



BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2015/16

It would be wrong to start my annual report without first paying tribute to Malcolm Curnock who very sadly passed away earlier this year. Malcolm was our longest serving parish councillor and it was with great pride that he often told us how he had been involved since the formation of the Parish Council in 1987. It was a privilege for us as councillors to serve alongside someone who was so knowledgeable and passionate about our village.

Once it was known that Broadbridge Heath (BBH) was to virtually double in size, he worked hard both as a parish councillor, and as our district councillor for four years, to try and secure the best possible facilities and infrastructure for the growing village. His commitment to ensure that Broadbridge Heath had the recreation and sporting facilities, particularly for football, that it deserved was unwavering. It is tragic that he will not be around to see the plans that he was involved in for so many years, turn into reality.

Broadbridge Heath and the Parish Council owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Malcolm, we miss him.

Elections were held in May 2015 for both the Parish and District. Eleven parish councillors were 'elected' unopposed and this included two new faces – John Newton and Roy Neilson. Matthew French was elected as our new District Councillor. We extended a warm welcome to them all as we did to Christine Knight who joined us as a co-opted councillor in December.

We now have 11 councillors, two short of our full complement. If you care about your community, please do consider joining us. We are keen to see all areas of BBH fairly represented on the Parish Council so would particularly like to hear from residents in the newer part of the village.

In my last report I mentioned the number of changes that had taken place in the village during the last council's four-year term of office. We are currently at a stage when many of the plans for improvements and changes as a result of new development will, we hope, soon turn into reality. I will leave it to the Chairman of the various committees, not only to tell you about what has happened over the last year, but to elaborate on what we can expect to see happening in the village in the near future. Suffice it to say, there are exciting times ahead!

Councillor Jonathan England – Chairman of the Local Development Committee (LDC) and The Village Centre Development Sub-Committee

The LDC considers strategic matters related to development in Broadbridge Heath. With the majority of large development applications having been submitted and approved (including Gleeson's "Land North of Guildford Road", which was allowed after a public hearing), much of the committee's work concerns delivery of facilities promised to support the increased number of residents. There continues to be concern that facilities will not be delivered on time, to sufficient quality or at all and so LDC members have attended regular high level meetings (chaired by Tom Crowley, Chief Executive of Horsham District Council (HDC) with representatives of HDC, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Countryside Properties (CP) to resolve these issues.

On the negative side, healthcare providers have confirmed that they will not provide the promised doctors surgery in The Neighbourhood Centre. WSCC has stated that it will no longer expand and move Shelley Primary School onto land handed over by CP. Instead, WSCC will make improvements on the existing site and are asking central government to fund a new academy school, possibly but not definitely, to be sited on the new land. The Parish Council considers this is unacceptable and that the school matter is not yet closed.

On the positive side, WSCC will deliver traffic calming along Old Guildford and Billingshurst Roads in the old part of the Village by the end of this year. After this, there are funds (but no committed dates) to upgrade Farthings Roundabout with traffic lights and to downgrade the existing A264 bypass after which all through-traffic should use the East-West Link Road. HDC have commissioned early design proposals for removing

the Leylandi hedges and landscaping the land around the downgraded road and between The Neighbourhood Centre and Village Centre. The timing and funding for the final scheme are not yet known.

Negotiations are on-going regarding the new home for Broadbridge Heath Football Club, to be provided near to the present sports centre, but agreements will hopefully be finalised soon so that the pitch can be seeded and a new pavilion built to allow the Club to start playing there in the 2017-2018 season.

Design work is progressing on public art (totally funded by CP), which will include a significant sculpture in front of The Neighbourhood Centre and some distributed stone structures in the south of the Village.

The LDC has formed a sub-committee with the Village Centre Management Committee to deliver improvements to The Village Centre building using £450K from section 106 payments and perhaps other funds. A public consultation to define what the community wants and needs has just finished and the sub-committee has begun to draft a design brief that will allow architects to produce conceptual designs for the improved building. It is likely to be a few years before building work could begin.

Councillor Geoff Clark – Chairman of the Planning Committee

2015/16 has in comparison to the last few years been somewhat quieter for the Planning Committee, with the majority of applications being those of a smaller nature and mostly for the extension or remodelling of domestic properties. With all the main applications now in for the Countryside development there has been a return to more normal or typical planning business for the parish.

