



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **FOR THE YEAR 2020 –2021**

*This report was finalised before we learnt of the resignation of Mary Wild.*

#### **Cllr Paul Berry, Chairman of the Council**

I am pleased to report that for the first time in many months, we have no vacancies on the Council. Since I reported this time last year, the following Councillors have resigned: Sue Rogers, Jon Perks and Alan Grant. Saddened though we always are to see faces go, we are pleased to welcome Craig Gale, Doug Waller, James Marchant and Caroline Beresford Pratt. Sadly, we learnt of the passing away of Cliff Griffin, a former prominent member of the Council over many years.

Our Councillors, who all give of their time freely, supported by Officers, run much of the day to day affairs of the Council through our **COMMITTEES** which all meet in public and to which anyone is always welcome to attend.

After the first lockdown, we resumed our full schedule of planned meetings last autumn, meeting virtually. This has been a steep learning curve for all concerned and I am grateful to all our Councillors and staff for embracing this new technology, and I thank everyone for their patience when sometimes gremlins have got in the way! We are really pleased how many residents are watching our meetings either live or afterwards and we plan to continue to stream meetings even after we start to meet in person again this summer. I am sure we will still encounter the odd technical difficulty and when we start to stream face to face meetings it may take us a few attempts to get things 100% right but one positive thing which seems to have come out of the COVID crisis is that it is easier than ever for members of the public to see their council in action.

Members of the **PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE** were last able to meet in person on 18 March 2020, before the commencement of the national lockdown due to Coronavirus. Although meetings were suspended, officers were given delegated authority to respond to planning applications in consultation with the Committee Chairman. The system worked very well and no comments deadlines were missed. Virtual meetings of the Committee commenced in September 2020.

During the past year, 118 applications were considered. Of these, the Parish Council either objected or strongly objected to 14 – 4 of which were later permitted by Horsham District Council (HDC) including HDC's own development of land at the top of Roman Way. Three of these applications were refused and the remainder have either been amended or are still under consideration.

Of the remaining 104 applications, the Parish Council did not object to 78 which were subsequently permitted. Of 4 refusals, 2 applications are now being considered at appeal. Of the remaining applications, 7 have been withdrawn and 15 are still being considered and decisions are awaited.

With the advent of virtual meetings, the Committee was able to invite guest speakers to answer questions about their development plans. Representatives of the developers of the Business and Trade Park at Hilland were present on two occasions.

As the development on land east of Billingshurst has progressed, street name plates have been installed. The street name suggestions from the Committee and the Local History Society were names taken from the War Memorial and the street signs have incorporated the poppy emblem of the Royal British Legion.

HDC envisages that a Regulation 19 consultation on its draft Local Plan will be held in June or July this year. At this time, details are awaited on which strategic sites in the district will be chosen to meet the housing need. The Parish Council has objected to all three strategic sites within the Parish and may consider once again engage a Planning Consultant to help navigate the Regulation 19 consultation and submit an appropriate response on behalf of residents of the parish.

Continuing the planning theme, the hard work of the **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY**, is nearing completion. A final consultation took place last year, followed by review by an Independent Planning Inspector. This is now going to a referendum on 6<sup>th</sup> May and we would urge everyone to vote upon it.

The **PROPERTY** Committee, meeting bi-monthly, oversees the management of the Council's various sites and other equipment and street furniture in the Council's care. Over the past 12 months:

At Jubilee Fields:

- A public consultation on designs for a bigger and better skate park was incredibly popular, using Facebook, videos and SurveyMonkey. Participants selected one scheme by a huge margin; this scheme is now being tweaked and priced-up. Sadly, by the time you read this, the old facility will have been removed as it was no longer economic to repair, and we hope to commission the new facility later this year. I would like to thank everyone who took part in the consultation for the design of the new facility, it was without doubt one of the most successful consultations the Council has engaged in; the final design will have been influenced significantly by the skate parks users.
- We have placed an order to improve drainage issues at the site which are damaging footpaths.

