



Annual General Meeting

18th June 2026

Chairman's Report

In January 2024, following completion of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Committee approved a new Mission Statement which was *'To promote physical enhancements in the public and private realm of the East and West wards of Englefield Green to improve the area for the convenience and wellbeing of the residents'*.

I am pleased to report that some of our projects are beginning to come to fruition.

Three years ago we first presented a plan to revitalise the Central Area of Englefield Green. After much back and forth with Surrey County Council we eventually received a grant (for which we were very grateful) and permission to proceed. The new Village Square is the result of those efforts, and from the feedback we have had believe it is an improvement on what was there before. It even features on Google Maps now! There are one or two remaining things to install, and we are currently working our way through the paperwork to allow us to proceed.

We are very grateful for the strong response to our call for volunteers to assist in maintaining the Village Square, undertaking watering, planting, weeding and general tidying. Well done 'The Friends of the Village Square'. If you want to help, please drop us a line!

A couple of years ago we started planning for the planting of trees and hedges throughout our Village, and particularly the Forest Estate. This has been a particularly difficult project to promote, as Runnymede Council for financial reasons do not wish to take on the maintenance of anything planted. However, we have now had a grant approved and are in the middle stages of planning (with RBC needing to approve) where about 40 trees will be planted in the Village. The actual planting will take place, we hope, in November this year, so watch out for another call for volunteers to assist! If anyone is interested in promoting the 'greening' of Englefield Green and can join our committee we would be very grateful to hear from you.

Over the past year and a half, under the guidance of one of our committee, a group of volunteers from the Central Area of Englefield Green and the East Ward Councillors (the Parking Pilot Project Group, or 'PPP') undertook house to house

surveys and analysed previous studies of parking in the Central Area, where the problem of congested parking has been a major unsolved problem over a considerable number of years. With the co-operation of Surrey CC Highways some additional parking bays have been found in the area, and the design of a scheme to eliminate casual parking and ease matters for residents is well under way, with public consultations due shortly. We hope you will all support this initiative when it eventually comes to fruition (after 15 years of being talked about, something is being done!)

Speeding is a problem in some parts of the village, and we have successfully lobbied for a 40mph limit on Bagshot Road, Prune Hill and Priest Hill. The former two are in place but despite some terrible accidents on Priest Hill that one is still under way due to the complication of the road crossing the border requiring two local authorities talking to one another.

Your opinion has been sought on a proposal for a 20mph speed limit throughout most of the village. Not everyone agrees on this but we think it will improve life in the village, even if it is not always strictly adhered to. Incidentally, a 20mph speed limit in an area contributes to creating a 'liveable neighbourhood' and thereby helps us to tap into other sources of grants. It also allows us to promote cycling without the expense of having to put in separate cycling lanes and markings, and reduces air pollution. (think mother and child on St Judes walking to primary school) So the benefits are sometimes hidden!

There are other projects in the pipeline, but there is no point in highlighting them here, as they are all grant dependant and whilst we continue to apply for grants, nothing is real till the grant is approved. Suffice to say we are still following the Neighbourhood Plan Placemaking recommendations and when we get news we will pass it on to you.

We are still looking for someone to join the committee to promote the commercial side of our village life. We believe that it would be useful to have input from our shops and businesses to see what would improve the footfall and allow our businesses to thrive. A kind of 'Chamber of Commerce' if you like, so we can focus in on organising improvements that help.

In March/April 2025 we started the process of applying to establish a Parish Council for the combined wards of Englefield East and West. We felt that the imminent reorganisation of Surrey into two Unitary Authorities and the dissolving of all local Councils and with only two councillors representing a combined Englefield Green and Virginia Water based in Guildford was all too distant to effectively progress local matters.

At the various stages when residents were asked for their opinion, I am pleased to say support was solid, and we are hoping that the Parish Council will be able to start operating some time in mid 2027. It will have very little responsibility devolved to it to begin with, but we expect it will very shortly be dealing with many of the matters that concern our residents. The big advantage will be the presence here in the Village of

an office and personnel who will pursue matters brought to them- a face, not a distant e mail to Guildford!

We continue both to monitor planning applications to ensure they comply with the Neighbourhood Plan and the ongoing task of pre-application discussions with applicants, where possible, to try and ensure consistency in design and development.

Luckily, there have been no highly controversial applications during the year, and we keep our fingers crossed that this continues.

We continue to support initiatives to introduce an Article 4 directive in Runnymede. An Article 4 directive when combined with Planning guidance, allows Runnymede to control all applications for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's). At present, HMO's of below 5 occupants cannot be refused if certain safety regulations and the like are demonstrated to be complied with, and HMOs above 5 occupants are also likely to succeed, regardless of the density of HMO's already in the area. I'm afraid there is no chance of this being introduced before the new Local Plan is introduced (2029) but such is the bureaucracy we have to push now to ensure it is eventually included.

We hope you have seen an improvement in our communications in print and online, and hope our newsletter is informative. We are pleased that registrations have continued to rise steadily, both in e mails registered and followers of our Facebook page. Keep passing on the word! It's your Forum and you'll only know what is happening if you let us communicate with you.

Lastly, as mentioned above, we are in need of more committee members. None of the Committee are getting any younger, and the more hands the easier the work. Our recent success in the Village Square demonstrates we can make a real difference, and whilst time is not considered of the essence in local government agencies on which we are dependant, patience and perseverance is paying off. Be a part of the team and make a difference!

Best regards to you and your family.,

Mike Kelly,

Chair, Englefield Green Village Forum Steering Committee