



WISBOROUGH GREEN
PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report

The Parish Council Year from May 2024 to April 2025

Chairman's Report

'Rage, rage against the dying of the light'; Dylan Thomas's famous poem encapsulates so much of the frustrations of being a Parish Councillor, albeit the Parish Council's fight is not against death but the imposition of dictats, delivered *de haut en bas*, that are neither beneficial to the village or actually detrimental.

As a Parish Councillor one regularly encounters arrogance, how often have you heard criticism of a national politician framed along the lines of 'they're no better than a Parish Councillor', yet Parish Councils, as the first rung of the government ladder, are closer to their constituents, providing a detailed knowledge of what is required and/or wanted. When this, quite often very detailed, local knowledge is ignored it is incredibly frustrating.

Clearly the most obvious area where this comes to the fore is planning, not only the number of new houses but also where they should go; what logic (is there any?) deems Wisborough Green the correct location for 25% of the whole of Chichester District's non-strategic housing allocation? Neither the Parish Council nor, I would surmise, the village are against new houses per se however it would be good to see some burden sharing.

With this background it is especially rewarding when the Parish Council (PC) is listened to, recent successes include: WSCC redesigning the new pavement along the Kirdford Road once they were appraised of the local conditions, the speed reduction from 40mph to 30mph along Durbans Road – at last and, when a patch repair lasted about 25 minutes, the highways authority finally investigating, and repairing, the cause of the potholes on the A272, the PC had been banging on about this for months and months.

This report sets out what the PC has been up to, where it gets its money (hint: it's yours) and where it has been spent. Please do give it a read and feel free to ask questions either via email or by turning up to a PC meeting.

This is my last time writing as Chairman and I would like to sign off by proffering grateful thanks to the many volunteers who contribute to making Wisborough Green the very special place that it is. There are so many who do 'stuff', big and small, quite often with no recognition but with immense effect and too many to mention. However I would single out one person, the PC's sole employee: Louise Davies. Louise's knowledge of, love for and unerring commitment to the village far surpasses what she is paid.

Peter Drummond, Chairman

Your Parish Council



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Sophie Winship (Current Vice-Chair) T: 700783



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Louise Davies
PC Clerk



Some High and Low Moments from the Year

- After many years, success at last. The speed reduction from 40 to 30mph in Durbans Road gets the go ahead.
- CDC transferred ownership of the Public Toilets to the village but we now pick up all the costs; CDC provided a grant of £2,200 toward the first year's expenses.
- WSCC are progressing the Kirdford Road footway on the Green to link to the Stable Field open space and new developments.
- Ownership of the Stable Field open space transferred to the PC.
- A survey confirmed support for junior cricket practice at Songhurst Meadow to be trialled this summer.
- WSCC designed an Operation Watershed Scheme for School Road and funded £22,841 for drainage improvements.
- Annual inspections identified other maintenance items around the village which were undertaken.
- Some village benches had oak footrests installed and where tree roots prevented, wear was repaired and re-turfed.
- Two community litter picking sessions held; great turnout.
- Remembrance Day road closure managed by the PC; the reading of names and 2 minute silence were held without passing traffic.
- No news on the new Pavilion but working on a new Lease and improvements for the current building.
- The recent Local Plan examination has confirmed 75 new dwellings for the village. We are exploring one final opportunity to make our case. The Neighbourhood Plan review process will now resume.
- Road safety, parking, speeding and pedestrian crossing incidents have continued to be a concern and are being addressed with WG Sports, the School and WSCC.
- Dog fouling was a significant health concern at Songhurst Meadow. Despite a publicity campaign, the problem persisted. A difficult decision to introduce a dogs on lead policy was made.
- Acts of vandalism: the commemorative Field Maple, 'donutting' on the Green and the removal of the UK/Ukraine friendship flag.
- Two more Horse Chestnuts have declined and failed health & safety testing; they are to be removed.

The Parish Council's Year at a Glance

FIRST LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY PROVIDING LOCAL VOICE ON LOCAL AFFAIRS. PROTECTING THE VILLAGE FOR US AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

- In law, a council is a single corporate body & the decisions it takes are the responsibility of the council as a whole
- Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and policy documents for governance

COUNCILLORS

- 9 unpaid Councillors but currently only 8
- Chair (Peter Drummond) and Vice-Chair (Sophie Winship) were elected in May
- Members are elected every 4 years
- The next election is May 2027

PARISH COUNCIL CLERK

- Only Council employee – 24 hours per week
- Undertakes Council's instructions
- Offers advice in relation to law & policy
- Provides information for effective decisions
- Responsible for financial records

MEETINGS

- Third Tuesday of most months at the Village Hall at 7.45 pm (not August or December) although 14 meetings held this year.
- Public are welcome to attend
- Public section included on the agenda
- Agenda published - notice boards & website

PRECEPT

- Collected by CDC through the Council Tax
- £85,000 for Financial Year to 31 March 2025
- Allows the Parish Council to undertake its functions and maintain its property

