



BROADBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2013/14

This last year has seen many changes in and around the village with the housing development to the south coming along apace together with the integral new road layout and landscaping, a new Pegasus Crossing on the existing bypass, improvements to the bridle way, a new garage on the Billingshurst Road and an even bigger one in the process of being built on Farthings Hill roundabout. To some extent, the Parish Council (PC) has been involved in all of these issues keeping us busy on your behalf.

Councillors are updated monthly on the developments in and around Wickhurst Green and are regularly invited to site visits to see how work is progressing and raise any concerns. Welcome packs, which are a joint initiative between the PC and Countryside Properties, are given out to all new residents to introduce them to the village and provide details of local activities and organisations.

The new Leisure Centre and development of the Broadbridge Heath Quadrant are hot topics of debate at the moment. The outline proposals that have been put forward are quite innovative and we will be interested to see more detailed plans in the future.

The current plans for the Quadrant include 200 flats and together with the outline planning application that has been submitted for the area north of the Old Guildford Road, we could soon see our village swamped with new development. With Wickhurst Green alone, our village is nearly doubling in size. Is it fair that we be expected to accommodate any more new homes? How will the new road system cope? There are many questions that still need to be answered before the Parish Council can support any further development!

Discussions about traffic calming are still on going. Our primary aim is to prevent traffic using the Billingshurst and Old Guildford Roads as a short cut when the new bypass is open, but we are also keen to introduce measures to slow down the cars and motor bikes that currently speed through the village. With help from traffic consultants and input from West Sussex County Council (WSCC), we are considering some different options but frustratingly this is still work in progress. We will be keeping you informed and asking your opinion, through our meetings, the newsletter, notice boards and the website.

Last year I mentioned that Broadbridge Heath PC had formed a partnership with Slinfold and Warnham Parish Councils to employ a shared Community Youth Worker for our young people. Dan Fairchild has now been in post since last August and has been working closely with youngsters in the villages and local organisations to develop a range of appropriate services and support. A new youth club (Toasties) has opened at the Scout Hut on a Friday evening and is proving to be very popular.

We have several green spaces and recreation areas in the village which the PC own and manage for the benefit of the community. We try to ensure that these are regularly maintained to a high standard and have an ongoing program to replace and improve the equipment. As you may have noticed, we had some hiccups last summer with our grass cutting contractors but these problems have now been resolved and it seems that, weather permitting, normal service will be resumed this year.

This August marks the centenary of the start of World War One. To commemorate this we will be re-landscaping the area around the war memorial in the village and a local family, the Hardings, have kindly donated a very impressive wooden seat to replace the one that is currently there. We will also be sprinkling some poppy seeds around the edges of the Common and the field at the Village Centre.

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 has recently been helping some local residents sort out parking and flooding issues.

We also have close ties with Sussex Police and I am pleased to welcome our new PCSO Alex Griffey. Alex will be providing us with monthly updates as to what is happening in the village and we look forward to working with him.

Unsafe and anti-social parking on verges are two of the main problems being reported to us at the moment although overgrown hedges, potholes and dog fouling are not far behind. We pass complaints onto the relevant authorities, but I would stress that in many cases it is quicker to report issues directly by either making a telephone call or logging the problem on a local authority website e.g. West Sussex County Council's website love.westsussex.gov.uk provides a simple, quick and efficient way to report any issue concerning roads or verges.

We continue to receive a number of consultation documents which we respond to on behalf of the village e.g. we have just received a consultation document asking for our views about a proposed second runway at Gatwick Airport.

A report from the Chairmen of the committees follows:

Councillor David Trangmar – Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee

Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 the parish precept collected through your council tax increased by a total of 2%. As advised in the December edition of the village newsletter, the Parish Council decided that it was necessary to make an increase of 10.9% for 2014/15. For a Band D household, the increase is £4.65 per year (from £42.77 to £47.42), or just short of 9p per week.

The increase is primarily due to youth services which we took on from West Sussex County Council last year, but paid for out of existing reserves in 2013/14.

As Broadbridge Heath changes and grows, we are planning carefully to ensure that our cash reserves allow us to maintain and improve the environment within the whole of 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, and maintaining the play areas, the exercise equipment and the village's trees and open spaces.