At Lower Station Road Recreation Ground:

- The project, much prolonged due to COVID, to improve the entrance has finally been completed.
- Billingshurst Tennis Club asked for permission to install an additional court to extend their facility. Concerns were raised regarding the loss of open space and the impact it might have on other user groups of the site such as the Scouts & Guides and Billingshurst Show. The Council asked the Tennis Club to talk to

these user groups to see if a compromise could be found which would be acceptable to all.

Elsewhere:

- The Public Conveniences in Mill Lane retained their Platinum in the 2020 *Loe of the Year Awards*
- 27 trees were planted last autumn on highway land, following suggestions by residents. These were funded by the Parish Council from the portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) it receives and arranged by West Sussex County Council (WSCC).
- A new more secure fence was erected at Manor Fields Allotments, at the request of tenants. This was funded by S106 funds destined for allotment improvements.
- The subject of dog bins continues to come up periodically, so much so that the Council has produced a policy which can be found on its website explaining the process and complexities of providing new bins. Parish Council land in the area is well covered by dog bins but the Council has no jurisdiction on land owned privately or by other authorities. Even if the Council wants to install bins on its own land, HDC must approve sites. Of course, a lack of dog bins in any area does not excuse the abhorrent behaviour of those who do not clear up after their pets. Waste can be bagged and placed in normal litter bins or taken home and disposed of with household waste.

The **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES** Committee continues to keep a close eye on the Council's finances. Again, I feel that the Council has maintained a good balance of maintaining current facilities in the Parish, updating others and increasing services and supporting the work of other organisations.

When determining the precept, the Council has done so whilst maintaining and, in some cases, increasing the services it provides, without reducing or removing anything. Amongst other things, the Council wants to increase its number of litter wardens to reflect the ever-growing area they need to cover; the Council is also committed to providing a new skate park. Getting the precept and budgets correct is a huge juggling act. Charging a little more but increasing services and facilities can attract criticism, but so does reducing services or indeed doing nothing. Although the Council has budgeted for projects, the Council and its partner agencies will still look for as much funding as possible for projects from elsewhere. If funding can be found, less precept money will be used and the money saved can be used for other projects or may mean that the precept can be reduced next year. It is not too difficult for the Council to decide what it would like to achieve in the coming year for its community. It is however difficult to predict what funding from elsewhere may be available to assist. Precept calculations are often worst-case scenarios and sometimes savings can be made and funds redirected.

Below this report the Clerk reports on the finances from this year and looks ahead to next.

The Council continues to fund regular youth sessions in the village, now held at the Women's Hall in partnership with Pulborough Parish Council and plans and funds are now all in place to convert the ground floor of 83a High Street into a youth facility, Sussex Clubs for Young People having recently secured significant S106 funding from HDC towards the project.

We also support other voluntary organisations in the parish by way of our **GRANTS** programme and in 2020-21 awarded the following:

Victim Support Sussex*	100.00
West Sussex Association for the Blind / 4Sight Vision Support*	300.00
Central & South Sussex CAB	200.00
Billingshurst Centre	2020.00
Billingshurst Community Partnership Luncheon Club*	606.00
Billingshurst Community Transport	2000.00
Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance*	250.00
1st Billingshurst Scouts*	150.00
The Racehorse Sanctuary & Rehoming Centre*	100.00
Billigreen*	228.00
BEAT*	500.00
	<b>6,454.00</b>

(Those marked with an \* were made using S137 LGA 1972)

The Council welcomes grant applications at any time of year, and there is an application form available to download on our website. We have also started to allocate CIL funds to local good causes to help them with their projects, although no CIL funds have been allocated to third parties this year.

The **BILLINGSHURST CENTRE COMMITTEE** continues to meet monthly to oversee the Billingshurst Centre of which the Parish Council is the Sole Managing Trustee (and meets as Trustee approximately 3 times per year.)

Daily management is left to an excellent team lead by Manager Sarah Newell; despite being closed over much of the year, we have successfully applied for several COVID business support funding streams to help keep the Centre solvent.

