



ANNUAL REPORT

2007/8

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The last year has been one of change for the Council. First, in May 2007, there were changes in the composition of the Council. We said goodbye to Jimmy Barnes, Barry Phillpot and Alison Stevenson. In their place we welcomed Alan Gomme, Mike Leach and Steve Willcox to the ranks. Will Blunden was elected Chairman to assume this mantle from Margaret Nicolle, who had served for 8 years – and she agreed to serve as Vice Chairman. So the membership is now:

Cllr. Will Blunden (Chairman)	Cllr. Derrick Johnson
Cllr. Margaret Nicolle (Vice Chairman)	Cllr. Mike Leach
Cllr. Mike Allen	Cllr. Roger Pickett
Cllr. Michael Davies	Cllr. Christopher Snowling
Cllr. Alan Gomme	Cllr. Valerie Upton
Cllr. Margaret Hersey	Cllr. Steve Willcox

THE CLERKS

Early in 2008 our long-serving Parish Clerk, Sue Kolien, indicated that she would like to relinquish that role at the end of March. Christine Irwin had served almost as long in her capacity as Deputy Clerk, so it was readily agreed that she should step into Sue Kolien's shoes and that a new part time Deputy Clerk should be sought. After a full, diligent recruitment process, Vera Grainger was duly appointed to take up this position and joined us in April. Vera is experienced at local authority work, having served for more than 13 years with MSDC, latterly as Community Safety Officer. Meanwhile, Sue Kolien has agreed to continue on a part-time basis as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), looking after the Council's accounting and budgets.

INTRODUCTION

In our last Annual Report we summed up the previous year of the Parish Council's work, with three words **Trees, Pond & Toilets!** The pond is now fully restored and the wall renovated and it looks good. The saga of the trees has continued throughout the past year, but looks like being resolved after endless negotiation and the intervention of the MSDC Central Area Planning Committee (see report of the Environment & Amenities Committee). The Parish Council has now taken over full responsibility for the Denmans Lane public toilets and it is hoped that a full renovation can take place during the financial year 2008 – 09.

If the past year can be summarised in a few words it would probably be **Development Proposals, Parking, Princess Royal and the Post Office.** A great deal of energy has been expended on the whole process of the Local Development Framework Consultations regarding the future development of the area and the specific proposal for a major housing scheme off Newton Road in the village (see the report of the Planning & Traffic Committee). Meanwhile, somewhat out-of-the-blue, proposals appeared for controlled parking zones (CPZs) in Haywards Heath and Lindfield and we were invited to exhibitions early in February to consider plans for an apparently draconian scheme to prevent parking in large parts of central Lindfield and to charge many residents to park outside their own homes. The overwhelming opinion of the Council and the community was that such measures were definitely not required or desirable here and it appears likely that the overall scheme for Lindfield will be dropped, though some specific areas of concern (e.g. residents' parking at the north end of the High Street) will still need to be addressed. An enormous amount of time and effort has gone into the campaign to save essential services at the Princess Royal Hospital and it looks as though a proper Accident & Emergency Department will be retained, though the future of maternity services is still in the balance. Although Royal Mail has reduced the provision of Post Offices in the Haywards Heath and Lindfield area from six, a few years ago to two today – and vigorous representations are still being made to improve this situation - we are delighted that Lindfield Sub Post Office has been retained and indeed has now been re-opened after the disastrous ram-raid on December 11, which demolished the wall in Lewes Road and closed it for five months. We have been immensely grateful to Alan and Wendy Stamford for the service rendered to our community.

The **Lindfield Village Plan Joint Advisory Committee** continues to pursue the various actions proposed in the Village Plan. A good deal has already been done or at least is planned. A new community noticeboard is to be placed on the wall of "Leaf" opposite the Parish Office. It is still hoped to produce a pictorial village map showing places of

interest. The medical centre has been enlarged and improved. The Council and Preservation Society are active in preserving high standards in village buildings and protecting our very special historic and architectural heritage. A Village Design Statement is in process of preparation and a public exhibition was held on November 26 to consult the community. The Council has continued to support the work of Streetmate, the detached youth work project which continues to have a regular presence in the village and responds to incidents of anti-social behaviour involving teenagers. Geoff Bennett, the neighbourhood Specialist Constable, now holds regular surgeries in the Parish Office.

