



LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Parish Office
6 Denmans Lane
Lindfield
West Sussex
RH16 2LB

Tel: 01444 484115
Fax: 01444 484918

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: vacancy
Responsible Financial Officer: Mrs. Sue Kolien

email: lindpc@gotadsl.co.uk
website: lindfieldparishcouncil.co.uk

MEMBERS OF LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Mike Allen	Alan Gomme	Mike Leach	Christopher Snowling
William Blunden (Chairman)	Stephen Henton	Margaret Nicolle (Vice Chairman)	Valerie Upton
Michael Davies	Margaret Hersey	Roger Pickett	Stephen Willcox

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

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW (Cllr. William Blunden)

This is my second Annual Report as Chairman of Lindfield Parish Council and once again it has been a busy and challenging year for the Council, during which much has been achieved.

Sadly, after a well fought fight, we lost the battle to prevent the building of 120 homes on the land parcel at Newton Road, on which the Parish Council, the Lindfield Preservation Society and the Lindfield Action Group had spent many hours. The Core Strategy Document, pending adoption by Mid Sussex District Council, identifies a further site for the building of some 500 homes on land between Scamps Hill and Gravelye Lane. Although the site is not in this Parish, development on this scale would have a huge impact on the Village as we know it now.

We have been very busy over the last year trying to move various projects along, but, frustratingly, a number of them have not been finished in time for this Annual Report for the financial year 2008/09. However they are very close to completion and the newly refurbished toilets will soon open for use; a litter bin from Black Hill and the Best Kept Village Sign, which are being smartened up, will soon be back in their respective places and a new noticeboard for events and other items of interest to the community will be going up on the wall of Leaf in Denmans Lane, alongside the other noticeboards. A new Parish Council website will be launched during the summer, which will contain a Community section for the type of information that was contained in Lindfield Online which is to be shut down. The new website address will be www.LindfieldParishCouncil.gov.uk and we are being provided with ".gov" email addresses with it.

In January, on the recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Council adopted a Strategy Document, which sets out some broader objective and ideals that will help to drive our activities for the remainder of the life of this Council, up to May 2011, and beyond:

- To provide good service to the people of Lindfield as Parish Council
- To ensure that the work of the Parish Clerks and RFO provides the service required without imposing an unrealistic workload on them and to this end determining priorities in the work of the Council
- To provide an adequate Parish Office base for the needs of the community
- To review and update the Council's policies and procedure documents
- To work to ensure an amalgamation of the work of the Parish Council and the Rural Parish Council in a new Lindfield & Scaynes Hill Parish Council in time for the next local elections in 2011.
- To achieve "quality status" as soon as possible
- To ensure that the renovation and re-commissioning of the Denmans Lane public toilets is completed in 2009.
- To work with the Communications Forum to ensure that excellent communications are established and maintained in the Parish e.g. through the website, parish newsletter, noticeboards, local press, directory.
- In all these matters the Finance and General Purposes Committee, as responsible for the financial control and budgeting of the Council, will seek to ensure that the Council's activities are undertaken as efficiently and cost effectively as possible and to this end will monitor expenditure and income, maintain adequate records and seek to account to the Council and the public for the economic use of resources.

The Environment and Amenities Committee and the Planning and Traffic Committee have also been active within their respective remits, as reported under the Committee Chairmen's reports below. The threat of large scale housing development, maintenance of the High Street and Compton Road trees and the question of whether or not there should be a mini roundabout at the Post Office corner are continuing issues as are the challenges facing all local authorities trying to maintain standards in the present economic climate.

I would like to thank all those people, including our Pond and Tree Wardens, our Directory delivery team and those who volunteer for the Annual Spring Clean, maintain flower beds and all who help in many capacities behind the scenes. 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 any way, please contact the Parish Office on 01444 484115. 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.

