



BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2009/2010

As the tier of local government closest to the people of Broadbridge Heath (BBH), the Parish Council has been involved in many issues throughout the last year that impact on daily life in our village including housing, recreation, transport and the environment. In some cases, our powers have allowed us to take direct action e.g. management of recreational space and the collection of litter in the village. In other areas, such as housing, planning and highways, our role has been to ensure that the views of BBH residents are represented to higher authorities such as Horsham District Council (HDC) and West Sussex County Council (WSSCC).

Issues are discussed and decisions made at Parish Council meetings which are held every month apart from August. We also have Recreation, Planning, Finance and Establishment Committees which meet regularly. Agendas and Minutes for all meetings can be found on the notice boards outside the One Stop shop and in the entrance hall of the Village Centre as well as on our website www.broadbridgeheath-pc.gov.uk. All meetings are open to members of the press and public, who are entitled to speak if they so wish.

Broadbridge Heath Parish Council should consist of 13 councillors (all volunteers), but we are currently one member short due to the resignation of Tony Blann earlier this year. I would like to thank Tony for his work on behalf of the village. If you are interested in the future of our village and would like to join us as a co-opted Councillor, please come along to one of our meetings to see what is involved.

We know that the circulation of a regular magazine with details of what is happening in the village is important and hopefully you will have seen the latest issue of the Village Magazine (published in February) which is organised and edited by the Parish Council. Throughout the last few years, the magazine has undergone many changes and it is now in a format that is self-funding and, we hope, sustainable.

Don't forget that our website also contains general information about the village and PC. If you would like any relevant local information included please email the clerk@broadbridgeheath-pc.gov.uk.

In my report last year, I mentioned that following the award of the Big Lottery Grant, work on the new improved Play Area and Youth Shelter behind the Village Centre was almost complete. The official opening was on 20th June and I am pleased to say that the new equipment has been a great success.

Unfortunately, some of the swings at the Village Centre and Common play areas have been damaged recently by what appears to be teeth marks of dogs who we understand have been encouraged to hold onto the seats of the swings. This does constitute criminal damage so please, if you see this happening, report it immediately to the police on 999. It is sad that this equipment, which gives pleasure to so many children, can be abused in this thoughtless manner.

Despite this, the Recreation Committee is determined to continue improving the play equipment in our other play areas and is also exploring the possibility of installing some outdoor fitness equipment for older age groups.

The lack of allotments is an ongoing problem in the village and one that the Parish Council has been trying to solve for some years. We have had meetings with local land owners and did find some suitable land last year, but unfortunately the owners were only prepared to let us have a short term lease – no use for anyone wanting to establish an allotment. However, we have not given up hope and are continuing our search with help from HDC and WSCC.

I am glad to say that the installation of new stronger metal posts around the perimeter of the Common deterred any visitors last summer, but please remain vigilant. If you see any unauthorised person or vehicle trying to enter the Common, report it immediately to the Police on 0845 60 70 999 or, if any damage to property is being committed, call 999.

The Finance Committee oversees the income and expenditure of the Parish Council and our accounts are audited every year. I am pleased to say that our last audit report concluded that the PC runs its finances in a sound and sensible manner and fully discharged its legal and statutory responsibilities. The Annual Accounts for the last financial year (2009/2010) will be available for inspection in June 2010.

Mindful of the difficult economic times, the Parish Council has only increased the precept by 1.3% for 2010/11. It has been set at £48,280, which for a property in Band D equates to approximately £41.39, an increase of just 47 pence over last year.

The Parish Council is aware of the enormous contribution made to the community by various organisations that operate in the village, most of which are run by volunteers. We do have some funds available to support such organisations and in the last year, awards included £750 to the Junior Football Club and £2,700 to the Youth Club. A small grant was also made to a group of enterprising youngsters in the village who came and presented their plans to us for repairing and improving the dirt jumps at the BMX track in Byfleets Lane.

The Youth Club, which started last year at the Leisure Centre, has been a great success and I would like to congratulate them on being awarded 'Best New Youth Club' in the Horsham District together with Partridge Green. At the last count, there were apparently 200+ members with approximately 95% of them residents of Broadbridge Heath. The grant from the Parish Council has allowed a third youth worker to be employed to help with the increase in numbers.

Our PCSO Jeff Grant continues to be active and has recently been promoting the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the village. As some of you may be aware, this has also been extended to some of the younger members of our community. Speeding in the village continues to be a hot topic and Jeff has been working with some local volunteers to promote SID, a device which flashes up the speed of oncoming cars and is used as a deterrent. We now have our own volunteer co-ordinator for the village, which hopefully means that you will see a lot more of SID around. New volunteers are always welcome – please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

Other areas that the PC continues to get complaints about include dog fouling, parking on the pavements, flooding in certain areas of the village, and most recently, pot holes! All of your comments are taken notice of and, although in many cases we ourselves have no direct power to take action, rest assured that comments are passed on to the relevant authorities and followed up wherever possible. As we have had so many comments about this recently, it is probably worth mentioning that pot holes can be reported directly on the WSCC website.

Planning continues to be an important area for the Parish Council, although we saw a marked decline in the number of applications last year – probably due to a combination of the uncertain

economic climate and changes in planning laws which mean that owners are now able to make less radical changes to their properties without planning permission.

On a strategic level, the Parish Council is still very much involved in the various stages of planning for the proposed new development West of Horsham. Councillors continue to represent the village at meetings of the Reference Group where issues concerning the development are discussed. In November 2009, Countryside Properties submitted a new outline planning application for the area to the South of Broadbridge Heath for 963 residential units, community facilities, highways and various other works. The Parish Council reviewed this application and submitted a detailed response to HDC. In summary, we still have many concerns, particularly about the new highway layout, traffic calming for BBH (we are still pressing for a consultation in the village about this) and provision of infrastructure and community facilities.

Berkeley Homes also submitted an outline application for work on the Horsham side of the A24. This was due to be decided on by HDC in March, however, at the last moment HDC deferred the decision and we understand that they are now talking with Berkeley Homes to renegotiate various aspects of their application, particularly with regard to the provision of affordable homes.

As I write this report, we are still not sure exactly what this means for the Countryside application – all I can say is that we will seek to keep you informed through our meetings, the website and the magazine.

In closing, I have many people to thank, all of whom contribute to the smooth running of the Parish Council and community of Broadbridge Heath.

Jim Cate our Litter Warden who is out in all weathers continues to provide an invaluable service, for which we are all grateful.

Thanks also to Mary Burroughs our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer who carries out a difficult job with great enthusiasm and, since gaining her CiLCA qualification recently (congratulations!), with increasing expertise. Also, Helen Dayneswood, the Clerk for Strategy and Development, who is to be admired for her knowledge for all things relating to the LDF.

I must also thank my fellow Councillors, in particular Malcolm Curnock - Vice Chairman, Geoff Clark - Chairman of the Planning Committee and Judith Jones - Chairman of the Recreation Committee.

Viv Edwards

Chairman
April 2010