PROPERTY / ASSETS
Owns, maintains and insures

VILLAGE GREEN

- Registered owner
- Considered and granted approval for events
- Maintains – grass cutting, grass surface repairs, litter and dog waste collection
- Tree inspections & work

SONGHURST MEADOW

- Registered owner
- Maintains

PUBLIC TOILETS

- Registered owner
- Maintains

STABLE FIELD OPEN SPACE

- Registered owner
- Developer funds grass cuts

ALLOTMENTS

- Priority to WG residents
- Tenancies managed
- Inspections & maintenance

PLAYGROUND

- Weekly inspection
- Annual RoSPA inspection
- Maintenance as identified

OTHER ASSETS

- Inspection & maintenance

OTHER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

PLANNING

- Full Council or Planning Committee comment on applications
- Reviewed a total of 43 applications (38 last year)
- The Planning Committee met 6 times.
- Referred several enforcement matters to CDC

COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS

- **Finance:** Met once for in-depth discussion, and scrutiny of the PC's budget, objectives, and long-term financial planning
- **Working Groups (involving other non-councillors):** Neighbourhood Plan Review, Green Coordination Group, New Pavilion Lease and maintenance

LOCAL PLAN

- Submitted representation and attended examination hearings
- Liaised with the Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group

CONSULTATIONS

- Responded to Gatwick consultations

DEVELOPER CONTACT

- Met with developers to be fully informed

REPRESENTATION

Attended meetings with CDC, WSCC, Local Council Associations and other parishes

TRAINING

- The Clerk attended regular briefing sessions
- One councillor attended new councillor training
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COMMUNICATION

- Three newsletters and an Annual report to all households via the Parish magazine
- Notices/news in the Parish magazine

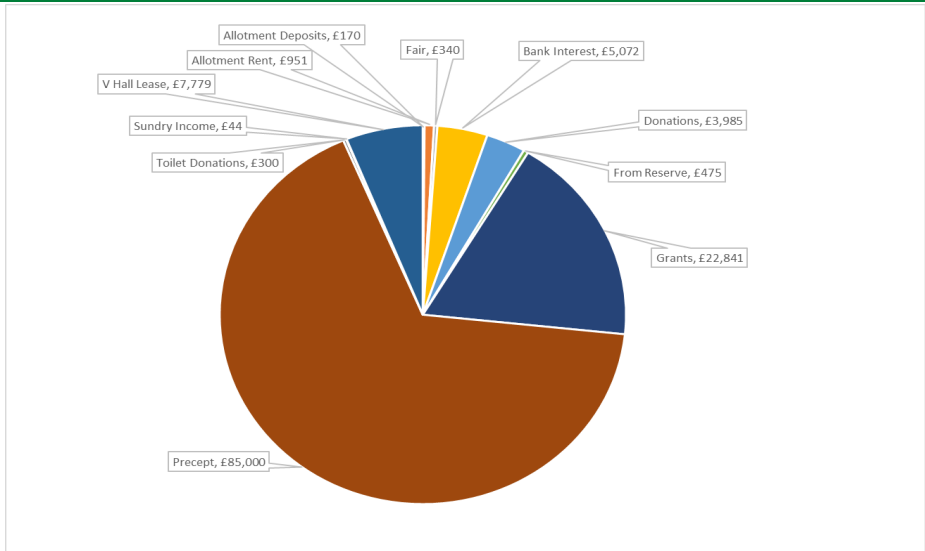
RISK ASSESSMENTS

- Undertaken annually for PC management and property
- Identified repairs undertaken

SUPPORT TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- Donations to outside village charities which benefit village residents
- Donations to village groups

Money Matters - Income for year ending 31st March 2025



Total Income: The total for the year was £126,482. The Precept was set at £85,000, up £7,000 on the previous year to cover increasing costs.

Allotments: Charged at 34p per square metre per year, increased to 37p from 1st April 2025. A £50 deposit is taken to encourage vacated plots to be left in a good condition.

Reserve Funds: The PC creates reserves to save for future projects and brings money in as required. £475 was spent on woodchips for the Songhurst Meadow shrub border, work not completed in the previous financial year.

Grants: WSCC provided £22,841 Operation Watershed Funding for drainage work in School Road. This was unspent so transferred to the Watershed Reserve.

Donations: CDC supported the village with a donation of £2,200 towards the public toilets, WG Sports paid towards the drainage sand and the West road residents donated the cost of the oak planters.