PLANNING AND TRAFFIC COMMITTEE

(Chairman Cllr. Christopher Snowling)

The routine work of the Planning and Committee is to comment on planning applications for work on buildings and trees within the Parish. Over the last year the Committee has commented on approximately 130 applications, of which 38 related to trees. We raised objections to 20 applications and offered comments on others as well as suggesting conditions to the planning permission to address concerns expressed.

During the course of the year, Members attended various workshops associated with Mid Sussex District Council's consultation on the various elements of the Local Development Framework, particularly the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Background Paper. If the Core Strategy document is adopted as it stands, it will establish a policy in favour of development of at least 500 homes in Gravelly Lane/Scamps Hill which will have a significant impact on the Village and the surrounding area.

Adoption by MSDC, in April 2008, of the Small Scale Housing Allocations Document meant that objections to the principle of development of the Newton Road site could not be made without challenging the decision by the Planning Inspector who presided over the Inquiry. The Parish Council shares the views of the Preservation Society and the Lindfield Action Group that development at this site would add significantly to the traffic on the road network in Lindfield and beyond and also that capacity at the Medical Centre and local schools would be put under

increasing pressure. Gleeson Homes PLC, the developers who had submitted a planning application to build 120 homes at this site, appealed against MSDC's refusal of planning permission and at around the same time submitted a revised application. The latter was finally approved by MSDC but not before the Parish Council had spent £3,191.40 on the professional services of a Planning Consultant to carry out an appraisal of the application and to speak on behalf of the Parish Council at the MSDC District Planning Committee meeting (and at the Appeal Hearing which did not take place as the revised application was approved).

WSSC's proposal to designate Lindfield as a Controlled Parking Zone did not receive support locally and was dropped from the scheme by WSSC. Informal consultation then took place on a much modified proposal, for waiting restrictions designed to address the problems known to exist in Denmans Lane, and formal consultation should be taking place shortly.

The Traffic Study Joint Working Party, which reports to the Parish Council through the Planning and Traffic Committee, has met three times in the last year and agenda items included: proposed waiting restrictions, vehicular traffic in Blackthorns, traffic speeds in High Beech Lane and Hickmans Lane and Community Speed Watch. The main items discussed by this group involved two locations where easy solutions could not be found, one of which was the pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the entrance to Hickmans Lane from the High Street. The other was the junction by the Post Office about which there are two current matters of concern: pedestrian safety on the narrow footway and the previously agreed mini roundabout which is being challenged on the basis of evidence from a report by Traffic Consultants commissioned by the Preservation Society and the Lindfield Action Group.

ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE

(Chairman Cllr. Will Blunden)

The Environment and Amenities Committee is responsible for providing and maintaining the Denmans Lane Allotment Site, 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 WSSC regarding the various highway matters. Two liaison meetings take place each year with officers of MSDC and WSSC as well as there being ongoing informal contact.

After lengthy discussions and a public exhibition at which proposals for the future management of the High Street lime trees were displayed, agreement was finally reached and the trees were pollarded in January. A further meeting was held in March at which it was decided to recommend that the Compton Road trees should be pollarded in late 2009 and thereafter every three years. The High Street trees are to be monitored over the summer to see how they respond to the recent pollarding and a decision will be then made as to the timing and frequency of future work, which it is anticipated will be in line with the arrangements agreed for Compton Road. Because WSSC do not have the resources to pollard more frequently than every four years, the Parish Council will be considering a recommendation to make a contribution to enable pollarding every three years.

As stated in the Chairman's Overview, much of our work has concerned matters that have not yet come to fruition. However the resurfacing of the ground under the Horse Gin in the grounds of the Red Lion has been completed and we have bought a new grit bin to replace the one that was vandalised in the Tollgate Car Park. Orders have been placed for the refurbishment of a litter bin in Black Hill and the Best Kept Village Sign and we are having brackets made for the new style bus time table holders to enable them to be fitted to those bus stop poles that are of a non standard design. We are liaising with WSSC regarding dropped kerbs in the Newton Road area, Compton Road and Hickmans Lane. At the request of residents, the Committee negotiated with WSSC for two new street lights to light the garage block in The Welkin. The Committee paid £500 towards these lights and was successful in securing a substantial grant from the WSSC Community Safety Initiative. A further contribution of £500 was generously made by the landowner.