Councillor Geoff Clark – Chairman of the Planning Committee

Perhaps not surprisingly, 2013/14 has been another busy year for planning activities within the parish and the PC Planning Committee. The Wickhurst Green development continues to generate the majority of the workload, as parcels of land are brought forward for development by the specific builders. The volume of information that is generated in support of applications is significant and demands a substantial amount of time to review. We will continue to see applications submitted for this site and looking ahead, this is expected to include further parcels for housing, a community/retail area (Neighbourhood Centre), open spaces and a new primary school for the village.

The application by Gleeson Developments (DC/13/2408) to develop an area of land to the north of Old Guilford Road has generated the most reaction and response from within the parish. It is clear from the responses that the proposed scheme (165 dwellings and a 60 bed care home) is seen to be a step too far for Broadbridge Heath to take.

Having considered the application and the taken into account the many responses from those living in and around the village, the Parish Council agreed to strongly object to this application.

At the time of writing this application has yet to be considered by the District Council and therefore the outcome of this application is unknown.

Although not strictly considered by the Planning Committee until any application is formally lodged with HDC, we are aware of potential future developments within the village. As has already been mentioned this may include development of the 'Broadbridge Heath Quadrant' as currently being considered by HDC and the future of the current Shelley School site in Wickhurst Lane, once the new school is built.

As in previous years, there have been the usual numbers of applications of a smaller nature, primarily from domestic home owners wishing to extend their properties.

The Planning Committee plans to meet on a monthly basis, but often the need to hold a formal public meeting is not necessary, in particular when considering schemes of a small or minor nature.

Finally I would like to thank the members of the Planning Committee for their time and diligence in reviewing and considering all applications and to all members of the parish who have provided feedback and comment to enable us to form an overall and objective view.

Councillor Ian Johnston – Chairman of the Recreation Committee

The Recreation sub-committee comprises 6 councillors, and meets 4 times a year, overseeing maintenance and issues/concerns surrounding facilities under parish control, and the local environment. Regular ground maintenance work and inspection of play equipment has been conducted during the year.

Items of particular note, beyond ground maintenance and inspection requirements follow:

- a) **Jubilee Seat, Stone and Plaque** - in August, we were delighted that the seat (made by our very talented handyman Hugh Bayne) stone and plaque, ordered in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, were sited at the bottom of the Charrington Way green space.
- b) **New Play equipment delivered in Charrington Way** – this was installed in November and includes a climbing frame. Before too long the wild flower seeds that were planted earlier in the year will bring some additional colour to this area.
- c) **Approaching completion of Dirt Jump safety improvements** - this last year has been a frustrating time as we were obliged to close the Dirt Jumps pending further safety inspections. After yet more hard work by the boys, with the welcome assistance of some heavy machinery from Countryside Properties, we are now getting close to the full re-opening of this local facility, popular with younger parishioners.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisations who have volunteered their services during the year. This includes the donation of the Jubilee Stone by Horsham Stone and Horsham Green Gym for their work at the Wickhurst Lane underpass and Charrington Way.

It is not only the village, but also the council that has undergone changes this year. Simon Collins joined us in October as a co-opted member and at our April meeting last week, we were pleased to welcome back Penny Hayles who served on the council some years ago.

This means that we now have two vacancies for councillors. This is an interesting time for Broadbridge Heath and if you would like to become actively involved in the work of your Parish

Council and support your community, please do contact the Clerk to find out how you can join us. There are also details on our website: www.broadbridgeheath-pc.gov.uk

In closing, I would like to extend my thanks to those who have worked hard on behalf of the council and the village over the last year.

This includes Jim Cate our Litter Warden who has provided an invaluable service over the years, Shaun Marshall who is helping to keep the village tidy on a temporary basis and Hugh Bayne who helps out in many ways including carrying out running repairs on our behalf.

Thanks also to Mary Burroughs our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for her support, commitment and professionalism in difficult times.

I must also thank my fellow councillors, in particular Jonathan England - Vice Chairman, Geoff Clark - Chairman of the Planning Committee, David Trangmar - Chairman of the Finance and Establishment Committee and Ian Johnston, Chairman of the Recreation Committee. Also Malcolm Curnock who, as well as being a parish councillor, is our District Councillor and is always campaigning for the best outcomes for the village.

Viv Edwards
Chairman
14th April 2014