

**WISBOROUGH GREEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**APRIL 2011**

**Chairman's Message**

It has been another busy but enjoyable year for the Council. I was again elected as Chairman in May 2010, with Andrew Jackson in support as Vice Chairman. I am extremely grateful for the help and support offered by all the Councillors and the Clerk during this past year.

We have continued with our quarterly newsletters to update you on the various issues that affect the Parish as they arise, so I will try to keep this summary of the Parish Council's year as brief as possible.

**Parish Councillors**

Having started the year in May with one vacancy, we were then sorry that Yvonne Boyd decided to leave the Council due to business commitments. After advertising the vacancies, the Council was able to co-opt both Russell Bowes and Roland Hamilton at the July meeting. The Term of Office for all Councillors comes to an end in May 2011 when the Parish Council elections will be held, although Mark Robinson resigned earlier in March due to work commitments. Details of the election were published in the newsletter and on the notice boards. Five nominations were received which means that these members have been elected uncontested; Keith Charman, Roland Hamilton, Andrew Jackson, Mike King and Patrick Mahoney. James Donovan, having intended to resign, has now agreed to be co-opted back onto the Council. Some expressions of interest to fill the remaining 3 vacancies by co-option have been received although further interest is encouraged. Our thanks to Russell Bowes and Nigel Parsons who will be leaving the Council.

**Meetings**

During the past year, the Parish Council met on 10 occasions, on the third Tuesday of the month at 7.45 pm, in the Committee Room at the back of the Village Hall. Meetings were not held in August or December. Details of all meetings are published on the notice boards and website. Members of the public are most welcome to attend and a public questions section is included on every meeting agenda to allow members of the public to address the Council.

**Newsletter**

We have now established a good relationship with Eyelevel Publishing of Pulborough who are reliably distributing a very professional quarterly newsletter. It is printed and distributed at no cost to the Council; advertising revenue covers the costs. We are featuring seasonal photographs of the village (the only village in the locality to do so) so welcome contributions from budding photographers.

**Website**

The website continues to be regularly updated by the Clerk and is full of useful information and contact details; forthcoming events, church service times, details of village organisations and business listing to name but a few. Do take a look and let us know what else would be of interest to you. Your comments are always welcomed.

**Planning**

Details of the planning applications to be reviewed by the Council are published on the notice boards. During the year, the Parish Council reviewed 74 which was double the number reviewed during the previous year. Most plans were reviewed at the full Parish Council meetings, although the Planning Committee met on 2 occasions due to response deadlines. Again, details are published on the website.

We should at this point mention The Three Crowns application for 5 bedroom units in the garden which caused considerable public response. It was a contentious issue which generated unprecedented public attendance at our Parish Council meetings. The application was referred to CDC's Area Development Control Committee due to the Parish Council and public comments, which concluded that the application should be refused. Public attendance at the Chichester meetings demonstrated considerable public concern and was a contributing factor to the final outcome.

**Road Safety**

The Community Speed Watch Group did some sterling work with the Speed Indicator Device (SID) around the village. Unsurprisingly and in common with many communities, we do have issues with speeding traffic. Thanks to all those involved, their findings, observations and some proposals have now been discussed with WSCC Highways. For the time being though, the Group has decided to suspend its activities pending further feedback from WSCC Highways.

Earlier in the year, we became aware that road improvement money relating to the Garmans development and provided by the developer, was still being held by WSCC. There were restrictions on the use of this fund and through the County's Solicitors, we made a request for a variation to fund the extension of the lay-by in Durbans Road. Unfortunately our request was rejected and the money is to be returned to Hyde Martlet. The Council will consider this project again in 2011.

Residents who live down the lane next to Zest hairdressers were anxious that their properties were difficult to find and were naturally concerned in the event that emergency services were required. In consultation with the residents, it has now been named 'Old Mill Lane' and a nameplate installed.

At the beginning of the winter, the Parish Council raised awareness of the Young Drivers' Skills Course offered by WSCC by offering to subsidise the cost for six Wisborough Green young drivers. We are delighted to report that one driver took up the offer and successfully completed the course. The offer is still available.

### **Environmental**

Back in May and June 2010, CDC undertook a Conservation Area Character Appraisal to help residents and Councils understand the history of the area and why it was desirable to preserve or enhance the character. In consultation with residents, some small changes were made to the boundary, primarily to incorporate the gardens of properties already in the Conservation Area. An Article 4 Direction (a special planning regulation) has now been adopted by CDC to provide additional powers of planning control for the Conservation Area. Residents who might be affected have received information from CDC. Further explanation is available on the CDC website along with a copy of the full report.

Littering continues to be a problem around the village which keeps our new litter warden, Beverley Twelvetrees, busy. In addition, we again organised spring and autumn litter picking sessions which collected a considerable amount from the village verges. Our thanks to all those who helped.

Not only has the Council undertaken bench repair and restoration but it has also had the village sign restored. The original design remains although the pictures now have more detail and are a little more representational of our village.