An application for grant funding towards planting a mixed hedge on the Denmans Lane Allotment site has been approved and work has been taking place to prepare the site for planting.

Members of the Parish Council held a very useful meeting with Allotment Tenants in November last year at which various issues of interest or concern were discussed. Feedback was encouraging and meetings with Allotment Tenants will take place annually in the future. The demand for allotments continues to grow and the number of

people on the waiting list exceeds the number of plots on the site. It has therefore been decided to close the waiting list to future applicants who are not residents of this Parish.

The Environment and Amenities Committee is responsible for arrangements for the Annual Village Spring Clean, Christmas Festival Night and the Christmas lights on the High Street. Following the pollarding of the trees it is unlikely that there will be lights in the trees next Christmas as they have to be put above a certain height.

The Council has been obliged to negotiate a new contract for maintenance of the street lights for which we are responsible as EDF are no longer providing this service. Southern Electric Contracting appears to have taken up most of this business and the contract has been placed with them. They will be carrying out an initial inspection, including cleaning and replacing all the bulbs shortly, at the start of the contract.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

(Chairman Cllr Rev 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. Against the backdrop of the general economic situation and in the light of important developments locally, it has been a demanding time for the Committee.

The renovation of the Denmans Lane toilets, acquired last year, has been a major project during the year and it is hoped that they will soon be open again as the new Council year begins. Last year we indicated that the Parish Office was no longer adequate for the demands made on it and we are in negotiation to obtain the lease of premises at Denmans Court, behind the Office, which will provide additional working space, storage for papers and archives and facilities for small meetings.

Various sub-committees and small groups look after some of the detailed concerns of the Parish. One such group keeps our insurances under review and also monitors the management of the many "risks" facing us in this health and safety conscious age. Another keeps the workload of the Parish staff under consideration and seeks ways of regulating the ever increasing demands made on them by legislation, other authorities and the general public.

The Communications Forum is not an official Council body, but was set up to pursue matters relating to communications and public relations in the village which had arisen during consultation leading to the Lindfield Village Action Plan 2006. It works with the Council, the Preservation Society and other organisations, churches, schools, etc., to encourage relevant projects, such as the recent launch of "Lindfield Life", the provision of a new community noticeboard and the rationalisation and improvement of websites. The Lindfield Village Directory & Year Book, delivered free throughout the village, is now a joint production with the Lindfield Rural Parish Council and is as popular as ever, though increasing costs and demands on the Clerks' time raise questions about its future.

Grants and donations have been made to local organisations with strong Lindfield connections. Unusually a substantial grant of £750 was made to the 1st Lindfield Sea Scout Group for camping equipment in the light of an encouraging report on the growth and development of the Group. Other grants were made to 4Sight (£100), the West Sussex Mediation Service (£100) and Victim Support Sussex (£150).

A major concern this year has been the significant increase in the Parish Precept of £158,246 when Council approved its budget for 2009/2010. This is an increase on the current year, because the anticipated expenditure has increased from £132,000 to £154,300 and hitherto we have been able to make use of funds in hand to reduce the income required, but these are no longer available and it is always prudent to keep an adequate working balance of funds to cover several months' anticipated outgoings and provide for any emergencies and contingencies which may arise.

In all governmental spheres, national, regional and local, there is constant conflict between the need on one hand to eliminate waste and keep taxes low and on the other to provide the services the public demands. In Lindfield your Parish Council tries hard to maintain that balance. As explained above, our small office in Denmans Lane is cramped and inadequate and major work is being done to bring our newly acquired public toilets in Denmans Lane up to standard. The routine costs of providing and maintaining local services such as street lighting, covered bus shelters, allotments, the community gardens, Christmas lights and extra freighter visits are also increasing inexorably.