Work should start this year on a new garage to the rear of the Billingshurst Centre in order to house the Council's Litter Warden Team, this being funded by CIL funds held by the Council.

One of the roles of the Council is to champion the parish's cause to higher authorities. Recently this has taken the form of very strong objections to plans by WSCC to contemplate closing the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and Children and Family Centre. We made strong representations to HDC over their mismanagement of the orchard at Cedars Farm.

In some cases we have to become more involved than we are obliged to, and a good example of this is where we have successfully been given the green light to draw down S106 funds for transport, to meet the design cost of highway works which will discourage traffic that should be using the spine road, from continuing to pass through East Street and High Street. We hope that the measures will encourage more walking and cycling, and help make the High Street itself more attractive as a retail and service centre. This study is now being extended to include a crossing point or equivalent in the vicinity of The Alders.

Our Neighbourhood Wardens continue to do sterling work in our parish. I would like to welcome Julie Green who joined the team towards the end of 2020; Julie replaced Glyn Thomas who moved on to pastures new. Julie has great knowledge of Billingshurst having previously worked as a PCSO in the area. I would urge you to look at the Wardens' monthly updates which are posted on the Council's website. These highlight their activities and the wide variety of the tasks they undertake.

Sadly, we have not made any progress on the provision of CCTV for the area. We feel though that we have benefitted from twice yearly meetings with the Police & Crime Commissioner's team, where we have had frank exchanges which have resulted in tangible results. Certainly, in recent months we have seen an increased police presence in the parish with officers not only patrolling more but also working with local businesses to reduce crime. Please follow 'Horsham Police' on Facebook and Twitter to get regular updates regarding their activities in Billingshurst. The Council will continue to lobby Sussex Police regarding concerns raised about speeding traffic and anti-social driving in the area and I would urge local residents to do likewise and to report incidents via the *Operation Crackdown* website where appropriate. If you witness crime or anti-social behaviour, please report it directly to Sussex Police either online, by calling 101 or in an emergency 999. If we as a community do not report every incident to the police, they may think they are not needed so much here and allocate their resources elsewhere!

Parish Councillors are local unpaid volunteers who unlike a majority of their District and County colleagues do not represent political parties. Parish Councillors can claim meagre expenses which they may incur whilst undertaking their roles (mileage for example) but most choose not to. Your Parish Councillors do not claim any allowances.

The COVID pandemic has been referred to in two Annual Reports now. When drafting last year's report, we could have never imagined that will would still be under significant restrictions now, a year later. I would like to again thank all our community for their strength and resilience throughout the crisis but particularly perhaps our local keyworkers and volunteers who have helped support our community in such difficult times. These include but are not limited to NHS staff, shop staff, postal workers and volunteers who have taken residents to medical appointments including COVID vaccinations and collected prescriptions or shopping. At the time of writing, the Council will be forced to hold face to face meetings again in mid-May, sooner than some of us would like. However, this, along with the success of the vaccination program and gradual lifting of restrictions hopefully means that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we are heading slowly towards the end of the crisis.

I would like to again thank the Council's staff for all their hard work. These include the Clerk and his team in the Parish Office, the Billingshurst Centre Manager and her team and the Council's hard working Litter Wardens. As always, although the Council embarks on some major projects such as the aforementioned skate park, youth facility,

CCTV and ‘traffic calming’, much of the Council’s work involves the day-to-day management of the Council’s buildings, play areas and open spaces and dealing with enquiries from members of the public.

Please consider signing up to the Council’s email subscription service and following the Council’s social media accounts. It also only takes a few moments each week to visit the Council’s website to see if any new agendas have been added and what items are due to be discussed and decided upon. The excellent local Village Tweet publication also includes monthly updates from the Council. I know many parishioners have a real interest and passion for matters relating to Billingshurst. The Parish Council offers more ways than ever to be kept updated, as does HDC and WSCC. The Council works closely with our District and County Councillors and has representation on a number of other local groups.

