housebuilding in the surrounding district continues apace, perhaps especially the Burgess Hill Northern Arc developments.

Speed control is something about which we can do something more immediately and tangibly. First, we use our two portable Speed Indicating Devices (SID) on all the principal routes through the village. One of the devices is nicknamed Sid and displays your speed; the other we named Nancy and this displays speed and either smiles or frowns at you as you pass. We believe these devices are effective in keeping traffic speeds down, but we also aim to test that assumption further in the coming months.

Second, Jill White leads a growing and highly active Community Speedwatch team of 11 who monitor traffic at various times using a special Sussex Police device (another is on order to enable more sessions). Motorists detected as speeding receive a warning letter from Sussex Police, but on any subsequent speeding, their number plate is listed on Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) devices around the country which constantly monitor the database against passing traffic. The team has done valuable work, often in the cold and early in the morning, especially at Brook Street which sees the highest number of speeders, followed by South Street and Whitemans Green.

As well as being deterrents to speeding, both SIDs and Speedwatch provide us with large amounts of valuable data, on both traffic speeds and density, which informs our choice of location sites and timing, and for future schemes. Some data arising from the devices is outlined below.

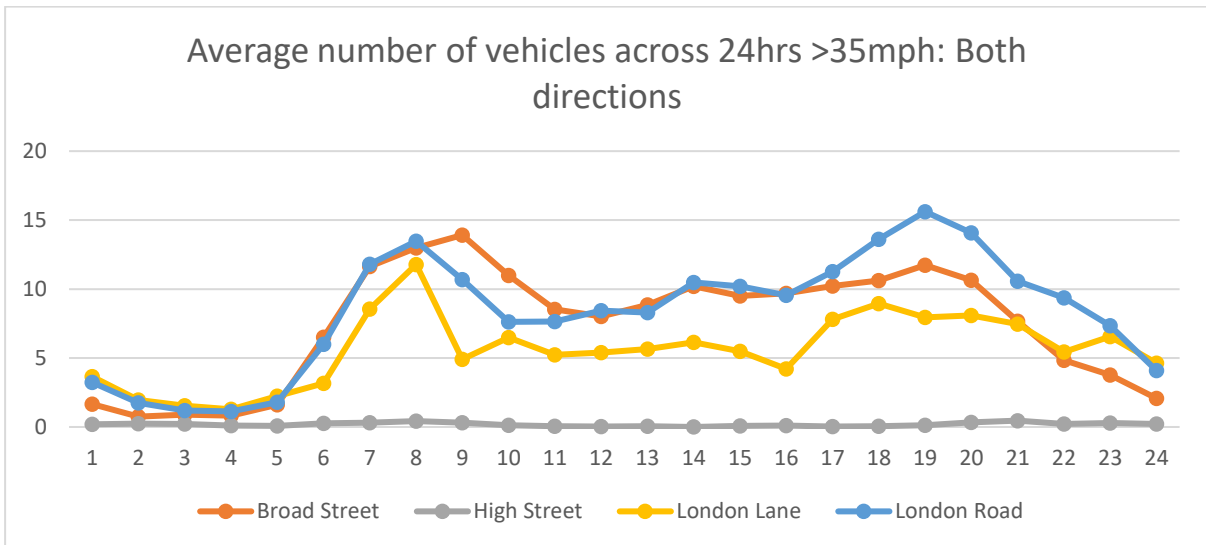
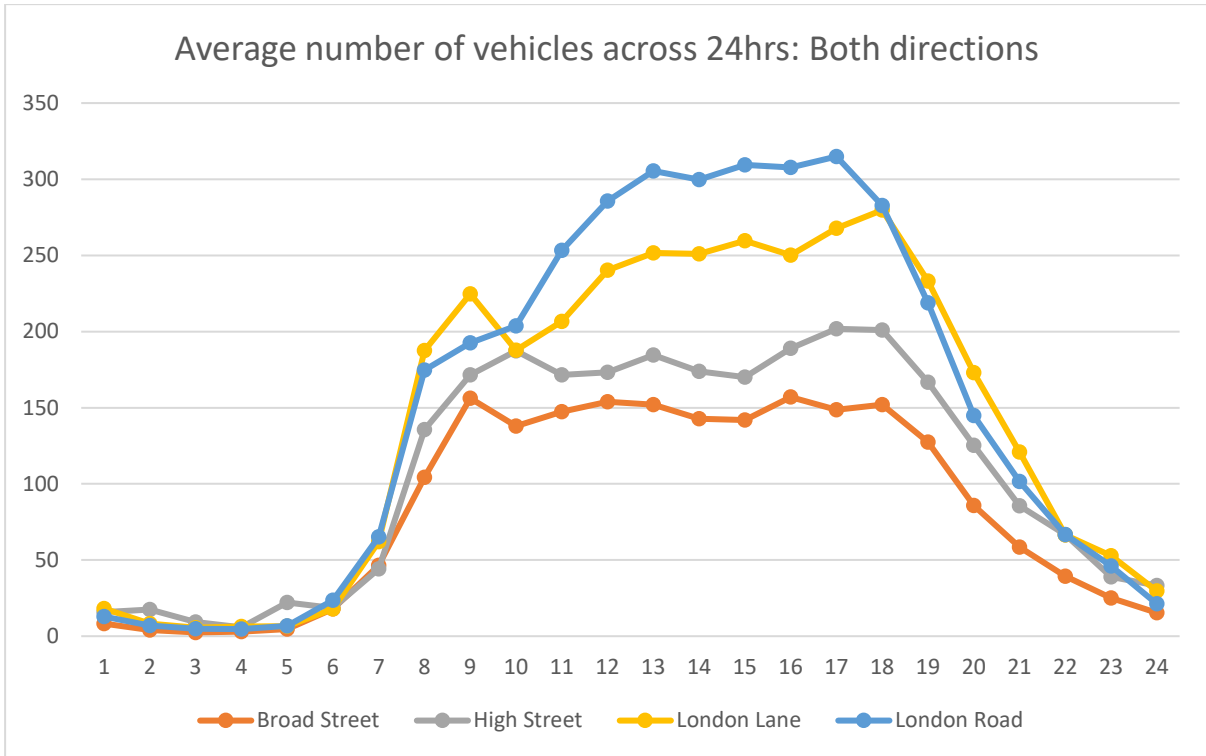
We are currently engaging a traffic consultant to look at options for future traffic management schemes through the village.