Further details are available from the Parish Office so, if you have any questions, please address them to us through the Clerks there. An abbreviated version of the receipts and payments account for 2008/09 is shown below. As usual, a copy of the full accounts is available in the Parish Office.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

2007/08				2008/09
£		RECEIPTS		£
110,000.00		Precept		99,000.00
3,920.58		Interest Received		2,265.60
546.01		Allotments: Rents and Licence Fee		570.53
5,245.00		Village Directory		4,295.85
205.00		Christmas Festival Night		195.00
17,300.00		Grants		-
2,601.60		Sale of green sacks		115.50
352.89		Other Income		899.81
-	140,171.08	VAT re-imburements		8,428.66
				115,770.95
		PAYMENTS		
	58,935.49	Administration:		80,410.40
	2,370.81	Capital		45,206.56
	2,732.20	Other Expenditure on Parish Office		6,192.48
	11,197.58	Finance and General Purposes Committee		8,918.76
	23,844.26	Environment and Amenities Committee		19,878.15
	1,823.28	Planning and Traffic Committee		3,217.35
	894.41	Village Design Statement		-
	233.00	Parish Plan Committee		-
	6,341.30	Other		-
	108,372.33	VAT on Payments		10,706.55
	<u>31,798.75</u>			174,530.25
				<u>- 58,759.30</u>
 SUMMARY				
Opening Balance		136,269.56		Payments
Receipts		<u>115,770.95</u>		Closing Balance
		<u>252,040.51</u>		<u>77,510.26</u>
				<u>252,040.51</u>
 BANK RECONCILIATION				
Current Account		-2,081.26		
Business Premium Account		<u>79,591.52</u>		
		<u>77,510.26</u>		

BUDGET 2009/10

<u>Finance and General Purposes Committee</u>		Per Budget
A	Administration	77,650.00
B	Chairman's Fund	500.00
C	Grants/Donations	1,500.00
D	Annual Memberships/subscriptions	1,500.00
E	Village Directory	6,000.00
F	Newsletter/Annual Report	1,250.00
G	Members' Allowances	2,500.00
H	Rental of additional accommodation	9,000.00
	Sub total	99,900.00
<u>Environment and Amenities Committee</u>		
1	Street Lighting - Energy/maintenance costs	4,500.00
	- Christmas Lights	2,500.00
	- Upgrading Street lights	3,000.00
2	Maintenance - planned	3,500.00
	- vandalism	750.00
3	Allotments	3,000.00
4	Gardening	150.00
5	Christmas Festival Night	500.00
6	Village Archives	500.00
7	Mobile Civic Amenity Freighter	1,750.00
8	Denmans Lane toilets - Cleaning and maintenance	8,000.00
9	Bus Shelters	4,000.00
10	Joint Project with WSCC - Dropped kerbs	1,900.00
11	Street map of Lindfield	500.00
12	Replacement of litter bins	4,000.00
13	Digital mapping	250.00
14	Adult play equipment	5,000.00
15	Benches in Hickmans Lane	400.00
	Sub total	44,200.00
<u>Planning and Traffic Committee</u>		
(i)	Miscellaneous	200.00
(ii)	Professional Fees	10,000.00
	Sub total	10,200.00
	BUDGET TOTAL	154,300.00
<u>Outstanding Projects</u>		
	Replacement of litter bins	3,000.00
	Refurbishment of signs	750.00
	Sub total	3,750.00
<u>Reserves (Estimated)</u>		
	General Reserve	27,500.00
	Sinking Fund - Denmans Lane	4,000.00
	Office Equipment	2,000.00
	Election	3,121.00
	Street Lighting	3,212.37
	Allotments	500.00
	Public Toilets - Capital	17,300.00
	- Maintenance	5,000.00
	Capital Project -	
	Bus Shelters	2,000.00
	Maintenance of King Edward Hall clock	900.00
	Horse Gin	520.02
	Sub total:	66,053.39
	Total: Outstanding Projects and Designated Reserves	69,803.39

Alternative summary

General reserve (estimated)	27,500.00
Other reserves & provisions	38,553.39
Outstanding projects	3,750.00