



BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2014/15

The four year term of this present Parish Council (PC) will come to an end on 11th May and as I look around the village it is evident that many changes have taken place over this period.

The most dramatic relates to the new development south of the village where already nearly 300 dwellings are occupied. Parts of the new road system, integral to the development, are open and a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists over the A24 is now in place. There is a Pegasus crossing on the existing bypass (which will be downgraded when the new bypass is open) and most of the Bridleway connecting the new and existing village has been improved, with work due to start soon on the last remaining section behind the Village Centre.

Two new garages have been established in the village which have brought some problems for local residents, such as an increase in noise, lighting and parking. These, hopefully, have been or are in the process of being resolved.

On a positive note, the area around the War Memorial has been re-landscaped and is now far more open and attractive and provides a worthy setting for such an important landmark in the village.

A defibrillator is on order and will soon be sited on the outside wall of St. John's Community Church Hall. Training in its use will be made available; if you are interested please contact the Clerk.

The PC has been involved in all of these issues and more and has worked hard to try and secure the most acceptable outcome for local residents. More details are provided in the committee reports below.

Other issues that have been of particular interest to local residents include:

Traffic Calming - the PC continues to discuss with the appropriate authorities the most appropriate form of traffic calming for the village. We are keen that measures will not only prevent traffic using the Billingshurst and Old Guildford Roads as a short cut when the new bypass is open, but will also slow down the vehicles and motor bikes that currently speed through the village.

The Leisure Centre and Broadbridge Heath Quadrant - it now seems possible that there will not be a new Leisure Centre but that the existing building may be renovated and made fit for purpose. We look forward to hearing Horsham District Council's (HDC) decision regarding this and seeing the revised plans for the area in due course, but we still have major concerns about the impact on BBH, particularly if the plans include even more new dwellings for the village.

Land north of Old Guildford Road - last year an application for 165 dwellings and a 60 bed care home was submitted for the area north of the Old Guildford Road. The application was refused by HDC but the decision was appealed by Gleeson Developments and an Inquiry into the objection was held in March. The outcome of the Inquiry is due in the next few weeks.

As regards on-going projects in the village, I am glad to report that the partnership between Broadbridge Heath (BBH), Slinfold and Warnham Parish Councils to employ a shared Community Youth Worker, Dan Fairchild, continues to provide benefits for all concerned. Following dramatic cuts in services a few years ago, the PC picked up the remit for provision of youth facilities in the

village and all seems to be going well. Dan works closely with young people and local organisations and has developed a range of appropriate services and support which include the popular youth club (Toasties), held at the Scout Hut on a Friday evening.

The local green spaces and recreation areas are much used and valued by residents and I know many people were disappointed last year when the grass in these areas was not cut regularly. We now have new contractors in place and the difference is already noticeable.

The PC 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 limited funds available to support such organisations and in the last year, awards have included grants to the junior and senior football clubs and the cricket club. If your organisation could benefit from such a donation please contact the Clerk for details.

We continue to have close ties with Sussex Police, mainly through the PSCO who is nominated to look after BBH. Currently this is Damian Cecil who provides us with monthly reports and periodically attends a PC meeting to update us on what is happening in the village.

Our County Councillor, David Sheldon, acts as a liaison between the PC and WSCC and I would like to thank him for his knowledgeable advice and support. David is currently trying to help sort out some of the parking issues that have arisen recently along sections of the Old Guildford Road.

Reports from the Chairmen of the individual committees follow:

Councillor Jonathan England – Chairman of the Local Development Committee (LDC)

The LDC takes a strategic approach to development and last year considered outline planning applications as well as some public consultations.

As development progresses in the village, concern exists that resources required to mitigate its effects are not being delivered on time or are in jeopardy due to lack of funds. In February the PC wrote to HDC, WSCC, NHS representatives and Countryside Properties about our concerns and bi-monthly meetings, hosted by HDC, are now in place to address the relevant issues.

The healthcare facility originally intended to be part of the Neighbourhood Centre will now not be delivered. We will continue to participate as HDC's ideas evolve to see if facilities will be included on the Quadrant site.

WSCC presently has a funding shortfall of £14M for providing road improvements and schools for the West of Horsham Development but we have received assurances that this is being addressed. The PC has had several meetings with WSCC and consultants, Wilbar Associates, to discuss traffic management schemes to limit rat running in the old part of the Village once the new East-West Link Road opens and are pushing to secure urgently the funding for this. We wait to hear the plans for the move of Shelley School.

We have also met regularly with HDC Officers and BBH Football Club to discuss the new recreational land and facilities to be provided near to the present sports centre. This has been challenging because the funds agreed in the section 106 agreement are inadequate to provide a suitable football pavilion. The PC continues to press HDC to agree which pieces of community land in the new part of BBH can be adopted and also lobbies for the completion of work that has slipped in schedule.

Lastly, a public inquiry was held in March so that Gleeson could appeal against HDC's decision last June which refused development north of Old Guildford Road. After discussions with members of HDC's team which fought to uphold the refusal, the LDC developed a response against Gleeson's appeal. Although the appeal was argued by professional teams representing both sides on two technical points (harm to the environment and to the listed building, Swan Ken) the Parish Council spoke to the inspector for over one hour to question the assumption that

no harm would be done if development proceeds. We also arranged for a show of support for refusal that was well attended and publicised in the local newspapers and on BBC Radio Sussex. The result of the appeal is due soon and it is hoped that it will be dismissed.

