



LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

June 2015

Parish Office :

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Opening hours: Tuesdays 1.00 – 4.00 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays 10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
or by appointment

Chairman: Cllr. Mr. William Blunden
Parish Clerk: Mrs. Christine Irwin
Deputy Parish Clerk: Mr. Iain McLean
Responsible Financial Officer: Mrs. Tracy Ely

email: clerks@lindfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk
website: lindfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk

MEMBERS OF LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL 2015/16

Mike Allen	Alan Gomme	Simon Hodgson	Valerie Upton
William Blunden	Stephen Henton	Ron Plass	
Judith Durrant	Margaret Hersey	Christopher Snowling	

2 vacancies to be filled by co-option

Members can all be contacted via the Parish Office in the first instance.

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW (Chairman of Council, Councillor William Blunden)

Once again this has been an interesting and challenging year for your Parish Council. One notable challenge has been the upgrading of the WSCC streetlights, which, at the time of writing, is yet to be completed and has caused difficulties for some residents.

Due to the lack of a District Plan, Developers are taking this opportunity to test the Local Authorities by making unwelcome planning applications such as the Birchen Field site. This is particularly disappointing as local Town and Parish Councils are all working very hard to produce their Neighbourhood Plans, which will represent the views of local people as to where development etc. should go in their particular areas. The current situation flies in the face of "Localism" and the Parish Council will continue to do their very best to represent our Parishioners views.

However the Committee reports highlight a number of achievements and we are pleased to report that we have kept the precept to the same amount as last year.

The Parish Council continues to maintain communication with West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council through liaison with Local Members and Officers and the attendance of our representatives at meetings of various forums such as the WSCC Central Mid Sussex County Local Committee. We are also represented at a number of other bodies, including the area Police Neighbourhood Panel, the Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils, the Mid Sussex Older People's Council, the Scrase Valley LNR Steering Committee and the River Ouse Stakeholders Group. Wates Development Local Liaison Group, the LF Primary School Traffic Group and the Gatwick Airport Town and Parish Liaison Group

I would like to thank our Pond and Tree Wardens, our Diary delivery team and those who volunteer for the Annual Spring Clean etc., and all those who help in many capacities behind the scenes. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors, who willingly give their time voluntarily and work hard to maintain and improve the Village for the benefit of all residents, and the Parish Council Staff for their dedication in serving the Council and local residents.

A warm welcome goes to our new Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), Tracy Ely, who has been appointed to replace Sue Kolien and I would like to record the Council's appreciation to Sue, who will have been with the Parish Council for twenty years in September this year, most recently as RFO and previously as Clerk/RFO for twelve and a half years.

This is an election year and as ten people have been nominated for twelve seats, we will be looking to co-opt two members early in the new Council year. I would like to welcome new member, Judy Durrant and to express appreciation to Councillors Michael Amor, Jane Chatfield and Roger Pickett who did not stand and to thank them for their contribution towards the work of the Council and wellbeing of the village.

PLANNING & TRAFFIC COMMITTEE **(Chairman: Councillor Alan Gomme)**

The committee has considered 144 planning applications during 2014/15, most of which came from Mid Sussex District Council, but we did also consider the occasional West Sussex County Council application, e.g. for our Schools. Of the applications considered, 41 related to trees, and 12 to listed buildings. We are always particularly concerned to protect properties within the High Street / Compton Road Conservation Area, and also the Areas of Townscape Character, so as to ensure where relevant, that the guidelines contained within the Lindfield Village Design Statement are followed by homeowners and developers.

The applications normally relate to land, buildings, or trees within our urban Parish but we did last year offer comments on a few significant applications within Lindfield Rural Parish and Haywards Heath Town, where we considered that such developments would have an effect on our own Parish.

Notable applications within our own Parish during the last year included a request for the conversion of the Stables next to the Witch Inn in Sunte Avenue to be converted for residential use, also in Sunte Avenue a request for a pair of semi-detached chalet bungalows to be built on the site of the old builder's yard behind No 67, and an application to modify, extend and refurbish the Old Fire Station behind the King Edward Hall. We made what we hope were useful comments on these applications, and in due course all were approved by Mid Sussex District Council but often with conditions, which reflected any concerns we had about them.

We commented significantly on the application for a residential development of 48 dwellings on Land North of Birchen Lane, which although it is mainly in Haywards Heath does include a small area that is within our Parish. In this case our comments and objections mainly related to the traffic flows that would be generated on our road network from such a development. This application was subsequently refused by MSDC in March this year.

