

BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2007/2008

I would like to present my Annual Report in my sixth year as Chairman.

Last May saw elections for the Parish Council (PC). Yet again there were not enough applications to hold an election and those who were nominated were elected unopposed. Two councillors retired – Vicky Hunt and Barry Mursell and I would like to thank them for their contribution and years of service for the village. We welcomed one new councillor, Nigel Dixon. However, we still have vacancies for two councillors so if you would like to join us and serve your community please contact the Chairman or Clerk.

The work of the Council has continued throughout the year with full Council Meetings held every month apart from August. All members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings and to speak if they so wish. Agendas and Minutes can be found on the PC Notice Board outside the One Stop shop, on the Village Centre Notice Board and on our website www.broadbridgeheath-pc.gov.uk which went live in May 2008. This also contains general information about the village and Parish Council as well as a general news page. In time, we hope that local organisations will be able to use this to post dates of their meetings, contacts, recent news etc. Please email the clerk@broadbridgeheath-pc.gov.uk if there are articles or details you would like included.

Councillors have represented the village at various meetings during the year including the Reference Group. This group, which consists of representatives from Broadbridge Heath (BBH) PC, Denne Neighbourhood Council and Horsham District Council (HDC) members and officers, has been meeting over the last two years to discuss the Masterplan for the West of Horsham. I am sure I don't need to remind you that, despite our numerous objections and concerns, at least 2,000 new homes will be built in this area by 2018. The Reference Group has spent a lot of time discussing the various road layouts that would provide an acceptable and efficient scheme for everyone. Key for our village is the prevention of the Billingshurst Road becoming a short cut (rat run) for traffic getting to and from Horsham from the west of the District. This issue will be discussed at our Annual Parish Meeting, but in brief, two highway options were presented in the Masterplan. It now seems, however, that the option favoured by the Parish Council will not go ahead as West Sussex County Council say they cannot support it. We have grave reservations about the alternative road scheme that is proposed and we are continuing to fight for what we consider to be the best option for the village, both old and new.

Other issues such as community facilities have been discussed at the Reference Group and the Parish Council has been in touch with various groups in the village such as the Football Club and the Village Centre, to see what aspirations they have for the future in order to try and incorporate these in the Masterplan.

Obviously there have been many other issues and challenges for the Parish Council over the last year and I would like to mention a few other areas in which we have been involved.

Speeding through the village continues to be of concern to many people and since the last Parish Meeting new road signs and red textureflex surfacing gateways have been introduced at all the entrances to the village.

SID (a device which flashes up the speed of oncoming cars and is used as a deterrent) has been in operation on a few occasions. However, we are desperately in need of more volunteers to train and use the device particularly at the beginning and end of the working day when we have the main volume of traffic through the village. Please contact our Clerk if you are interested in helping us with this.

On a positive note, BBH Parish Council submitted an application to HDC to be included in their Big Lottery bid for new outside equipment for children and young people. I am pleased to say that this was accepted and HDC's bid was successful. The grant will allow us to add substantially to the play equipment at the Village Centre and also provide a Youth Shelter in the village. Young people visiting the Snack Wagon suggested to Youth Workers that they would use such a facility if it were available. We will, of course, be consulting with the appropriate age groups and local residents before starting work on these projects. If you would like to become involved in this process please contact the Clerk.

We are hoping that the Youth Shelter will in some ways help counteract the sporadic problem of anti social behaviour in the village. The Local Action Team (now known as the Community Action Team) led by our PCSO Jeff Grant, has been working with some success to try and overcome these problems. The lay-by next to the Common is still a favourite meeting place and many of you will have noticed the 'CCTV in operation sign' which has recently been erected there.

The play area at Singleton Road was another area where youngsters were gathering and a small minority causing problems. Following a street meeting with some of the local residents we have now put a fence across the entrance with a gate which we are investigating locking after dark.

Future improvements for the village include two new cantilever bus shelters for the bus stops near the Shelley Arms and, as part of a joint initiative with HDC, we are hoping that a mobile Skate Park will be visiting the village later this year. A replacement swing is to be erected at The Common and the broken posts around the perimeter replaced.

Following up on some of the items mentioned at our last Annual Parish Meeting, some new fencing has been put up at the Charrington Way play area and the stile has been replaced by a gate together with a handrail leading down to the road. Tesco have cut back shrubs along the area from the underpass to the store and seem to be doing a reasonable job in keeping this area free from litter. Some residents at the last meeting mentioned problems with parking, particularly on the verges, and these concerns were passed onto the police and relevant organisations who have taken action where appropriate.

Allotments are an ongoing issue and we are currently investigating possible sites for this long awaited village amenity.

Following the demise of the village magazine last year, I am pleased to say that we are going to trial a new company to edit and distribute a magazine starting in September. Comments on the new format and any copy to be included would be much appreciated.

During the last year the Parish Council received several local planning applications to evaluate and comment on. Planning meetings are held twice a month (if there are plans to review) and all meetings are open to the public.

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council continues to run its finances in a sound and sensible manner and for the last financial year was able to fully discharge its legal and statutory responsibilities in an orderly manner, meeting the requirements of the official auditor. Those of you who have studied your Council Tax bill will have noticed that our precept is lower than for last year. For the financial year 2008/09 it has been set at £46,495, which for a property in Band D equates to approximately £39.46 a year – a decrease of nearly 11%.

Our village is kept remarkably clean and tidy thanks to the efforts of our Litter Warden - Jim Cate. I would like to thank him for his dedication and hard work which is much appreciated by everyone in the village. Unfortunately, dog fouling is still a problem and I would ask that dog owners act responsibly and use the bins provided or take litter home to dispose of.

Tracey Hooker, our Parish Clerk, resigned in November last year and my thanks go to Tracey for her contribution to the work of the Parish Council. Mary Burroughs joined us as our new Clerk in January and has already proved to be a reliable and worthy successor. I would like to thank Mary and Helen Dayneswood, the Clerk for Strategy and Development, for the support they have both given me as Chairman and for their hard work and enthusiasm.

In closing, I must also thank my fellow Councillors for their support and commitment to duties carried out on behalf of the village of Broadbridge Heath. Particular thanks to Malcolm Curnock - Vice Chairman, Geoff Clark - Chairman of the Planning Committee and Judith Jones - Chairman of the Recreation Committee.

Viv Edwards
Chairman
May 2008