



LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

June 2016

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

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MEMBERS OF LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL 2016/17

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

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

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

The Council year 2015/16 started with an uncontested election, having received only 10 nominations for 12 positions. We welcomed new Councillor Judy Durrant who stood for election and also Liz Hinze and Stewart Shortland who were subsequently co-opted to fill the two vacancies. Having said goodbye to Roger Pickett along with Michael Amor and Jane Chatfield, who had all made a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the Council, Roger Pickett was once again co-opted in February to fill the casual vacancy that arose due to the resignation of Liz Hinze for personal reasons. The Council would like to thank Mrs Hinze for the contribution she made during her time on the Council. Once again this has been an interesting and challenging year for your Parish Council. We also welcomed our new Responsible Financial Officer, Tracy Ely, to the Council replacing Sue Kolien who had served the Council for nearly 20 years

The most noticeable challenge for the Council over the last year was the upgrading of the WSCC streetlights. The completion of the conversion of a number of lights to heritage style, for which the Parish Council has paid a significant contribution is still awaited.

The lack of a District Plan and a five year land supply is still leaving the area open to unwelcome planning applications such as the Birchen Field, Walstead and Scamps Hill sites. This is particularly disappointing as local Town and Parish Councils have all been working very hard to produce their Neighbourhood Plans which are intended to represent the views of local people as to where new developments should go in their particular areas. The Lindfield and Lindfield Rural plan was "made" by Mid Sussex District Council on the 23rd March .

As ever, the past year presented the Council with challenges but a number of achievements can be reported. The Minutes of the last year reveal how busy the Council has been, particularly the Planning and Traffic Committee and the Environment and Amenities Committee and the Committee reports highlight a number of achievements.

We have raised the precept this year, for the first time since 2009/10, to £157,000, which is an increase of approximately 3.3% and in real terms adds just £1.57 to the Band D equivalent.

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

The committee has considered 145 planning applications during 2015/16, of which 44 related to trees. Most of these came from Mid Sussex District Council but we did also consider the occasional West Sussex County Council application, e.g. where they undertake work to trees that are either listed, or within the Conservation Area. As always, we are particularly concerned to protect our listed buildings and properties within the High Street/Compton Road Conservation Area, and the Areas of Townscape Character (which have now been added to by our Neighbourhood Plan, of which more below) and to ensure where relevant, that the guidelines contained within the Lindfield Village Design Statement are followed by homeowners and developers alike.

The applications normally relate to land, property or trees within our urban Parish but we did last year offer comments on a number of significant applications within Lindfield Rural Parish and Haywards Heath, when we considered that such developments would have an adverse effect on our own Parish, especially when it comes to the adequacy of our local infrastructure and amenities. This included the large scale housing application at Scamps Hill, which Mid Sussex District Council has since refused, and a similar sized application recently along Gravelly Lane, which has yet to be decided.

Notable applications within our own Parish included two that we considered unneighbourly and one that we considered would mean undesirable changes to a Listed Building within the Conservation Area.

A proposed rear extension at Chimney Corner, High Street came before the committee on two occasions and we considered it would have an unacceptable impact on the reasonable enjoyment of the neighbour's light and view contrary to Local Plan policy. It was a very similar situation with the proposed side extension to 30 Savill Road, in that case we considered that the height of the proposed extension would have an unacceptable impact on no.32.

The Barn, Hickmans Lane is a Listed Building within the Conservation Area but is a very difficult building to see from either Hickmans Lane or the High Street. A proposal for a single storey side extension and replacement of the existing lean to roof at the side with a solid roof including roof lantern came before us and although these works would not really be seen by members of the public, we concluded that we could not support the application because of the concerns about the adverse effect on it as a Listed Building and the setting of the Conservation Area.

The application for a residential development of 48 dwellings on Land North of Birchen Lane, which although mainly in Haywards Heath does include a small area within our Parish, was also refused by Mid Sussex District Council, but which unsurprisingly, went to appeal. We are still awaiting the result of that appeal, but it is expected shortly. In this case our comments mainly related to the traffic flows that would be generated on our road network from such a development.

On that traffic front, the Committee has also progressed the commissioning of the 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 consultant, Creative Roads Limited, was therefore appointed in the autumn last year, and work is now well underway to inform how we approach these concerns. We hope to come up with our recommendations and possible solutions for consultation with our Parish, later in the year.

We also commented to Mid Sussex District Council on their proposed Community Infrastructure Levy – Draft Charging Schedule and we expressed our concern that the proposed levy did not appear to be high enough, being only 78.5% of the forecasted shortfall and based on the assumption that all possible SHLAA sites would be developed.

During the year we and the Lindfield Preservation Society became concerned about a number of changes to either Listed Buildings or properties within the Conservation Area that were being done without the appropriate planning permission. So together we started a regular review of the Conservation Area in order to look out for such recent alterations and to then either take the matter up with the owners or the planning officers at Mid Sussex District, whichever seemed the most appropriate in the individual circumstances.

Neighbourhood Plan

Since my last report, the Plan has been through the independent examination stage, and where it was considered appropriate, the recommendations of the examiner were taken on board. The Plan subsequently went to referendum on 28th January 2016, where it was passed with a 95% "yes" vote. It was then formally made by Mid Sussex District Council on 23rd March 2016, and so it is now a material consideration in terms of planning applications that are decided in our Parish, by Mid Sussex District Council as our Planning Authority. However,

the law says that whilst the District Council does not have its own Development Plan in place, or an approved 5 year housing land supply, the weight that can be attached is open to a range of views. We will be watching this space.