The pond has had a better year although the warm weather in June took its toll and red algae formed. Advice was sought from the Environmental Agency; they were not concerned! Although residents were advised to keep away from the water, a fortunate change in the weather and a fresh shower of rain resolved the problem after a few days. In 2009 the lilies were thinned but due to the reduced water level and subsequent dry summer, the ducks killed them on the north side. As such, new lilies were replanted last autumn.

The Green is a valuable asset for the village and is used by many, not only for sporting fixtures, but for general recreation as well as the many annual events that Wisborough Green is renowned. The drainage work undertaken in autumn 2009 has worked successfully but unfortunately, heavy clay will always retain water over the winter months. We continue to verti-drain the Green each spring to aid the drainage system.

Some of the torrential rain this winter has again highlighted blocked drains around the village. The jetting team visited but we continue to have a problem with the drain behind the Pavilion and another running under the Green by the playground. Further investigations are required and as an initial starting point, the ditch running along the Park Cottage boundary had years of silt removed.

The Horse Chestnut trees are again symbolic of the village and another wonderful feature. Sadly a further tree by the war memorial succumbed to disease and was felled. Due to the village's connection with the Canadian Veterans (the Dieppe Commemorations are held each year) it was decided to replace the tree with a Maple which would give a good show of red in the autumn. We continue with an annual view of the trees and are carefully monitoring several which are showing signs of distress. It may be necessary to consider different varieties in the future.

### **Playground**

For many years the Parish Council hoped that the post and rail fencing around the playground would meet safety standards to prevent children from running into the road, but in recent years, the lack of 'infill' fencing has been raised at the annual inspection. The Parish Council made the decision that this advice could no longer be ignored and mesh was therefore installed to remove the risk. Over the years we have received comments from parents that the equipment for younger children is limited. As such, we have made initial enquiries to refurbish and make improvements when financially possible.

### **Emergency Plan**

Fortunately it was not necessary to implement the Emergency Plan last year; self help information to cope with a hard winter was published in the autumn newsletter as a precautionary measure.

### **Winter Management Plan**

As a result of the severe winter weather experienced in January 2010, WSCC introduced new winter management plans and encouraged Parishes to dovetail local clearing initiatives with their own snow clearing and gritting efforts. This involved the Parish Council contracting E P Clark & Co Ltd to undertake additional limited snow clearing and gritting in extreme conditions. This was the first year of this initiative and the volume of snow and ice very early in December certainly tested our Plan! The Council stressed from the start that any action would be limited to specific pedestrian areas around the village and we hope the majority agree that the operations carried out were very beneficial. We shall of course review the plan at the end of the winter to examine whether it can be improved further.

### **Affordable Housing**

The Council invited the Rural Housing Enabler from CDC to make a presentation at the October meeting. As a result of receiving local comments and the information provided by CDC, the Parish Council has recently begun to again investigate the possible location of an Affordable Housing project. We are currently in the early stages of information gathering, both historical and the current options available, also the likely potential planning responsibilities for such a plan. The Council is very mindful that this is a project that is bound to generate a lot of local discussion and interest and the village will be kept fully informed.

### **Parish Plan and Localism Bill**

The Council has undertaken some preliminary investigations and concluded that the old plan published in 2004 needs to be updated. Although Councillors and the Clerk have attended briefing sessions about the new Localism Bill, the full impact will not be known until autumn 2011. We are therefore putting in place plans to conduct a new Parish Plan, with consultation starting in autumn 2011.

### **Local Development Framework (LDF)**

Back in the autumn, CDC decided to put its Core Strategy on hold whilst waiting for more details on the Localism Bill. Clarification has now been received which confirms that the Government still wants councils to press ahead with their local plans and as such, CDC will restart work on the Core Strategy. A public consultation about the levels of future housing will be held from 26<sup>th</sup> August to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011, with consultation on the draft early in 2012 and the statutory public consultation on the proposed submission from starting in May 2012. CDC intends to submit the Core Strategy in October 2012 and aim to start using it in May 2013.

### **Potential Development at Billingshurst**

Being located on the Horsham District Council border, the Parish Council attended the consultation meetings regarding possible development in Billingshurst and made representation to Horsham District Council on the schemes which would potentially impact upon Wisborough Green. We will continue to monitor progress with interest.

### **All-Weather Sports Surface**

As outlined at the February Parish Council meeting, it is disappointing to report that after much research into cost, other similar local village projects and potential sites, the initial preferred offered site of the village school had been withdrawn. The area will now be used for an ecological and wildlife project to benefit all the pupils in this important and rewarding future development to our school. This does however limit our future options and the Parish Council agreed that due to possible issues with other potential locations and current restrictions and pressure on finance, there was sadly no opportunity to progress with this project at the present time. This does not mean that we would not in the future reconsider and investigate this important resource again if a suitable option became available and financial means to support it could also be obtained. We would like to thank all the local Parishioners who added their support and time in the research of this possible project.