Councillor Geoff Clark – Chairman of the Planning Committee

At the risk of repeating last year's planning report, this year once again has been dominated by detailed applications for the Wickhurst Green development, where we continue to see sustained build rates from the three primary builders. The adjacent site being developed by A2 Dominion on the former Heath Barn Farmhouse site is also now well into the build phase.

We have during this year also seen the application (DC/14/1943) to build 49 dwellings on land to the north of Heath Barn Farmhouse, the strip of land adjacent to the existing A264 BBH bypass. This application was approved by Horsham District Council at its Development Control Committee on the 3rd March 2015.

With this piece of land now committed for development, it effectively means the parish is full as far as any further significant development, apart from two areas currently the subject of development plans or actual planning application, these being:-

- the land to the north of Old Guildford Road application DC/13/2408 where the PC submitted a strong objection to the plans; and
- the Broadbridge Heath Quadrant comprising the WSCC depot, Tesco store, the retail park and the Leisure Centre where we may see plans to build two to three hundred dwellings as part of the overall development.

There has also been the usual amount of smaller applications for the planning committee to review, typically submitted by owners of existing domestic properties in the village wishing to extend or develop their properties.

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

My thanks as always to the members of the Planning Committee, who over the last year (as in previous years!) have given many hours of their time to consider and comment on the numerous applications submitted.

Councillor Terry Oliver – Chairman of the Recreation and Environment Committee

The Recreation and Environment Committee has a broad remit to manage the Parishes recreation areas and to deliver a range of environmental initiatives on behalf of the Council.

Regular ground maintenance work and inspection of play equipment has been conducted during the year. All our recreation areas are subject to regular inspection. The Environment Officer checks the areas weekly and the annual inspection reports noted only very low or low risk items. Reported items are reviewed by this Committee and repair or replacement is agreed and carried out as necessary. Any concerns regarding recreational areas should be reported to the Clerk.

The Committee has continued to support the development of the dirt jumps and notes the commitment demonstrated by those who work on the jumps to ensure that they are kept in good condition. Unfortunately the good summer weather also brought with it a small but unwelcome group of visitors who established a small camp which was soon removed. The area is designed to provide a safe and proper environment for those wishing to enjoy riding a course of dirt jumps, however, at present the dirt jumps are closed as surface conditions are unsafe and will remain so until all the necessary inspections have taken place and the Council approves their reopening. If you think that you may be able to help maintain the jumps please contact the Clerk.

Many of you will have seen that the area around the War Memorial has had a facelift to commemorate the centenary of World War One. This is the first of a series of street scene projects that the Committee has helped deliver. This area will continue to improve in the coming months and years with maturing of the trees and hedging not to mention the addition of the spring flowering bulbs. It is important to thank Bovis Homes and Countryside Properties for their financial contribution towards the work and in particular David Wilson Homes who as well as contributing financially provided the labour to carry out the landscaping. In addition, we acknowledge and thank Broadbridge Heath WI for their contribution of a flowering cherry tree and the Harding family for donating the engraved seat.

The second of the street scene projects for hanging baskets on a series of lamp posts along part of the Billingshurst Road is in progress and hopefully we shall see them in bloom this summer. Also, the sowing of the wildflower beds in the Charrington Way recreation area has been very successful; the display should even be better next time as the plants are now well established.

In conclusion I would like to extend my sincere thanks to members of the committee and the Council Officers for their help and support.

Councillor David Trangmar – Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee

For 2015/16 the parish precept collected through your council tax has increased by 2%. For a Band D household, the increase is 95p per year (from £47.42 to £48.37), or just short of 2p per week.

During this period of change for the village, we are planning for the future to ensure that we can maintain and improve the environment within the whole of the village and the facilities that we provide. Most of our cash reserves are earmarked for future use, such as ensuring that the village has appropriate representation in planning issues, and maintaining the play areas, the exercise equipment and the village's trees and open spaces.

There have been changes to the PC and staff over the last year. Simon Collins and Ian Johnston both resigned due to pressure of other commitments and I would like to thank them for their contribution during their time as councillors. It was Ian's inspired idea to name the roads on the new development after the local people listed on the War Memorial who had died in battle.

Two stalwarts of our village, Jim Cate (Litter Warden) and Hugh Bayne (Handyman) retired last summer and on behalf of the village I would like to extend thanks to both of them for their invaluable work over the years and wish them a long, happy and healthy retirement. Replacing Jim and Hugh was never going to be easy, so we decided to combine the two roles and create a new post. I am pleased to report that John Pilkington has joined the team as our new Environment Officer and is fast becoming known as he goes around the village carrying out his various duties.

Another new member of staff is Caroline Gould who joined us as Assistant Clerk and is already proving to be invaluable. As usual, I am very grateful to Mary Burroughs our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for her continuing support and for her commitment and hard work on behalf of the council and the village over the last year.

Thank you also to my fellow councillors, in particular Jonathan England - Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Local Development 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. Also Malcolm Curnock who, as well as being a parish councillor, is our District Councillor and is a great champion of the village.

Viv Edwards, Chairman

20th April 2015