

Chairman's Report - Peter Hughes



2018-2019 has been a very positive year. Projects that had been planned for some time have begun to take shape, and we have achieved a great deal. However, it has also been a year that has seen a great change to our staffing.

Firstly Katy Hughes, our deputy clerk decided to take on the role of clerk to Wokingham Without Parish Council, a good advancement for her, but the loss of one of our longer serving staff members and a mine of information. We decided to review this role and look at splitting the responsibilities, bringing a qualified

accountant on-board as an essential to our team as we continue to grow. We were lucky to recruit Jane Mason, who had all the additional accounting expertise we needed, and we could then build Katy's remaining workload into other roles.

Towards the middle of our financial year we then lost our main clerk Sue Roberts, who decided to look for pastures new, leaving us in a situation with no qualified clerk and the remaining team all being very new to the job.

Mike Balbini joined us as clerk in January. Mike has been a parish councillor for some eight years in Bourne End and had spent much of his working career in the Pharmaceutical world. He has broad business experience and was looking for a change in tempo and this seemed to fit into our thoughts of recruiting someone with wide business experience as the parish continues to grow. So far, things are working well, and we have a wholly new team, enthusiastic, and ready to face new challenges. Mike Balbini will introduce the new members of the team later in this report.

We took the opportunity whilst reorganising the staff to upgrade our offices by changing our meeting room into additional office accommodation so providing sensible working conditions, a new telephone system, upgrading our computer systems providing each employee with a lap top computer, able to work from anywhere and installing a proper server to begin to remove excessive amounts of paperwork.

Whilst all of this was going on, we maintained our usual management of the land and buildings we are responsible for, despite extra costs from outside contractors. We completed the improvements to the parish hall which have turned out to be a great success with more interest in the up to date facilities. Do come and have a look at what is now the best equipped hall in the area and busy most of the time.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors, our staff both old and new and the many local residents who help the council by volunteering, running local organisations. Without everyone pulling together Shinfield Parish would not be quite the same place to live and I hope that the plans we have for the next few years will improve things further.

Chairman's Report cont.....

2019 is the year that all our parish councillors stand for re-election for a further four year period. If more nominations than available seats are available then this goes to election on 2 May along with some of our borough councillors. The whole timing of the election is determined by key dates, you need to have applied to stand way before the actual Election Day. This year ten of our existing parish councillors stood for re-election and as insufficient nominations were received by the closing date they are automatically elected. Thursday 11 April is formally the last meeting of the existing council, the new council holds its first formal meeting on 16 May when the chair for 2019/2020 will be elected along with other key members. James Reid and Gilly York's, members of the current council stood down and I thank them for all their work since becoming councillors. This means we have five vacancies which we are able to fill by cooption, please contact the clerk if you would like more information..

Much has happened in the plans for the new community centre at School Green and the parish whilst still working closely with Wokingham Borough Council, is now responsible as the lead on this project and will appoint the contractors and manage the project as it proceeds. Plans are virtually finalised following a number of public events where local residents were able to voice their opinions. We have recently appointed an employer's agent working for the parish who will advise, control and manage the costs of the construction. We expect to be able to submit a full planning application in a month or so, only slightly behind schedule.

As part of this development we have finally agreed terms with the Shinfield United Charity and are in the final stages of purchasing the existing parish hall, up to now we only held a long-term lease. Once ownership is completed then we can fully integrate both buildings as originally planned.

The Ryeish Green Sports facility finally opened last September. Whilst we were not involved in the detail, financing or management, we played a key part in convincing Wokingham Borough to redevelop the existing sports hall rather than demolishing it and replacing with a smaller changing facility. This facility complete with a 45 station gym is a fantastic addition to our parish providing superb year round pitches, an artificial flood-light pitch, a large sports hall and the gym. We need to use it to ensure its long-term success, so make sure you visit it soon if you haven't already done so. As yet we still have to finalise agreements with the borough over the pitches and old pavilion that the parish own there and the land that the borough owns at Deardon Way, ideally, we want to swap one for the other.