### **A Youth Club – a village success story**

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010, the new village Youth Club opened its doors under the leadership of Josie Davis, the new Youth Worker, and has grown from strength to strength. Anyone who has happened to walk down School Road on a Thursday evening will be aware of the buzz; the club is regularly attended by over 20 young people and on several occasions, there have been over 30! It has obviously taken a great deal of hard work to get the Club opened and the Council is extremely grateful to all those who have volunteered so far. The success of the Club will ultimately depend upon securing funds to continue employing the Youth Worker and to provide further equipment and other opportunities. Volunteer helpers are still required. The Parish Council has confirmed some financial support for 2011 and the Club continues to apply for any grant opportunities.

### **Village Asset – The Old Workhouse**

We are pursuing a project of some financial significance resulting from a surveyor's report commissioned jointly with the Churchwardens. This report concluded that the wall on all three sides of The Old Workhouse garden was in need of renovation. In particular, the largest project is the east wall where the difference in levels, coupled with the pressure from the trees in the churchyard, is causing the wall to move. Planning permission has been granted for the work and due to safety concerns relating to the north wall, this has now been done. Consideration and discussion with the Churchwardens on how to achieve all the remedial work to the east wall is on-going.

### **South Downs National Park**

The SDNP Authority officially took up the reins for the new Park on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. With a small part of the Parish (Bedham area) in the Park, we are keeping a watching brief on what opportunities and what future challenges this might bring.

### **Objectives for 2011**

So what plans do we have for the next year? Our key objective for the 18 month period starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 is to research and consult the village on a new Parish Action Plan. The previous plan published in 2004 was reviewed during 2010 and it was concluded that it had been satisfactorily completed. To this end, a Parish Council working group will put together a consultation

schedule and some ideas. The village will be fully consulted on these as well as inviting any other ideas. We'll keep you informed as this exercise unfolds. As mentioned earlier in this report, we will also be looking into Affordable Housing provision which obviously links closely with the Parish Action Plan and the new Localism Bill, full details of which will be known in the autumn.

## **And finally, Explanation of Accounts for Year End March 2011**

### **Income**

The total income for the year was £44960.77 which was up by £4566.77 on budget in the main due to donations from the Village Hall Management Committee for improvements to the Village Hall. A small increase was made to the Precept which members considered necessary due to increasing charges.

### **Expenditure**

- Administration for the year, which includes the Clerk's salary and all other expenses which allows the Council to function efficiently and within the law, totalled £14188.01, the Clerk's salary being £10061.16.
- The Parish Council continues with general village maintenance to ensure that Wisborough Green remains a pleasant and attractive village in which to live. A total of £14523.47 was spent on Village Maintenance, the main items being £4192.95 for litter collection around the Green and from the Pavilion and Village Hall by Chichester District Council and our new litter warden, and £3568 for grass cutting. £829.00 was spent on the repair and refurbishment of benches and footrests around the Green and we will continue with a further 10 benches this year. It cost £540 to restore the village sign; although the layout remains the same, the panels have been changed slightly to be more representational of the village.
- The cost of the marquee is reimbursed by the Horticultural Society although the Parish Council did make a contribution of £350 towards the security which is sadly necessary these days.
- The Council continues to support village organisations with donations as well as the Grant Fund. We were delighted to give a grant to the New Youth Club to cover 6 month's rent of the Village Hall. In addition, we were again pleased to support the Minibus Association; the Scout Association considered their funds to be sufficient at this time but asked that a donation be considered again next year. The Council also supported St Peter ad Vincula PCC with a donation of £1000 towards the grass cutting and clock maintenance.
- Applications from other outside village organisations were also considered and the Council helped those that demonstrated benefit to the Parish. As such, donations were made to St Catherine's Hospice, 4Sight, Victim Support and Arun & Chichester Citizen's Advice Bureau. This money is taken from the Section 137 allowance which allows the Council to make donations to outside village organisations.
- The Council again made provision for future repairs to the Village Hall and Workhouse by transferring £2000 and £4000 respectively to the reserve accounts. Due to donations from the Village Hall Management Committee, the Parish Council's only expenditure was £5000 on the new floor, the Management Committee paying the major share.
- With regard to the Workhouse flat, £539.02 was spent on plumbing, installation of a fire alarm and consultant/planning fees for the proposed work to the walls. Due to safety concerns, work to the North wall and path was undertaken at a total cost of £4949.50.
- We had hoped that there would be some funding remaining from the Section 106 agreement relating to the Garmans development which could be used for the lay-by project. Unfortunately, the developers would not allow a variation of the agreement so the budgeted funds are now being held in the reserve for future consideration.
- Some small maintenance items were undertaken in the playground. Plans for further work are currently being considered.
- We anticipated a total expenditure of £44104.00 and ended the year spending £42063.39. Please note that the funds for the Village Hall and Workhouse work were taken from the reserve funds and it is only the budgeted transfer figure shown in the accounts – refer to information in the box!