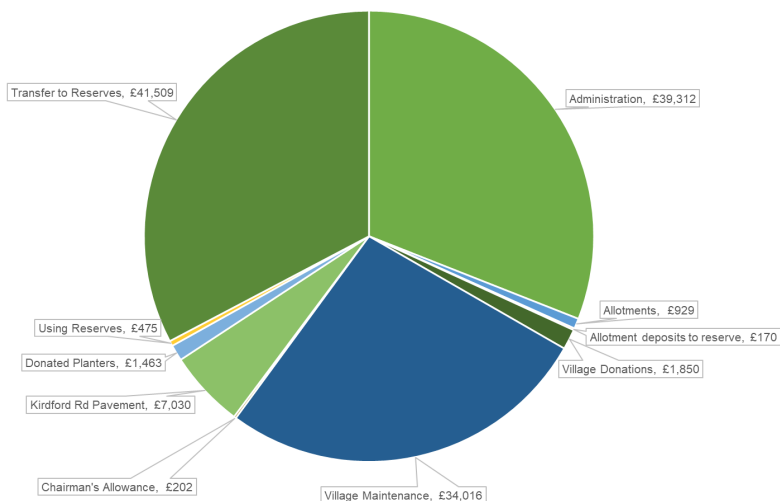
Bank Interest: One of the PC's roles is to ensure that your money is spent wisely, and earmarked reserves are protected. The PC has continued to invest funds in a series of one-year fixed rate bonds as well as a 35-day notice account. These funds are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and the interest earned is supporting the village. The interest received was £5,071, up £3,608 on last year.

Public Toilet Donations: The PC was pleased to receive donations towards the upkeep of the facilities from the Fete Society and the School.

Sundry Income: Relates to peppercorn rent and the Fete Society garage rent.

Village Hall Lease: The lease payment is paid every 6 months and having now paid off the loan for the Old Workhouse Refurbishment, this income is benefitting the village.

Money Matters - Expenditure for year ending 31st March



Total Expenditure - £85,278

Administration: The total annual cost, which includes the Clerk's salary and all other expenses that allows the Council to function efficiently, totalled £39,312, in comparison to £36,760 last year.

Clerk's Salary: The National Joint Council for local government services agreed a pay award from 1st April 2024 which was applied. The National Insurance and pension contributions increased accordingly.

Legal & Professional Fees: It was planned to use Reserve Funds to update the Pavilion Lease however this was not completed. £1,600 was spent on the preparation of an independent Schedule of Dilapidations to identify health & safety maintenance work to the Pavilion.

Section 137: Used to make donations to outside village organisations that demonstrated a benefit to the village. Donations were agreed to: St Catherine's Hospice (£80), Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance (£200), Chichester & Arun Citizens Advice (£100), 4Sight Vision (£80), Billingshurst Emergency Assistance Team (£100) and Remembrance wreaths from the Royal British Legion (£100).

Subscriptions: Paid annually to the West Sussex Association of Local Councils, Open Spaces Society, Society of Local Council Clerks, Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign and the Association of Parish Councils Aviation Group.

Telephone/Broadband: Includes the cost of broadband for the Village Hall as well as the PC's own telephone line and broadband. The PC requires broadband in the Hall to review planning applications at meetings.

Training Courses: One councillor attended New Councillor training.

Chairman's Allowance: Was used for the Annual Parish Meeting costs.

Money Matters - Expenditure Continued

Allotments: The PC continues to maintain the allotment hedge and addressed maintenance concerns.

Donations: The PC continues to support village organisations and was pleased to make the following donations: £350 to the Community Minibus Association and £1,500 to St Peter's PCC towards churchyard grass cutting and clock maintenance.

Village Maintenance: The PC is responsible for general village maintenance to preserve the village's appearance. A total of £34,016 was spent, down on the overall budget, although some individual budget headings were more.

CDC Litter Collection: There are 16 litter bins (now used for dog waste too) around the Conservation Area and two bins at Songhurst Meadow, which are emptied weekly by CDC. The total cost was £1,778.

General Maintenance: Includes tree surgery, verge posts, verge repair, provision of dog bags, and general maintenance items to retain the village's appearance.

Grass Cutting: The cost of £9,893 was for both the Green and Songhurst Meadow Open Space. Additional cutting was arranged later in the season at Songhurst Meadow in an attempt to deter dog fouling.

Green Maintenance: Covers work to the Green grass surface to maintain the area for general recreation. WG Sports finances sports repairs.

Path Repairs: Although organised the work was not completed before the year-end. The budget was transferred to the reserve.

Public Toilets: The PC owned the building from 1st April so is responsible for cleaning, water and drainage, electricity and all maintenance costs., totalling £11,553.

Songhurst Meadow Open Space: The cost of £864.36 was for hedge cutting, weed control, tree work, rolling and fencing.

Village Projects:

Neighbourhood Plan: Budget provision was made but unspent so transferred to the reserve at year-end. The process will resume this year.

Paths & Projects: The Kirdford Road pavement was resurfaced , £7,030. The budget balance to be transferred to the reserve for surfacing the top of Harsfold Lane.

Playground Projects: £3,000 was budgeted to be transferred to the reserve for future renewals. A further £2,000 has been added at the year-end as deterioration of the safety surfacing is evident and replacement will be required.

Projects on the Green: Relates to the planters at the entrance to the west road. The residents have donated the planters to the village.

Projects Using Reserves: Not completed in the previous year, woodchips at Songhurst Meadow.

A full version of this report and financial details, including the Internal & External Auditors' Reports, are published on the village website
www.wisboroughgreen.org