

Chairman's Report

The past year has been a roller coaster ride, with some great successes, but other projects still not properly resolved. At the end of 2016, the culmination of four years' hard work came to fruition, when the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan was successfully supported by local-residents through a public referendum. The Plan came into legal force on 3rd February 2017, and now forms part of the statutory planning regulations for the parish. The Plan seeks to control aspects of development, and deliver better facilities for local residents.

Importantly since the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the delivery of our neighbourhood plan, the parish will now receive 25% of developer contributions on all future approved development within the parish. CIL will bring rich rewards and considerable benefits to our parish, and the parish council will play a pivotal role in developing and delivering additional facilities for the community. We are the only Parish Council in Wokingham to have achieved this.

We have also been working very hard to secure the best sport and leisure opportunities for all our local-residents to enjoy. Working closely with the Borough Council (WBC) and local sports clubs, we have had great success in improving the playing facilities at Ryeish Green. The grass pitches have now had underground drainage installed to alleviate flooding and these should open for business from September this year. An artificial full size pitch with flood lights is now open and this will provide all season play and training facilities. WBC, after pressure from us, has decided that refurbishment of the existing sports centre is a better option than building a separate new pavilion with facilities for teams using the grounds. This plan will see demolition of part of the existing sports centre, re-building new changing facilities, and re-opening of the main sports hall. This has been budgeted for 2017-18 by the borough and we expect to see final plans for consultation later in the summer. Overall this will be an investment of close to £3 million in improved sports facilities for our community. The parish is also talking to the Shinfield Association about improvements at Millworth Lane Recreation Ground and to the University of Reading, who are committed to developing more sports facilities close to High Copse Farm. In all, we need to ensure these plans are co-ordinated to provide our needs today and in the future when all the new developments are fully occupied.

We have continued to work with WBC to develop designs for the new Shinfield community centre at School Green. Whilst there have been delays in this process, we hope to get the design stage on-stream in the next few months and agree a basic plan for presentation to all our residents. This new community centre is an important project that will see another £2.4 million of investment, funded by developer contributions, in community facilities and will provide a key up-to-date facility for a wide range of uses. We are, at the same time, developing closer ties with both Spencers Wood and Grazeley Village halls and will be looking at how facilities might be improved at these sites.

The Parish Council has been involved in reviewing speed limits on all local roads, and has launched a petition for a 30 mph speed restriction for key roads within the parish. In other highways matters, the Parish Council is pressing WBC to take action on the bends on Hyde End Road, which are causing increasing concern amongst residents due to the growth in volume of large vehicles on this route.

Based on the feedback from residents in the Neighbourhood Development Plan over protection of the green separation gaps between the settlements, the Parish Council has objected to the planned bus road across the green separation between Croft Gardens in Spencers Wood and Shinfield Meadows developments. This bus road was part of the original plans, but nevertheless is regarded as a blot on the green separation space. The Borough seems impervious to our objections, despite proposing, but failing to deliver, numerous bus routes through developments in the parish. The Parish Council objects to the wasting of large sums of money on projects such as the bus gate on Basingstoke Road at Mitford Fields, which has never been used for its intended purpose, and is now scheduled to be removed. Buses work best where there is a proper, integrated network bringing benefit to travellers. Local buses serving the parish at present only regularly serve Reading and Wokingham town centres, meaning they can only meet the needs a relatively small proportion of those travelling. The new Science Park, when it is open, will be added to the Leopard 10 bus route, which will move to 30 minute intervals.

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Parish Council Chairman
Peter Hughes

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Ballot boxes at the referendum count on 8 December 2016 where 87% of residents supported the plan.



Councillors and staff at the referendum count at Shute End, Wokingham.

From left: Sue Roberts (Clerk), Cllr Peter Hughes (Chairman), Katy Hughes (Deputy Clerk) and Cllr Andrew Grimes (Vice Chairman)



Celebrating sixty years of Grazeley Village Hall.

From left: Cllr Peter Hughes (centre) with Dave Herring and Vic Jerome of the Grazeley Village Hall Management Committee



One of the teams at the Annual Pancake Race, won by the Budgens Team.

We recognise the frustration and inconvenience suffered by local residents by the lengthy delays in completion of the Eastern Relief Road. Opening of the road is now almost a year late, and still no date is on the horizon. We will continue to monitor the situation and do what we can to get the project completed and assist those blighted by the scheme to get some resolution to their issues.

We maintain regular contact with all the companies developing housing in the area, along with the University of Reading, major land owners, planners and other officers at Wokingham Borough Council to understand their aspirations locally, viewing and commenting on their plans. Over the past year our planning and highways committee have reviewed and commented on 157 planning applications ranging from small home extensions right through to the major housing developments.