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

This is my first Annual Report as Chairman of Lindfield Parish Council and in this first year I have become very aware of the difficulties and challenges that face us all to keep our Village as we want it and not as the Developers say we should have it. The Council too has found this year to be very challenging especially the Clerks with the huge number of consultation documents that have to be dealt with and responses made. We are also seeking to attain **Quality Parish Council Status** which will enable the Council to undertake more responsibilities for the benefit of the community. I would like to thank Sue Kolien for all her hard work and commitment to the Council over the past 13 years. Sue retired as Parish Clerk on the 31st March 2008 and we will all miss her knowledge, patience, enthusiasm and sense of fun. I am pleased that she has agreed to continue on a part time basis as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those people, who help in many capacities behind the scenes, including our Tree and Pond Wardens, our Directory Delivery Team and those who help with the Annual Spring Clean. Without this help there is no doubt that the Parish Council alone would be unable to carry out the huge amount of work that it does and it is a credit to Lindfield that we have so many willing volunteers. However we can always do with more, so if you are able to help in anyway please contact the Parish Office on 01444-484115

THE PLANNING AND TRAFFIC COMMITTEE (Chairman Cllr Christopher Snowling)

The committee meets every three weeks throughout the year to consider the planning applications and related matters the District Council refers to the Parish Council in its role as a statutory consultee. The number of items considered at each meeting ranges between 10 and 16. While some have considerable importance for a number of residents or indeed for the whole Village, as is the case, for example, with the proposals to develop the land at Newton Road, other planning applications which affect only the applicant and an immediate neighbour are to them just as significant. The committee has developed a system whereby up to two persons can address the committee against an application and up to two in support of it before the members come to a decision on what observations to pass to the District Council; the comments of a representative of the Society for the Preservation of Lindfield are also welcomed.

At one meeting in three the committee deals not only with planning applications but also with traffic issues and other matters of wider planning significance. At such meetings 15 minutes are set aside at the beginning and end of the meeting to enable members of the public to ask questions or make comments about issues within the committee's terms of reference. The committee welcomes the attendance of local people at these meetings, whether or not they wish to raise matters of concern to them.

Although the District Council has turned down the recent application for the development of the land at Newton Road it must be anticipated that either an appeal against that decision will be made or a fresh application submitted. In either case the committee will ensure that the Parish Council's views on the planning merits will be made known. Other on-going issues include the development of the District Council's Core Strategy, as part of the Local Development Framework, and the Rural Issues strategy. In all such cases the committee will prepare responses to the consultation documents for approval by the full Council.

Last, but by no means least, is the on-going issue of the proposed mini roundabout at the junction of Lewes Road and the High Street – a proposal which has not received universal approval in the Village, by those who urge that traffic lights would provide a more satisfactory solution to the traffic congestion there. The Council is still awaiting details of what has been suggested as a controlled crossing outside Somerfields. When details are brought forward they will be first considered by the Traffic Study Joint Working Party and then by the committee, which will report to the full Council and ensure that Villagers have an opportunity to comment on what is suggested.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (Chairman Cllr Will Blunden)

This Committee oversees street lighting, toilets, the allotments, the pond, the common, bus shelters, litter bins, seats, footpaths, bollards and the late night shopping festival. One of the main items of concern this year have been the High Street Trees, which are the responsibility of the Highways Authority of WSCC but the tree preservation policy is determined by MSDC as the Planning Authority. The Parish Council together with the Preservation Society have been fully involved with discussions about the care of these trees. At a meeting held on October 16, on the basis of the information given at that time, it was agreed by representatives and Officers of WSCC, MSDC, LPC and LPS that a radical management scheme would be implemented, which would mean the felling of all the existing Limes in the High

Street and replanting with young Limes which would mean less pavement heave and less or no epicormic or basal growth. This long term plan would enable Lindfield to have an avenue of “Pollarded Limes”, all of a similar age and size. WSCC submitted a planning application to MSDC, which was subsequently refused by the Central Planning Committee of MSDC. An exhibition with a series of new proposals with a recommendation will be held in the King Edward Hall (on August 1), which will enable the Parishioners to express their views and hopefully agree a way forward. We continue to work on refurbishing the toilets in Denman’s Lane, but progress continues at a slow pace. We have however been able to provide a new bus shelter in Hickmans Lane and are also actively looking into providing shelters in the High Street, subject to consent of WSCC Highways department. The new play equipment on the improved playground on the common has been a huge success and well used by the children although there are some minor works still to be completed. It is intended to install an additional light on the common adjacent to the car park next to the tennis court. Permission has been given by MSDC and we are now in the process of informing nearby residents. We are keen to provide further public facilities for all ages such as public toilets on the common and would welcome your suggestions as to what other facilities you would like to see in the village.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (Chairman Cllr Michael Davies)

This Committee oversees the finances of the Council and is responsible for the general administration of the Council’s work, including the Parish Office in Denmans Lane.