You will remember that our ***Neighbourhood Plan*** which you supported and was adopted in 2017 was delivered mainly to protect the parish through excess development outside the South of M4 strategic development zone it is still valid, however, it seems to have failed to stop developers winning appeals for even more houses. One of the benefits of the plan is that it gave us the right to collect 25% of any Community Infrastructure income received from developers. At the time this wasn't a key element as most of the developments were paying S106 money to the borough to reduce the impact of the development and provide necessary infrastructure. This all changed as the Borough introduced Community Infrastructure Levy, a fixed levy on most new build. The effect of this and the additional housing won under appeal has bought the parish an unexpected dividend, to date we have received nearly one million pounds in CIL money for us to decide what to spend it on with certain restrictions. Our initial thoughts were to strengthen community facilities throughout the parish and a number of projects are underway to consider these.

Finance and General Purposes Committee- Chair Andrew Grimes



The F&GP committee is comprised of all the chairs of the council's committees plus a co-opted councillor with accountancy qualifications. The prime responsibility is to manage the council's overall expenditure, produce budgets, deliver monthly finance reports and manage our reserves. The council's vice chair is the chair of this important committee. Our reserves are secured with National Savings Bank and other UK banks working within the protected limits of each bank, sufficient cash is held in a current account to allow for several months of normal operations. It is our policy to make payments to suppliers quickly and especially to those smaller local businesses who carry out much of our routine maintenance work.

Our finance committee is also responsible to consider applications for larger funding support from clubs, village halls and other non-religious organisations in our parish. This funding support could be a loan to improve facilities or purchase new equipment or one-off grants or a combination of the two elements. If you feel that your organisation could benefit from this kind of support, then you should contact your local parish councillor in the first instance to register your interest.

How do we develop our budgets?

Each September/October all of our spending committees start to review their budgets for the following civic year April to March (basically the tax year). We have previous years information to hand, six months of the current year and with that information can take a view over how much will we will need to finance the following year. It is the council's current policy that all normal accepted running costs are recovered from the precept charged to residents and one-off costs are paid from reserves or funded from Community Infrastructure levy.

Each committee budget requests are then considered by our Finance committee and merged into an overall budget for the council which may be adjusted up or down by the committee. The end result is proposed by the finance committee and discussed by full council in December or January in time to be advised to Wokingham Borough Council for inclusion with your Council Tax Bill. Our precept has been unchanged for the past three years. We have however decided that a small increase is necessary for the coming year, this means around an additional £10 per annum for the average property.

Although we benefit from the new homes when they are occupied it takes over twelve months from occupation before we receive any precept from them and that only applies from the start of the forthcoming year. A house occupied in November 2017 does not benefit the parish until April 2019, although the precept has been collected by WBC from day one.

Some of Our Key Projects for 2019/2020

- 1. In Spencers Wood we need to replace the temporary building on the recreation ground that currently provides facilities for the pre-school nursery, the youth club and car service office. This 20-year-old temporary building is an urgent project. Plans for this will be finalised over the next few months looking to undertake this project in 2020. There is the opportunity to upgrade and possibly extend the Spencers Wood Village Hall and the initial work on this is now complete waiting for the hall committee and local people to decide what they want.**
- 2. In Grazeley the village hall committee have made decisions on upgrading their facilities and this, with a combination of their own funding and parish council contributions, will be undertaken this year.**
- 3. The Millworth Lane recreation ground managed by the Shinfield Association has always been an important facility widely used by football, cricket and tennis clubs but has suffered through lack of investment. The parish council is now finalising plans to consider taking over management of the site and invest substantial sums to bring it up to a reasonable standard. To date we have already spent some £100K in replacing the old children's playground with a brand-new facility.**

Staffing Committee—Chair Andrew Grimes

The staffing committee is an independent working group of the council lead by the vice chair of the council, it is responsible for all staff matters from recruitment, salary levels and terms of employment. We had a busy year recruiting a whole new team both to replace leavers and as part of the agreed growth for 2019/2020. As some job responsibilities were reallocated new job descriptions were written for every role and contracts updated. We maintain a contract with external HR consultants who can advise us on our specific needs and keep us up to date with all the latest legal updates in employment terms and conditions.

Some pictures of the Community Improvements 2018/2019



Above: our new facilities Team van

Below: The Playpark at Millworth Recreation Ground officially opened November 2018



Below: The Ryeish Green Sports Hub



Above: our refurbished office



The Recreation and Amenities Committee—Chair Ian Clarke



- ◆ The R&A committee have had a busy and productive year.
- ◆ The completion and immediate success of the Ryeish Green Leisure and Sport facilities, they already have 400 plus members.
- ◆ New and enlarged children's playground at Millworth Lane Recreation Ground built and financed by the Parish Council.
- ◆ Following the refurbishment of the Parish Hall we are getting a significant increase in new bookings and this upgrade is helping us to ensure the new community centre has the right level of facilities for our residents.
- ◆ We have been carrying out our usual upkeep of hedge cutting, mowing of recreation areas, the Orchard at Deardon Field and of course letting and ensuring our 207 allotments are kept in good order.