We have worked with our local partners to honour our heritage and tradition, such as through our annual Remembrance Day parade in Shinfield. We organised a second successful Pancake Day Race for local schools and businesses and are actively involved in supporting the annual Spencers Wood Carnival. We have a wonderful army of volunteers in the parish, who are at the heart of our community, helping others and supporting the local community in a whole variety of ways. These include running the voluntary car scheme and computer club, picking up litter, looking after our footpaths, and the local environment, and working with our young people.

This year we said goodbye to three Councillors – Jacqueline Greenway, Judith English and Christopher Moore – and I thank them all for their hard work on behalf of the parish council. But we have been delighted to welcome three new Councillors onboard: Nigel Boyer, Gordon Hewett, and Darrell Lias, who have already made important contributions to the council’s increasing workload. We are still very keen to recruit more councillors and volunteers, especially those with skills such as accountancy, IT or PR and marketing expertise, who want to make a difference to their community – please let us know if you are interested.

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice-Chairman Andrew Grimes, the chairs of all our committees my fellow councilors, our staff and the many residents who play an active role in the community for their tremendous hard work and support to me throughout the year – I am very grateful, and wish them all every success next year.

About the Parish Council

Parish Councils are statutory bodies and the first tier of local government, at the heart of the community. Shinfield Parish Council is apolitical, and made up of 15 Councillors, supported by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and a number of part-time staff. The councillors are all volunteers.

The Parish Council receives income from a number of sources but the main one is our “precept”, which residents pay as part of their Council Tax. The Council’s activities fall into 3 main areas: representing the local community; working with partners to deliver services to meet local needs and striving to improve the quality of life and community well-being across Shinfield Parish.

Our full Council meets monthly, and currently we have 5 main committees: Planning and Highways, which meets every 3 weeks due to volume of business; Communications and Policies; Development Board; Finance & General Purposes and Recreation and Amenities which each meet at least 4 times a year. In addition, there is a Staffing Committee, and a number of Working Groups which meet as required to review and take forward specific projects or activities. The Council also has representatives on a whole range of outside organisations, from the Spencers Wood and Grazeley Village Hall Management Committees to the Neighbourhood Action Group and groups linked to the planning of the Shinfield area Strategic Development Location (SDL).

The work of the Council and its busy committees over the last year is summarised in this report. For details of the council’s work and council and committee meetings please see our website, www.shinfieldparish.gov.uk, or contact the Parish Office. Members of the public are always welcome to attend our meetings.

Committee reports

Communications and Policies Committee

Engagement has been the theme of the work that the committee has undertaken during the year, seeking to find new ways of listening to, supporting and informing our residents.

With the multitude of changes happening across the parish, with new homes, new infrastructure and new residents arriving, the committee has sought to grow the council's profile within the community, through the following means:

- Establishing regular councillor surgeries
- Running information exhibitions
- Broadening our use of social media to share information and give residents an opportunity to give their views and feedback to the Parish Council. Residents can follow us on Facebook (Shinfield Parish Council) and on Twitter @ShinfieldPC
- Meeting and engaging with residents at local events
- Producing the council's quarterly newsletter, distributed to all homes in the parish.
- Establishing an e-news letter
- Maintaining relationships with local press and media and producing press releases on key local issues.
- Sponsoring local events such as Spencers Wood Carnival and the School Green Pancake Day Races.

Over the course of the year, the committee has adopted new guidelines on the use of social media, on document retention and a strategy for community engagement.

In addition, work has been undertaken to develop the recently launched new Parish Council website, in particular, to make it more mobile-friendly.

A new booklet of information on the parish for new residents has been launched, which is available from the Parish Office and the sales offices of the new developments.

The committee continues to work to develop how the Parish Council communicates with the community, and welcomes suggestions and ideas from residents on how we can improve this.

Development Board

The Board comprises a number of parish councillors and independent lay members, and this year, work has focused on managing the parish's interests in the new Shinfield community centre. The board has been working with the Borough Council to agree what should be incorporated into the facility, prior to progressing to a design stage and planning application, which we anticipate will occur later this year.

The Development Board will be working through a process for assessing projects for CIL funding, and seeking a coherent approach towards community facilities and projects.

Finance and General Purpose Committee

The committee ensures that we operate as efficiently and effectively as possible and that we work SMARTly through robust performance management: Being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely .

We are committed to ensuring we give real value for money in the services we provide. This year we introduced a new accounting system to allow for a more detailed analysis of our income and expenditure, phased budgeting, and short, medium and long-term business planning and the associated risks as the parish continues to grow. This is one means by which the staff can manage an increase in workload with the same resources.