Another matter, although outside our Parish, which we discussed at one of our meetings was a flooding issue at the junction of the B2028 High Street and Buxshalls Hill with Park Lane. As we believe that this issue is caused by problems higher up Buxshalls Hill within our own Parish, we have made suitable representations to West Sussex Highways in order to try and get the situation properly addressed

The Committee has also been considering during the last year how to progress the objective of our Council commissioning a Traffic Survey throughout our Parish in order to seek possible solutions to the many traffic related issues that our residents have brought to our attention. A tender document for this project is expected to be issued shortly.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN **(Councillor Alan Gomme, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group)**

The Steering Group, comprised of Councillors from Lindfield Rural and our own Parish, continued to endeavour to progress our Plan during last year against a background of problems with Mid Sussex's District Plan, and amendments by Central Government to both the Neighbourhood Planning process and new guidance on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Having considered these and other matters, a slightly revised Plan, Consultation Statement, and Basic Conditions Statement were passed to the Neighbourhood Planning Officer at MSDC for a health check last June, and an independent second opinion on these documents was also obtained. As a result of these checks MSDC suggested that we should consider further consultations on the Plan with our chosen statutory consultees, and this was duly undertaken last autumn for a period of 6 weeks.

Our Plan was then formally submitted to MSDC last December who published the Plan for the regulation 6 week public consultation period during February and March. The responses it received as a result of that consultation can be found on their web site. The Plan has now moved into the examination phase and an independent examiner has been appointed. We expect the examination itself to take place over the next few months.

ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE **(Chairman: Councillor William Blunden)**

The Environment and Amenities Committee is responsible for providing and maintaining the Denmans Lane Allotment Site, the public toilets, some of the Village street lighting, litter bins, bus shelters and other items of

street furniture. The committee also liaises with MSDC regarding management of the Common, the Pond and Hickmans Lane Playing Field and with WSCC on various highway matters. Winter maintenance, the annual Christmas Festival Night and Spring Clean also come under this Committee's remit.

In addition to routine payments, the Committee's expenditure during 2014/15 included the six refuse freighter visits to the Tollgate car park, re-print of the Lindfield leaflet, replacement of three of the Parish Council's street light columns, one of which had been damaged and the other two were marked for planned replacement of concrete columns, There was extra expenditure on the Christmas lights because the lights normally left wrapped round the trees had to be removed for pollarding. These will be replaced for next Christmas.

The two village street map panels were finally installed in March – on the walls of the public toilets in Denmans Lane and the Lindfield Medical Centre. The Parish Council's grateful thanks go to Merie Blundell for a selection of her lovely illustrations and to the GPs at the Surgery for giving permission to put one of the panels on their wall. Subject to the necessary permissions, we hope to install two more of these maps in other locations during the next year.

There is still a demand for allotments and the waiting list is only open to residents of the urban Parish of Lindfield.

Paul Frost retired at the end of March having given excellent service as our Village Orderly since October 2010 and previously as an employee of MSDC's street cleaning contractors. The Parish Council has not yet made plans to appoint a new Village Orderly, which will depend on the outcome of discussions with MSDC and SERCO.

Welcome to our new Assistant Pond Warden, Brodie Branch, who will work alongside Richard Powell.

West Sussex County Council's contractors SSEC have been replacing street lights throughout the village during the last few months. The Parish Council arranged to meet representatives of WSCC and SSEC in advance to discuss in particular the plans for the heritage columns, which were installed as plain standard columns to be modified to heritage style subsequently. The Parish Council carried out a thorough survey of the lights in the village and put together a proposal for heritage style columns in the Conservation Area and certain adjacent roads in the Village centre. As this would exceed the WSCC provision, the Parish Council agreed to make a substantial contribution to achieve this objective. At the end of the financial year this work had not been completed and the Parish Council's contribution would be held over to 2015/16.

During the coming year the E&A Committee's priorities are the re-paving of the PO corner and moving forward with a number of joint projects with Mid Sussex District and West Sussex County Councils: including upgrading the play equipment in Hickmans Lane, maintenance of the post and rail fencing round the Pond and Common and installation of a number of dropped kerbs.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE **(Chairman: Councillor Stephen Henton)**

The Finance and General Purposes Committee is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the day to day financial matters of Lindfield Parish Council and to recommend to the Council the annual budget and the precept to be levied for the Parish. Staffing and the Parish Office accommodation also come under the remit of this Committee as well as governance, insurance, risk assessment, production of the Lindfield Parish Directory and Year Book and any matters of policy which do not fall clearly within the responsibilities of the other Committees, or where there is conflict between them.

Putting together the annual budget is a major task. As Lindfield Parish Council has very little income from other sources, most of its funds have to come from the annual precept which is one element of the Council Tax. In 2014/15 the precept was £152,000, the same as the previous year. If the Committee underestimates the amount required, it is unable to obtain any further sums from other sources, other than loans for particular capital projects, so it is essential that reserves are held as a safeguard in case of unexpected but necessary expenditure. Full copies of the accounts are available from the Parish Office. A breakdown of the budget for 2015/16 is enclosed with this report, together with an abbreviated version of the receipts and payments for 2014/15. After careful consideration of the budget for 2015/16, we were pleased to be able to keep the precept at £152,000 for the fourth year running.