One task of the Committee is to consider requests for grants and donations, the criteria being that the organisation involved must in some way benefit the residents of Lindfield. In 2007/8 the following grants/donations were made:

▪ Mid Sussex Citizen’s Advice Bureaux	250.00
▪ Outset	50.00
▪ Victim Support Sussex	50.00
▪ Tiger Cubs Pre-School	50.00
▪ 1 st Lindfield Sea Scouts	250.00
▪ Streetmate (Churches Together Youth Project)	300.00
▪ West Sussex Mediation Service	75.00
▪ Sussex County Playing Fields Association	25.00
▪ Sussex Air Ambulance	250.00
▪ Women’s Royal Voluntary Service	100.00
▪ 4Sight	100.00

The Lindfield Village Directory & Year Book continues to be a popular production of the Council, which is delivered free of charge to every home. A small voluntary group of Councillors assists the Deputy Clerk with production. We welcome the full participation of the Lindfield Rural Parish Council in this enterprise. A review of the various Lindfield websites has been undertaken by the Communications Forum, which meets several times a year to monitor all aspects of public relations and communication in the village. It is hoped to bring together the Parish Council and Lindfield Online sites, with links to others, such as those of the Preservation Society, Lindfield Times, the churches and various societies. We continue to be very grateful to the “*Lindfield Times*”, which does such a splendid job, going into every home and informing people of local issues. It also contains the regular Newsletters of the two Parish Councils serving the village and the Preservation Society – an invaluable link in the communications chain. The “Office Workload” sub-committee has reviewed the duties of the clerks in the light of the ever increasing demands on their time. Temporary additional accommodation has been taken in the village to provide more space for clerks, councillors and the Lindfield archivist, Richard Bryant to sort out the vast amount of material accumulated over the years. It is hoped in the longer term to provide the Parish Office with additional space for public surgeries, files and archives and perhaps a small meeting room. Another sub-committee keeps the Parish insurances under review and is compiling a comprehensive risk management schedule to ensure that every aspect of the Council’s activities is regularly monitored to ensure all possible dangers are identified and mitigated. Consultations continue with the Rural Parish Council about a possible amalgamation in the future and, in the longer term, this seems to be sensible and inevitable. Meanwhile a joint venture with regard to the purchase of additional land for burials at the Walstead Cemetery is being actively pursued.

In 2007/08, the precept was increased to £110,000 and we also received the sum of £17,300 from Mid Sussex District Council to help offset the cost of having to take over responsibility for the Denmans Lane toilets. Our overall income was, therefore, increased by over £37,000 on the previous year. The administrative costs of running the Parish Office in Denmans Lane continues to be one of our major areas of expenditure. Those of you who visit the office will know that it is now very cramped and during the last year we have rented storage space at premises in Lewes Road. Hopefully this will enable the staff to sort through old files and paperwork, which it was impossible to do in the office. The capital cost of refurbishing the Denmans Lane toilets falls within the remit of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. It was hoped that this would have been finalised during the past financial year, but various issues with the

proposed contractor meant that this was not achieved and the project has been carried forward into 2008/09. An abbreviated version of the receipts and payments account for 2007/08 is shown below. A copy of the full accounts is available in the Parish Office. In 2008/09 the precept will be reduced to £99,000 and this will go towards completing a number of outstanding projects, as detailed in the various Committee reports.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2008

2006/07		2007/08
£	RECEIPTS	£
85,000.00	Precept	110,000.00
2,327.70	Interest Received	3,920.58
551.62	Allotments: Rents and Licence Fee	546.01
5,387.50	Village Directory	5,245.00
215.00	Christmas Festival Night	205.00
-	Grants	17,300.00
4,016.60	Sale of green sacks	2,601.60
202.09	Sales of Village Plan	-
525.84	Other Income	352.89
4,787.98	VAT re-imburements	140,171.08
103,014.33		
PAYMENTS		
51,062.43	Administration:	58,935.49
189.39	Capital	2,370.81
2,719.21	Other Expenditure on Parish Office	2,732.20
11,721.56	Finance and General Purposes Committee	11,197.58
26,106.18	Environment and Amenities Committee	23,844.26
-	Planning and Traffic Committee	1,823.28
-	Village Design Statement	894.41
2,200.96	Parish Plan Committee	233.00
3,616.73	VAT on Payments	6,341.30
97,616.46		108,372.33
<u>5,397.87</u>	Surplus for year	<u>31,798.75</u>

SUMMARY

Opening Balance	104,470.81	Payments	108,372.33
Receipts	<u>140,171.08</u>	Closing Balance	<u>136,269.56</u>
	<u>244,641.89</u>		<u>244,641.89</u>

HOW TO CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council office at 6 Denmans Lane continues to be open 3 times a week – Tuesdays 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. – when members of the public are welcome to come along to look at planning applications for Lindfield, obtain bus passes and railcard vouchers or simply seek advice on issues of concern. However, if you do need to speak with someone outside our normal opening hours, than please contact the Clerk by telephone on 01444 484115 or by fax on 01444 484918, who will be happy to make alternative arrangements with you. You can also contact us by Email: clerks@lindfieldpc.fsnet.co.uk, or visit our web site at www.lindfieldparishcouncil.org.uk.