We have also improved our audio-visual and IT systems, including our ability to review CCTV footage, and work remotely, both of which allow us to manage our resources and time better.



Volunteer litter picks across the parish were held in March, May and October. Dozens of volunteers helped clean up local streets and recreation areas



Information stands on local developments at the Spencers Wood Carnival in September 2016, which is sponsored by Shinfield Parish Council to provide a day out for parish residents



Donating money raised at the 2016 Pancake Race to the Royal Berkshire Charity, supporting the Lion and Dolphin Children's Wards



Thanking our amazing parish volunteers at a reception in November 2016

Planning and Highways Committee

With all the ongoing development around the parish, it will be no surprise to hear that it has been a particularly busy year for the Planning and Highways Committee. The committee seeks to represent the views of local residents to Wokingham Borough Council, our Local Planning Authority.

Over the past year, the committee has sought opportunities to speak with local residents and has worked hard to raise awareness and knowledge amongst local residents about the changes coming to the Parish. In our quarterly newsletters, we have sought to provide up-to-date information about the infrastructure and large scale house building that has now commenced. During the autumn of 2016, the council displayed maps and shared development information with local residents at the Spencers Wood Carnival, and this was followed by two 'Development Update' exhibitions held at the Parish Hall during October and November, where information on both approved development and on sites for the WBC Local Plan Update, expected to be approved in 2019, was shared with residents.

In order to keep ourselves up-to-date with the works programme, our staff have been regularly attending update meetings with Wokingham Borough Council to allow us to share information on upcoming works with residents, and ensure that the Borough Council is aware of the impact that the traffic and construction works are having on our community. We have also sought presentations and meetings with local developers to learn about the plans and proposals for the parish, to ensure that we can share this information with our residents.

Alongside the Neighbourhood Plan, the committee has approved the conversion of more than 120 street lights managed by the Parish Council to LED, which will result in longer term energy cost savings. The Parish Council has been able to take advantage of a significant grant from Central Government enabling the work to be carried out at a much reduced cost. This conversion work will take place over the coming months.

Over the past year, the Parish Council has adapted to a move away from traditional paper planning applications, to an online format, initiated by Wokingham Borough Council. With more than 150 planning applications reviewed and commented on, the committee has invested in improved computer facilities at the Parish Hall to enable the council and residents to be able to view applications on a large screen.

We seek to support residents' concerns however we can; although we should emphasise that WBC is not duty-bound to take our remarks on-board. Should residents have concerns or comments on planning and highways matters generally, they can attend the local Community Forum meetings organised by WBC; voice their concerns via the parish council website or social media, or attend our councillor surgery sessions.

Recreation and Amenities Committee

The committee believes that a clean and green environment, sport, leisure and recreation are at the heart of promoting happy and healthy lifestyles. We take great pride in supporting our local community, and we have worked hard over the last year to protect and enhance the local environment, provide more public seating, improve our bus shelters, clear rubbish, pick litter, and arranged a clean up and ongoing maintenance programme for the Grazeley Road Pond.

It is of concern that we must continue to spend considerable sums of money clearing litter from Spencers Wood Recreation ground, removing graffiti and dealing with dog waste. Dog wardens do operate in our area and fines of up to £1000 can be handed out to owners who fail to clean up after their pets.

The Parish Council has carried out a programme of repairs and refurbishment to our properties, including Spencers Wood and Ryeish Pavilions, and the Parish Hall. We secured an energy efficiency grant for new lighting in the parish office and meeting room, and we are planning a major refurbishment of the Parish Hall over the next few months for the benefit of all our hall hirers and users.

We have continued to improve the overall appearance of the public open space known as Deardon Field, in particular, the new Community Orchard, and we are keen to develop this as an attractive family environment.



Safety concerns on Hyde End Road with increased volumes of large vehicles using the road



The Parish Council is working to reduce speed limits on main roads within the parish. In response to residents' concerns, a petition has been started.



House building in the parish began in earnest in the summer of 2016 and work is now underway on at least 5 sites across the parish.



Safety improvements at Grazeley Road Pond

Recreation and Amenities Committee continued.....

Our volunteer group constantly monitor footpaths especially as some of these will be diverted during construction of the new developments. Through the year the group have made a number of improvements including opening up a sound footpath from the Millworth Tennis Courts to the Langley Mead Sang and have negotiated with the borough and developers alike to get positive footpath improvements throughout the parish.