RECREATION PROJECTS AND AIMS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

The possibility of taking over the management and development of Millworth Lane Recreation area.

Over 50 plus fenced in new allotments opposite the footpath at Deardon Field, will be available mid-summer. This is a brand-new allotment site with car parking, water supply to each pair of allotments and will be managed slightly differently to our existing sites. These should be of special interest to residents of Shinfield Meadows and The Manor, Cutbush Lane residents and other local developments. If interested in taking one of these new allotments, please get full details from the parish office.

We are looking into the possibility of building a new Pavilion at Spencers Wood Recreation Ground. During the end of 2018 we commissioned community experts Locality to carry out an extensive public research project in Spencers Wood to help us and the residents decide what was needed to cater for the new residents and how that should be provided. The report highlighted a number of important issues, but could not meet the expectations of many local residents who felt the lack of certain outdoor recreation facilities, which cannot be provided as there is no land available, left gaps in the report.

We are working to get more open space for our community, where we envisage the following facilities, ball play, basketball and netball nets, small play area for the little ones, then put in picnic tables to enable the local community to meet and socialise. There are small pockets of land dotted around the parish where we may be able to introduce some of these things. We are currently negotiating with the University to enlarge the Deardon Way Recreation area and will then make further improvements to expand this facility.

We are endeavouring to tidy up our Parish, calling it 'Pride In Our Parish', we have made a very small start, planting hundreds of daffodils at either end of the Black Boy roundabout, we have the enthusiasm to do more but, this is often restricted by land owners and what might be regarded as petty rules.

As part of this 'Pride in our Parish' we have invested in a full time Facilities person along with leasing a van for the parish council so we can deal with some of the many small annoying things quickly and efficiently at lower cost than employing sub-contractors. Already we have made a start by removing many illegal signs as they appear, fly posting is illegal, but WBC never do anything about it, at least in Shinfield we will. This new facility will come under the R&A committee and we will be carefully monitoring the impact of this service as it will also monitor the work of all our sub-contractors.



Planning and Highways Committee—Chair Dawn Peer

Over the last twelve months we have responded to the following residents' concerns;



- Government instructions to WBC to supply varying housing numbers, despite Land Banking and slow build-out rate by developers.
 - Low numbers of 'affordable' homes being built in the Parish.
 - Lack of bungalows or other suitable 'downsizing' accommodation, for existing local residents.
 - Recent Planning Appeals lost by WBC - Stanbury House; Land opposite Farriers Arms, and Parklands.
 - Local Plan Update 2026-2036 public consultation - biased questionnaire.
 - CEMEX - Cement Plant/Factory being given the go ahead in our Parish.
- On road parking, and inadequate parking provisions.
 - Speeding
 - Traffic, roads and infrastructure conditions - not supporting the housing being built to date - let alone the majority of homes yet to be built.
 - Continual upheaval of multiple road works and temporary traffic lights across our main traffic routes.
 - Constant ever-increasing loss of our green spaces, trees and hedgerows, resulting in the destruction of our wildlife's habitat.
 - Heightened Environmental concerns generally.
 - The building or proposed building on Flood Plains and subsequent diverted watercourses.

A New and much safer footpath alongside Hyde End Road built inside the field after Dobbies Garden Centre and continues until the entrance opposite Langley Mead SANG. This work was a combination of local residents, the volunteer group, the parish council in cooperation with the landowner University of Reading with some help from our Borough Councillors, who have been claiming it was all down to them.