The on-going work of the Committee includes reviewing monthly income & expenditure against the budget, carrying out periodic checks on the financial records and reporting to Council annually on the effectiveness of the internal audit and internal control procedures. The finances of the Council are subject to both external and internal audit – to date no significant problems have been identified and some helpful suggestions have been followed up.

In August 2014 we completed on the sale of our former office in Denmans Lane. The money is being held as a capital receipt safeguarded for capital projects and it is expected that this will go towards funding the proposed

new public conveniences on the Common.

It is anticipated that the Parish Council will soon be in a position to go to public consultation on the proposal for the reinstatement of public conveniences on the Common. Subject to the outcome of this consultation we will then apply for the statutory permissions under planning and Commons legislation.

Each year the Council sets aside an amount of money in the F&GP Committee's budget for grants/donations, either to local village based groups or to organisations whose activities benefit residents of our Parish. In 2014/15 a total of £1,500 was paid in grants to the following organisations: St Catherine's Hospice (£200); Outset Youth Action (£100); West Sussex Mediation Service (£100); 1st Lindfield Scout Group (refurbishment of the Scout Hut roof) (£250); Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance (£250); Victim Support (£100); St Peter and St James Hospice (£200); Mid Sussex Older People's Council (£50) and the Lindfield Arts Festival (£250). A further grant of £1,000 was made towards the All Saints Church Bells Project, funded from the reserves.

Other activities undertaken by the Finance and General Purposes Committee during the year have included strategic matters (review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and various policies) and overseeing the recruitment of our new Responsible Financial Officer.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a formal welcome to our new Responsible Financial Officer, Tracy Ely, and to thank her predecessor, Sue Kolien, who has given nearly twenty years dedicated service to this Council, first as Clerk/RFO and latterly as RFO.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

2013/2014 £		2014/2015 £	
			RECEIPTS
148,600.00		152,000.00	Precept
103.98		127.01	Interest Received
740.15		802.64	Allotments: Rents and Licence Fee
4,300.00		3,485.00	Village Directory: Advertising
7.00		12.00	Village Directory: Donations
240.00		330.00	Christmas Festival Night
3,760.00		-	Grants and Donations
		5,000.00	WSSC: Contribution towards paving repairs
		769.24	WSSC: Re-imburement for grass cutting
-		2,410.00	WSSC: Re-imburement for tree pollarding
		4,719.55	Insurance claims: Allotment shed and front door
11,874.97		7,125.00	Rent: Clock Tower House
		84,170.00	Sale of 6 Denmans Lane
894.39		1,234.52	Other Income
13,648.42	184,168.91	8,872.03	VAT re-imburements
			PAYMENTS
81,695.33		74,715.02	Administration:
		28,927.54	Capital: repayment of loan for Clock Tower House; associated costs; toilets on the Common
33,933.99		2,502.00	Other Expenditure on Parish Office
1,334.00		12,191.64	Finance and General Purposes Committee
11,034.48		36,271.74	Environment and Amenities Committee
34,313.62		1,081.93	Planning and Traffic Committee
14,113.64		8,588.06	VAT on Payments
10,658.92	187,083.98		
	- 2,915.07		
			164,277.93
			106,779.06
SUMMARY			
Opening Balance	162,711.77	Payments	164,277.93
Receipts	271,056.99	Closing Balance	269,490.83
	£ 433,768.76		£ 433,768.76
BANK RECONCILIATION			
Current Account	- 4,409.20		
Business Saver Account	273,764.49		
	269,355.29		
Petty Cash in Hand	135.54		
Total:	£ 269,490.83		

BUDGET 2015 / 16 (Precept £152,000)

Finance and General Purposes Committee		
Administration	112,520.00	
Chairman's Fund	500.00	
Grants/Donations	2,000.00	
Annual Memberships/subscriptions	2,500.00	
Village Directory	6,000.00	
Newsletter/Annual Report	2,000.00	
Members' Allowances	2,500.00	
Sub Total:		128,020.00
Environment and Amenities Committee		
Street Lighting - Energy/maintenance costs	3,750.00	
- Upgrading Street lights	25,000.00	
- Christmas Lights	4,000.00	
Maintenance / gardening	5,750.00	
Allotments	2,000.00	
Christmas Festival Night	1,000.00	
Village Archives	300.00	
Mobile Civic Amenity Freighter	2,000.00	
Denmans Lane toilets - running costs	12,000.00	
Replacement of litter bins	2,000.00	
Digital mapping	250.00	
Joint Project with MSDC/WSSC - Post and rail fencing - Pond and Common	2,000.00	
Grass cutting (High Street)	2,600.00	
Emergency Equipment	750.00	
Joint Project with WSSC: Dropped kerbs	7,000.00	
Joint Project with MSDC: Upgrading Hickmans Lane Playing Fields	5,000.00	
Sub total:		75,400.00
Planning and Traffic Committee		
Miscellaneous	200.00	
Sub total:		200.00
BUDGET TOTAL		203,620.00