Spencers Wood Pavilion remains very busy, serving as the base for both the Chapel Lane playgroup and the Volunteer Car Service. Over the last year, our youth workers have arranged a variety of activities for local young people. Spencers Wood Recreation Ground is very popular, offering play and fitness opportunities for adults and children of all ages. We have worked hard to keep our children's playgrounds both exciting and safe, and the adventure playground equipment continues to be well-used.

Last summer we were very grateful to the Co-operative Food Store for their generous sponsorship of our successful annual garden competition. In addition to prizes for hanging baskets and best front garden, there were two new categories: how wildlife friendly you can make your front garden; and for the best up-cycled container for plants.

Our allotments have also had a successful year, and we were delighted that Fraser's Retail (BP Garage) in Three Mile Cross agreed to sponsor our annual allotment competition. The allotment holders' annual general meeting was as popular as ever, where we announced the winners of the best kept allotment competition for both seasoned gardeners and newcomers.

Staffing Committee

As well as monitoring and reviewing staff performance, we ensured the continued professional development of our staff and councillors, who are actively encouraged to undertake new and refresher training as required. We continue to review and implement our health and safety duties and responsibilities, and remain committed to being a caring employer.

Budget report

Despite rising costs we do not wish to place any additional financial burdens upon our residents, and have decided that for this year we can meet our expenses from our own reserves. We are therefore pleased to report there will be **no increase** in our charge for 2017-18, which will remain at £66.30 per annum for a Band D property. Our precept for 2017/2018 year will raise some £341,000 against £317,000 in the previous year.

Your Parish Council tax charge 2017/18:

	£
Precept	341,047
Annual charge Band D property	66
Change on previous year's charge	Nil

	£
Expected annual expenditure 2017/18	722,584

	£
Expected annual income 2017/18	
Precept	341,047
Other sources of income	46,861
Met from reserves	334,676
Total	722,584



A new kissing gate funded by the Parish Council and installed by the Loddon Valley Ramblers group at Langley Mead SANG to provide a mud-free entrance into the SANG from Millworth Lane



Improvements to the surface of footpath 11 from School Green to Deardon Way, achieved by the Shinfield Volunteer Group, in collaboration with the Parish Council and Buxted Construction



New fencing at Deardon Field which is managed by Shinfield Parish Council as an open recreation space and community orchard, located off Deardon Way



CIL money will allow the Parish Council to invest in local facilities for the community



Shinfield Welcome Club, supported by a grant from Shinfield Parish Council, funding regular activities for local residents.

Grants

The Parish Council is very proud of its local voluntary and community sector, and tries to support local groups and activities where it sees real benefits to the parish and its residents. Grants to organisations serving the community as a whole take priority. The purpose of the grant should be in the interests of, and bring direct benefit to, the parish and its residents. Funding may be given to a charitable or not-for-profit body for the furtherance of its work in the local community.

Approximately £20,000 was paid in grant funding during the 2016/17 financial year. Awards were made to the following organisations: St Mary's Infant and Nursery School; St Mary's Junior School; Whiteknights Primary School; Lambs Lane Primary School; Oakbank Secondary Free School; Grazeley Parochial Primary School; 1st Shinfield Brownies; 1st Shinfield Guides; Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre; Berkshire Vision; Cruse Bereavement Care; Keep Mobile; Mobile Information Centre (MICe) bus; Pearmans Croft Residents' Association; Readibus; Reading Citizens Advice Bureau and Wokingham Citizens Advice Bureau; Remembrance Sunday; Shinfield Parish Volunteer Group; Shinfield North Community Group; Shinfield Voluntary Car Service; Spencers Wood Carnival; Spencers Wood Local History Group; Spring Gardens Lunch Club; Three Mile Cross Bowls Club; Wokingham District Veteran Trees Association; the Shinfield Welcome Club; Wokingham Job Support and Wokingham Homestart.



Shinfield Parish Council



Shinfield Parish Council

Shinfield Parish Hall

School Green

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Parish Councillors



Nigel Boyer
Grazeley



Ian Clarke
Spencers Wood
and Three Mile
Cross



Phil Emmet
Spencers Wood
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Andrew Grimes
Spencers Wood
and Three Mile
Cross



Gordon Hewett
Shinfield Village



Carole Hughes
Shinfield Village



Peter Hughes
Shinfield Village



Darrell Lias
Grazeley



Akhtar Masood
Shinfield North



Ian Montgomery
Shinfield North



Dawn Peer
Spencers Wood
South



Roy Pike
Shinfield Village

There are currently vacancies on the Parish Council, so if you are interested in finding out more about how you can get more involved in the local community, please speak to Sue Roberts, Clerk to Shinfield Parish Council.