**Speeding information for Cuckfield 2020**

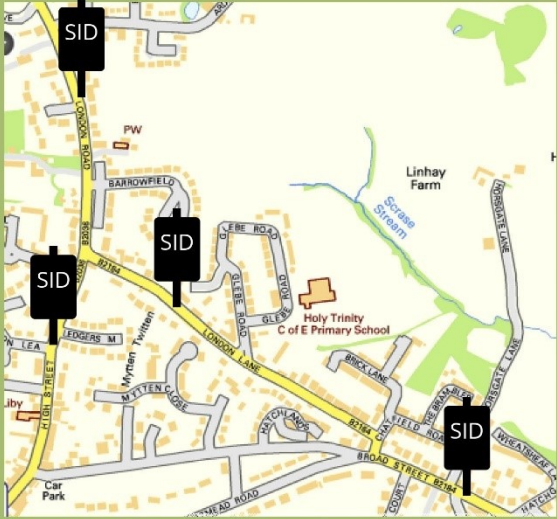
- Total number of vehicles passing a speed sensor: **581,584**
- Total number of vehicles over 35mph (set to remove inaccuracies): **29,183**
- Total number of vehicles over 60mph: **32**
- % of vehicles speeding: **5%**
- Highest speeding: **Broad Street Inbound**
- Lowest speeding: **High Street Downhill**
- Speedwatch checked: **18,457**
- Speedwatch vehicles checked: **18,457**
- Speedwatch vehicles over 36mph: **1,786**
- Speedwatch over 60mph: **5**
- Speedwatch over 60mph in a 30mph zone: **5**
- Speedwatch total % speeding **9.7%**

**Volume of Speeding Traffic**

	Total Vehicles recorded (all speeds)	Vehicles recorded >35mph	% <35mph	Vehicles recorded >60mph
<b>Broad Street (Inbound)</b>	139,907	12,974	9.3	15
<b>Broad Street (Outbound)</b>	26,769	1,711	6.4	6
<b>High Street (Downhill)</b>	24,224	35	0.1	-
<b>High Street (Uphill)</b>	69,737	123	0.2	-
<b>London Lane (Inbound)</b>	19,602	1,103	5.6	3
<b>London Lane (Outbound)</b>	192,032	7,215	3.8	4
<b>London Road (Inbound)</b>	79,527	4,635	5.8	2
<b>London Road (Outbound)</b>	29,786	1,387	4.7	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>581,584</b>	<b>29,183</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>32</b>



# 2020 CUCKFIELD TRAFFIC REPORT



### SID Locations

- London Lane  
- 3,407 vehicles daily
- London Road  
- 3,654 vehicles daily
- High Street  
- 2,609 vehicles daily
- Broad Street  
- 2,032 vehicles daily



### Total vehicles

more than 581,000 vehicles passed a speed sensor



### Total vehicles speeding

5% of all vehicles travelled over 35 Mph



### Speeding Time

More vehicles sped during 6AM-8AM and 6PM-8PM



### Observing the speed limit

95% of vehicles observed the speed limit

# SPEEDWATCH 3 YEAR REVIEW



## Top 5 roads for speeding

Worst roads for % of speeding:

1. Brook Street Inbound: 27%
2. Brook Street Outbound, 22%
3. White Hart Inbound, 17%
4. W/mans Green Outbound, 11%
5. W/mans Green Inbound, 7%



### Total vehicles

18,457 vehicles passed the Speedwatch team



### Total vehicles speeding

1,786 were going over 35mph



### Total vehicles going 2x limit

5 vehicles were going more than 60mph