



## **BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Chairman's Report 2011/12**

My report last year was written just before the incumbent members of the Parish Council (PC) were due to stand down and a new council elected for a four-year term. Those of you who take an interest in such matters, will note that our councillors are exactly the same as they were before and while it is encouraging that all councillors were prepared to stand again, it is disappointing that no new residents put themselves forward for election. This means that we still have vacancies for two councillors, so if you would like to join us and be part of what is going to be an exciting and challenging time for the council and the village please contact the Clerk or myself for more details.

An issue that has tended to dominate local news recently is the future of Broadbridge Heath Leisure Centre (BBHLC). The initial decision to close the Centre was as much a surprise to the PC as it was to residents and many of the users. Although BBHLC is a facility for people across Horsham District, it is very much valued and used by the local community. The PC hosted an open meeting in December to allow members of the public to listen to and ask questions of representatives from Horsham District Council (HDC) about their proposals. Due to the public outcry, HDC decided to allow more time for public consultation and appointed consultants to put together a detailed business case about the future of BBHLC. Key users, local residents and stakeholders (including the PC) have been consulted and the final report is due to be presented to district councillors on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. This will then be subject to public consultation before a decision is made at a meeting of HDC at the end of June. Although the future for BBHLC and its users is still uncertain, please be assured that the PC is seeking to ensure guaranteed provision of equivalent or better leisure facilities for all residents of Broadbridge Heath.

Many of you will have noticed (and as we heard during the Annual Parish Meeting) that work has started on the new development to the south of the village. Trees and hedges have been cut back along the perimeter of the development area and work on the access road for construction traffic is to begin soon. We understand that building of the first houses will start later this year – see the report from the Planning Committee for further details. We have asked the developers to provide us with regular updates about what is happening on site and this information will be available on our notice boards, website, in the magazine and, of course, at our regular monthly meetings.

The PC continues to be involved in many aspects of village life, often working in partnership with other organisations to help improve facilities and services. A recent success, brought about by working with West Sussex County Council (WSCC), is the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system which, by the time you read this report, should have been installed at the bus stop by the Shelley Pub.

Our County Councillor, David Sheldon, acts as a liaison between the PC and WSCC and I would like to thank him for the support and knowledgeable advice he provides.

We also have close ties with Sussex Police and our local PCSO Roy Millard and Police Sergeant Rachel Carr provide us with monthly updates as to what is happening in BBH. I am pleased to say that, on the whole, there is very little to report although speeding through the village and inconsiderate car parking continue to be a worry for many residents.

Other issues that cause concern include dog fouling, pot holes, fly tipping and street lights that are not working. We pass any complaints we receive onto the relevant authorities, but I would stress that in many cases it is quicker to report issues directly to the relevant organisations via their website or just by making a quick telephone call.

The lack of allotments in BBH continues to be a problem. Last year I reported that suitable land had been identified, but unfortunately we were unable to convince the owner to lease it to us. Currently, we are looking into the possibility of using Crown Land adjacent to the current by pass, but it would help our case if we knew exactly how many people in the village would genuinely like to lease an allotment. If this applies to you, please contact the Clerk.

The PC continues to be concerned about cuts in the provision of local services, particularly for the young, elderly and more vulnerable residents in the village. We are keen to offer support where we can and I would like to remind organisations that the PC does have a small amount of money to award grants to worthy causes. Last year we awarded grants to the Village Centre, BBH Football Club and BBH Scout Group.

Over the year we received a number of consultation documents which we responded to on behalf of the village. This included the recent consultation concerning the number of houses required for Horsham District in the future. In this particular case, we were unable to agree with any of the options put forward by HDC, considering them all to be too high.

The Annual Report is in a slightly different format this year as the chairman of each our 3 main committees has prepared a brief summary of the work undertaken in the last year.

**Councillor David Trangmar – Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee**

The parish precept collected through council tax for 2012/13 remains unchanged for a third year, at £48,280. However, a reduction in the number of properties in the parish has led to a small increase in individual council tax bills, which are about £41 per year for a band D property.

As the village changes and grows, we are planning carefully to ensure that our cash reserves allow us to maintain and improve the environment within the village and the facilities that we provide.

Our current reserves are mostly earmarked for future use, such as ensuring that the village has appropriate representation in planning issues relating to the new development, and maintaining the play areas, the exercise equipment and the village's trees and open spaces

**Councillor Geoff Clark – Chairman of the Planning Committee**

The planning agenda has been dominated during the last year with the outline planning application by Countryside Properties for 963 residential units and community facilities, to the south of Broadbridge Heath. More recently we have seen the first detailed planning applications for 105 residential units, this being the first phase of the new housing development, along with the associated infrastructure, including the first section of the new east-west link road, which will eventually link the A264 to the A24 running primarily to the south of the new development. These applications signal the start of the most significant period of development of Broadbridge Heath village and have necessitated considerable time and effort being spent by the Planning Committee in reviewing and passing comment to the District Council in order to try and ensure the best possible planning outcomes.

A scheme to develop the Heath Barn Farm site with approximately 40 dwellings has also been brought to the attention of the Planning Committee. We understand that amended plans for this site will shortly be available for review and comment.

In the course of the last year the Planning Committee has also considered numerous other more minor schemes, mostly consisting of applications to extend or develop domestic properties, within the parish boundary.

**Councillor Judith Jones - Chairman of the Recreation Committee**

We are extremely fortunate in the village to have such a plentiful supply of green spaces and recreation areas which we work hard to maintain and improve.

Fitness equipment, which was installed last summer at the Charrington Way Open Space and behind the Village Centre, has proved to be extremely popular with people of all ages and levels of fitness. The old swing at Charrington Way was replaced at the same time. Thanks to volunteers from Horsham Green Gym, the Ducky and surrounding areas have been tidied up and later this month they will be working on clearing the ditch behind the Village Centre. As a thank you for their continued efforts the PC has made a small contribution to their funds.

Jess Woodall, our tree warden, successfully applied for a grant on our behalf, which enabled us to plant 11 trees in the green space at Charrington Way. These have been planted in recognition of the Queens Jubilee and it is hoped that in June there will be an official 'opening ceremony' – watch the website and notice board for further details.

Please note that following a health and safety inspection of all trees in the village that belong to the PC, some essential work will be carried out in the next few months, primarily to remove any dead wood and dangerous branches.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who contributes to the smooth running of the Parish Council and community of Broadbridge Heath.

This includes Jim Cate, our Litter Warden who continues to provide an excellent service, for which we are all grateful and Hugh Bayne who carries out running repairs on our behalf.

Thanks also to Mary Burroughs our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer who carries out a difficult job with great professionalism and integrity and Helen Dayneswood, the Clerk for Strategy and Development, for her invaluable knowledge about all aspects connected with the new development.

I must also thank my fellow councillors for their hard work and support over the last year, in particular Jonathan England - Vice Chairman, Geoff Clark - Chairman of the Planning Committee Judith Jones - Chairman of the Recreation Committee and David Trangmar - Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee.

*V Edwards*

Viv Edwards, Chairman

April 2012