There do however remain some approved schemes still to commence build, including the Gleeson development (DC/13/2408) to the north of Old Guildford Road (behind the Shelley Arms) and for the new Neighbourhood Centre (DC/15/0284) approved earlier this year to be situated to the south of the original bypass. This new area will include retail units, a planned nursery school and an office for the Parish Council. These two developments are in addition to the approved build of 49 dwellings (DC/14/1943) on land just to the north of the A2 Dominion site (Heath Barn Farmhouse), which is also still to commence build.

You will have seen much coverage of the plans for the new Leisure Centre as proposed by HDC and a formal planning application is awaited for this development, as are finalised plans for the sports pitches and pavilion.

Specific planning committee meetings are held as required and all applicable applications are referenced at the monthly full Parish Council meetings, where our responses to Horsham District Council as the local planning authority are confirmed.

Councillor Terry Oliver – Chairman of the Recreation and Environment Committee

The Recreation and Environment Committee continues to ensure that the Parish's recreation and play areas are regularly maintained, with weekly and a third party annual inspection report being reviewed and the appropriate action taken. Our Assistant Clerk and Environment Officer attend committee meetings and offer their advice for keeping the play areas safe which provides the Committee with invaluable professional support. The Parish Council currently manages four recreation areas in the parish. These are situated at Charrington Way, The Common, Singleton Road and the Village Centre. Users of these areas are encouraged to contact the Clerk if they have any suggestions or concerns as this will help the Council in managing and, hopefully, improving the facilities.

New 'Dog Fouling' signs have been erected around the village as there has been a noticeable increase in dog fouling. The health and welfare of our residents is very important to us and we would encourage users to report to the Clerk or Environment Officer if they notice that particular dog owners are not complying with the dog fouling regulations.

A key function of the Committee is to monitor and ensure that all the Council's open spaces are maintained to a high standard. This includes regular green cutting of not only the open spaces but other key areas around the village. A detailed survey of all trees in the ownership of the council has recently been completed by a firm specialising in arboricultural assessments. A programme of remedial work will commence across the village when the birds have finished nesting.

The wild flower areas and trees planted to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee situated in the Charrington Way open space continue to grow and hopefully give users of that area some pleasure. The hanging baskets situated in part of the Billingshurst Road are now being prepared at a local nursery for the summer season and will be back on the lampposts in early June.

The Dirt Jumps on land situated adjacent to Byfleets Lane are still closed to the public; a decision as to the future of the jumps will be taken later this year.

As part of our street scene enhancement programme which is part of our Pride of Place strategy, volunteers from the Green Gym Club kindly provided their time in the autumn to plant bulbs at two entrances to the village, Old Guildford Road and Billingshurst Road. This scheme will be extended during the current year and as the programme progresses we welcome suggestions of locations that would benefit from bulb planting.

The village will in 2017 have its first 40 allotments as part of the Countryside development. News travels fast and unfortunately we now have more requests than plots, so for the time being we have closed the waiting list. When we are in a position to progress this further, most likely Spring 2017, we shall be in touch with those already on the list to let them know what is happening and to assess if there are opportunities to plot share or perhaps to half them in size to create more.

Councillor David Trangmar – Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee

The Parish Council's financial position continues to be stable. It was not necessary for us to increase the precept (our share of residents' Council Tax) for 2016/17, which remains at £48.37 per year for a Band D property.

The Parish Council is always looking for ways to improve the environment within the village and the wellbeing of the residents within it. This year, your precept has helped to improve the look of our street scene with the introduction of hanging baskets in Billingshurst Road. The ageing equipment at Singleton Road play area will also be replaced soon. There was a successful CPR training morning for residents following the installation of a defibrillator outside the Church Hall, and we continue our support for the Community Youth Workers who work with our young people in our local schools and supervise the popular Friday evening youth club (Toasties).

If you have ideas about how your money should be used to improve the village and its facilities, please contact the Clerk.

I am, as ever, very grateful to Mary Burroughs our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for her continuing support and for her commitment to the Council and the village over the last year. Many thanks also to Caroline Gould our Assistant Clerk and John Pilkington our Environment Officer for their contributions in making the village run smoothly and efficiently.

I would also like to extend my thanks to our County Councillor, David Sheldon and our District Councillor Matthew French for their work on behalf of Broadbridge Heath.

Finally, thank you also to my fellow councillors, in particular Jonathan England - Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Local Development Committee and the Village Centre Development Sub-Committee, Geoff Clark - Chairman of the Planning Committee, David Trangmar - Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee and Terry Oliver, Chairman of the Recreation Committee.

Viv Edwards, Chairman
16th May 2016