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 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, Christmas lights, the annual Christmas Festival Night and Spring Clean also come under this Committee's remit.

The E&A Committee has achieved a number of objectives for the benefit of the village during 2015/16 and in addition to routine payments, the Committee's expenditure has been considerable with some long term projects coming to fruition.

Over the last five years we have been working with our street lighting contractors to upgrade the Parish Council's 46 lights, replacing old or obsolete equipment and painting columns. As a result the lights are now more reliable, we have far fewer reported faults and our energy costs have been reduced. The latest work carried out in 2015 involved the replacement of all the old concrete columns in Brookway with steel ones at a cost of £9,625 paid to our street lighting contractors and a further £17,305 to UK Power Networks for necessary underground work. The Parish Council has also made a contribution of £13,143 to the cost of the upgrade of the West Sussex County Council's street lights in order to ensure that heritage style lights were installed in the Conservation Area. Unfortunately we are still waiting for this to be completed.

Another project which has finally been done is the re-paving at the corner of Lewes Road and the High Street with additional bollards installed to deter parking which had contributed to the break-up of the York Stone. There are further plans to add a couple more bollards on the area north of the crossing.

We have taken part in discussions about the proposed footpath to Lindfield Primary Academy School and improvements to the dog waste bin service and we have negotiated an arrangement with Haywards Heath Town Council for some maintenance to be done as paid work (including cleaning and painting items of street furniture)

The Village Spring Clean in April has been much better supported in the last few years – many thanks to the people who give up their morning once a year to make this a great community effort.

During the coming year the E&A Committee's priorities are additional bollards on the High Street paving north of the crossing 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, and installation of some 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 2015/16 the precept was £152,000 prior to which we had not increased it since 2009/10. If the amount required to fund the budget is underestimated, the Council 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. After careful consideration of the budget for 2016/17, it was agreed to increase the precept to £157,000.

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 2015/16.

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.

The capital project for providing public conveniences on the Common also comes under this Committee and it had been the intention to hold a public consultation on the proposals around this time. However because of concerns expressed by a number of residents about the proposed site we will be looking again at all the other possible options.

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 2015/16 a total of £1,200 was paid in grants to the following organisations: St Catherine's Hospice (£250); St Peter and St James Hospice (£250); West Sussex Mediation Service (£100); Mid Sussex Older People's Council (£100); 4Sight (£150); Victim Support (£100); and the Lindfield Arts Festival (£250).

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

2014/2015 £		2015/2016 £	
	RECEIPTS		
152,000.00	Precept	152,000.00	
127.01	Interest Received	145.19	
802.64	Allotments: Rents and Licence Fee	787.80	
3,485.00	Village Directory: Advertising	3,990.00	
12.00	Village Directory: Donations	12.50	
330.00	Christmas Festival Night	462.86	
5,000.00	WSSC: Contribution towards paving repairs	307.50	
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	-	
7,125.00	Rent: Clock Tower House	9,500.02	
84,170.00	Sale of 6 Denmans Lane	-	
1,234.52	Other Income	4,390.75	
8,872.03	271,056.99 VAT re-imburements	14,325.97	185,922.59
	PAYMENTS		
74,715.02	Administration:	74,564.91	
	Capital: repayment of loan for Clock Tower House;		
28,927.54	office equipment; toilets on the Common	26,320.91	
2,502.00	Other Expenditure on Parish Office	5,263.33	
12,191.64	Finance and General Purposes Committee	10,553.55	
36,271.74	Environment and Amenities Committee	98,976.31	
1,081.93	Planning and Traffic Committee	492.88	
8,588.06	164,277.93 VAT on Payments	22,389.57	238,561.46
	106,779.06		- 52,638.87
SUMMARY year ending 31 March 2016			
Opening Balance	269,490.83	Payments	238,561.46
Receipts	185,922.59	Closing Balance	216,851.96
	£ 455,413.42		£ 455,413.42
BANK RECONCILIATION			
Current Account	- 3,573.86		
Business Saver Account	220,193.92		
	216,620.06		
Petty Cash in Hand	231.90		
Total:	£ 216,851.96		

BUDGET 2016 / 17 (Precept £157,000)

	£	£
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE		
Administration	115,780.00	
Chairman's Fund	500.00	
Grants/Donations	2,000.00	
Annual Memberships/Subscriptions	2,500.00	
Village Directory	6,500.00	
Newsletter/Annual Report	2,000.00	
Members' Allowances	2,500.00	
Sub-Total		131,780.00
ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE		
Street Lighting - Energy/maintenance costs	4,300.00	
- Upgrading Street lights	7,000.00	
- Christmas lights	6,000.00	
Maintenance/Gardening (including annual Village Spring Clean and work carried out by Haywards Heath Town Council)	7,500.00	
Allotments	3,000.00	
Christmas Festival Night	1,000.00	
Village Archives	300.00	
Mobile Civic Amenity Freighter	2,000.00	
Denmans Lane toilets - running costs	12,500.00	
Extra Bollards, High Street (North of Crossing)	3,000.00	
Digital mapping	250.00	
Joint Project with MSDC/WSCC - Post and rail fencing - Pond and Common	2,000.00	
Grass cutting (High Street)	2,000.00	
Emergency Equipment	750.00	
Sub total		51,600.00
PLANNING AND TRAFFIC COMMITTEE		
Miscellaneous	200.00	
Sub total		200.00
BUDGET TOTAL 2016-17		183,580.00