

Chairman's report 2017-2018

In my last report we detailed some of the challenges that were encountered throughout the year, leaving with a huge amount of effort and nothing to show for it. This past year has still been a hugely challenging year but all of our efforts over the previous years are now coming good.

The work that we started back in 2014 to revitalise the sports facilities at Ryeish Green, came good last October when the grass pitches now properly drained were opened and the new all-weather flood lit artificial turf pitch was completed. This was a combined effort between the parish and Wokingham Borough along with the involvement of our local borough councillors. The overall plan is not yet completed as work is now underway to deliver new changing facilities and re-open the sports hall. This with a new 48 station Gym will open in July this year. Managed by Wokingham's new leisure contractor it will provide unrivalled facilities for all our sports clubs. Arrangements are currently underway to swap the parish's interest in our old pavilion at Ryeish and our two football pitches for land owned at Deardon Way which we currently lease from the council. This will mean overall ownership and management at Ryeish will be with WBC and similarly parish will take control at Deardon Field.

We are now working with the borough and the University of Reading to secure the adjoining land at Deardon Field owned by the University to extend this leisure area right through to the Ridge Sang providing extensive leisure facilities in this part of the parish. When these negotiations are completed we will be looking at further improvements on this site, bringing the footpaths up to standard providing a safe clean route to Oakbank School and better on-site facilities, such as picnic tables and more tree planting.

We have not forgotten other parts of the parish and we are in negotiation with the University to acquire land off Hyde End Road to open a new park facility that would link through the two SANGS north and south of Hyde End Road. This would provide extensive walking and recreation land for many of the new homes in Shinfield and Spencers wood and regain some of the lost fields that were previously accessible.

By the time you read this report we will have appointed the architects to design and construct the new Shinfield Community Centre that has to be provided as part of all the new developments. This will be on the old British Legion site at School Green, Shinfield joining the proposed Village Centre to be constructed by the Shinfield Meadows developer. Because the parish council took the view that a simple square box would not be the legacy we would want to leave future residents then we embraced an architectural competition run by the Royal Institute of British Architects to seek the best possible solutions. This involved some ninety architect's practices showing interest in entering the competition. This was whittled down to twenty-six and from which five practices were invited to submit entries, the selected outline winning entry will be shown to the community very soon before we start to get down to the detail. The winning entry was selected by a joint panel representing the parish, Wokingham Borough and lead by a high-level consultant architect appointed by RIBA. We have a budget of some £2.3m to construct and equip this new

building and hope to submit a planning application later this year, with construction starting in 2019 and completion early in 2020.

We are currently looking at community facilities in Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross and have appointed Locality, an independent community engagement consultancy to review current facilities, engage with local residents and users of all the existing facilities and deliver some proposals on how these could be improved. Funding for any improvements could come from the Community Infrastructure levy that the parish now receives since adoption of our Neighbourhood Plan last year. Equally we will be talking to Grazeley Village about how we might help them improve the Village Hall.

During the past year we made some major improvements to the parish hall which was beginning to look dated and with failing services needed a substantial update. Now completed this venue has new heating and ventilation equipment, a new floor, an improved kitchen and refitted toilet facilities incorporating the latest environmental technology. With other improvements to chairs, tables and kitchen ware this is now the most up to date facility for all kinds of parties and other events and meetings. This shows what could be done in Spencers Wood and Grazeley and how we will address the construction and fitting out of the new Community Centre in Shinfield.

We continue to support local events such as Spencers Wood Carnival by assisting with their up-front costs in organising the event. We work with as the lead organisation to deliver the annual Remembrance Day Service at School Green, attended by many local residents, which in 2018 will importantly remember one hundred years since the end of the first world war. We run pancake races and the carol service on School Green in conjunction with local schools and churches, no pancake races this year due to the date falling during school half term holidays. We will hopefully be back next year on pancake day and certainly Carols on the Green will feature with a much larger Christmas Tree and hopefully a warm welcome after the event by Shinfield View repeating their last years offering.

Much more to do in the coming year, we are very vibrant parish council and it is disappointing that we have gone through the year with unfilled seats on the council. We have got some new members this year, but still seek some additional members to help us complete all the plans we have.

My thanks go out especially to Carole Hughes who has left the Council to concentrate on her position as Vice Chair of Shinfield Infant and Nursery School as they embrace a period of change. We miss Roy Pike who passed away late last year, one of the longest serving members of the parish council and a person who was particular over the council's finances.

I thank our staff, Sue, Katy, Angela in the office, who keep us in check and do much of the work plus our support staff running the youth club and looking after our facilities.

Not forgetting of course my fellow councillors who give up much of their time in an attempt to make things better for everyone, and importantly those people who not members of the council who volunteer for a wide variety of roles, from running various clubs, the car service, the volunteer group and looking after our footpaths

Without our whole team this would not be as good a place to live, could you not give a few hours to volunteer somewhere.

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