Moving forward in 2019/2020

- ♦ **SIDs (Speed Indication Devices) continually provide valuable data evidence in regard to motorists' behaviour. Their presence appears to be making a difference, but also highlights excessive speeds through our villages. We have failed to date in getting any speed reductions on our roads.**
- ♦ **Two Air Pollution Monitors have been purchased, and are being installed at their selected sites, to check and monitor air pollution. which is of growing concern throughout the more built up areas in the UK. It will be sometime before we have any reliable results from the devices, but continues in our desire as a parish council to undertake these kind of projects which may help us defend our neighbourhood plan and demand no more house building.**
- ♦ **'Traffic Calming Measures' in various locations, and the provision of a pedestrian/cycle path to the Mere oak Park & Ride are being investigated.**
- ♦ **120 Planning Applications have been reviewed since the start of the Civic Year (May 2018) to our last meeting on 07/03/2019. An entire proposed development is counted as one application.**

Community Services Committee—Chair Ian Montgomery



This is a newly constituted committee charged with the remit to bolster community activities within the Parish, both those involving the Parish Council directly and those outside the Council but possibly involving Parish Council support. To date we have taken on the administration of the Small Grants Budget formerly handled by a separate Grants Committee within the Council. We have offered monies to a series of applicants to assist in the normal running of their activities and also to provide funding for start-up activity such as new Toddlers Groups, very much needed in our expanding villages.

We are also currently reviewing footpath access jointly with our planning and highways committee, both within the new SANGs and those existing previously, to make sure that all surfaces are wheelchair and pushchair friendly so that these can be enjoyed by all residents.

A review of the options and services available to the elderly within our community has identified various clubs and options and we are hoping to improve and assist in furthering their aims. Concurrently we are hoping to identify services that may need improvement for the disabled within the Community.

The provision of Youth Services is also within this Committee, since its devolution by WBC. Youth Club meetings are currently held within Spencers Wood Pavilion and also the Community Flat located at Frensham Green in Shinfield Rise. This provision is vital to the wellbeing of Youth in these areas and is much underused. We are currently looking into further provision within the planning for the new Community Centre in Shinfield.

The Committee has an agenda for various forthcoming activities within the Parish including;

- ♦ Litter Picks
- ♦ Cycle Rides
- ♦ Spencers Wood Carnival
- ♦ Volunteer Day
- ♦ Joint “Roadshows” involving Caf’Activ to promote Council activities and the facilities available at St Michaels Church. A successful Pancake Day on Shinfield Green was enjoyed by local school children and residents of Shinfield View Care Home with whom we also maintain close links.
- ♦ We are also hoping to strengthen links with the church community in the Parish and work alongside them in activities to widen our position and presence in the Parish.

Clerk's Report—Mike Balbini



My name is Mike Balbini and I am the new Clerk and started on the 2nd of January this year. There has been quite a change in the staffing at the Parish Council over the past few months and I would like to introduce the new team to you. Should you arrive at the office in the morning you will be normally greeted by Angela who has been here for 14 years. At 12 noon there is a hand over to Lynda who started November last year and mans the reception desk in the afternoon till 2:30pm. Lynda also looks after the media side and is updating the website and facebook.

From a financial point of view, we can all feel assured that our finances are in order through the work of Jane our Finance Manager who started in June last year.

Facilities within the Parish will now be addressed by our new Facilities Manager, Luke who started in November last year and is assisted by Kerry whom you all know as he has been here for a number of years. Luke is also the proud driver of our new facilities van that will mean more rubbish or larger items can be moved or disposed easily by the Parish Council. Luke has already stripped the parish of a large number of unlawful signs such as those painted on car bonnets.

These can be thought of as the frontline staff, but we have other staff that you might not see on a regular basis these are:

- Jo our Committee Secretary who takes the minutes of our 7 committees;
- James our Planning Support Officer who assists with the large number of planning applications we deliberate on;
- We have three litter pickers who help to keep the parish clean and tidy: Heather, Richard and Tim;
- We also have three youth workers: Mark, Kim and Harriet who run youth activities in the Spencers Wood Pavilion and the community flat in Shinfield North.
- We also have a Senior Youth Worker (TBC). Well that is the new and established team, we look forward to another year supporting the Parish.
- Our extended office hours are 9am to 2:30 pm with a half hour team meeting every Monday but should you turn up one of the team will see you.

We stock replacement blue rubbish bags at £4 for 10 and Garden rubbish sacks at £1 each, if you have recently moved into a new home your builder will have given you a supply of bin bags and the new food waste bins. if this has not happened, often the case when you move into an existing house, then you will need to Contact WBC and get them to send you authorisation that either, we at the parish council or any WBC library can supply the missing bags.

(Please note we do not hold any spare food waste bins or supply the plastic bags that they use).

Contact Information

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