### **Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2021**

<b>Clerk</b>	Mr Greg Burt
<b>Office Manager</b>	Mrs Liz Berry
<b>Assistant Clerk</b>	Miss Jo Booth
<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	Mrs Sarah Meyer
<b>Litter Wardens</b>	Colin Ellis + Roland Clark

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Twitter: [@BillingshurstPC](#)

The **Full Council** usually meets on the first Wednesday of every other month and has the following Committees/Working Parties:

<b>Planning and Environment</b>	meets at least monthly
<b>Property</b>	meets bi-monthly
<b>Finance and General Purposes</b>	meets monthly
<b>Billingshurst Centre</b>	meets monthly
<b>Working Practices</b>	meets bi-monthly
<b>Neighbourhood Plan Working Party</b>	meets as and when required.

15 Councillors  
Next Parish elections May 2023.

PARISH COUNCILLORS – MARCH 2021			
<b>CHAIRMAN</b> Mr P M Berry	8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst, RH14 9TY	<a href="mailto:paul.berry@billingshurst.gov.uk">paul.berry@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	07880 507666
<b>VICE-CHAIRMAN</b> Mr K Peters	31 Saddlers Close, Billingshurst, RH14 9GL	<a href="mailto:ken.peters@billingshurst.gov.uk">ken.peters@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	07874 855387
Mr G Acraman	11 Kenilworth Place, Billingshurst, RH14 9UB	<a href="mailto:graeme.acraman@billingshurst.gov.uk">graeme.acraman@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 780940
Mr B L Barnes	13 Carpenters, Billingshurst, RH14 9RA	<a href="mailto:barry.barnes@billingshurst.gov.uk">barry.barnes@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 780660
Mrs E Bengier	6 The Wadeps, Billingshurst, RH14 9UD	<a href="mailto:edna.bengier@billingshurst.gov.uk">edna.bengier@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 783684
Mrs C Beresford Pratt	2 High Street Billingshurst RH14 9PH	<a href="mailto:caroline.beresfordpratt@billingshurst.gov.uk">caroline.beresfordpratt@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	
Mr G C Commins	130 Forge Way, Billingshurst, RH14 9LN	<a href="mailto:garry.commins@billingshurst.gov.uk">garry.commins@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 780527
Mrs S Duck	189 Berrall Way, Billingshurst, RH14 9PQ	<a href="mailto:sandy.duck@billingshurst.gov.uk">sandy.duck@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 786146
Mr C Gale	4 Groomsland Drive, Billingshurst, RH14 9HA	<a href="mailto:craig.gale@billingshurst.gov.uk">craig.gale@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	0782 6519432
Mr D K Homer	24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst, RH14 9LA	<a href="mailto:dave.homer@billingshurst.gov.uk">dave.homer@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 782824
Mr J Marchant	Laurel House, 103 High St, Billingshurst, RH14 9QX	<a href="mailto:james.marchant@billingshurst.gov.uk">james.marchant@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 785041
Mr R E Margetts	47 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst, RH14 9NN	<a href="mailto:roy.margetts@billingshurst.gov.uk">roy.margetts@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 784487
Mr D Waller	C/O Parish Office	<a href="mailto:doug.waller@billingshurst.gov.uk">doug.waller@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 257531
Mrs M Wild	66 Honeysuckle Drive, Billingshurst, RH14 9UL	<a href="mailto:mary.wild@billingshurst.gov.uk">mary.wild@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	01403 786095
Mrs S L Wilson	37 Carpenters, Billingshurst, RH14 9RA	<a href="mailto:sarah.wilson@billingshurst.gov.uk">sarah.wilson@billingshurst.gov.uk</a>	07990 755252

## REPORT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER 2010-21

Points to highlight are:

For the year just ended, summarised below

1. Salaries includes paying those permanent members of the Centre's staff for ease of pension contributions, via the Council's own Payroll. These are subsequently reimbursed from the Centre.
2. The Council continues to receive CIL funds, which it is obliged to account for and report on separately.
3. The Council has continued to earmark reserves for upcoming projects, including a replacement skatepark at Jubilee Fields and works at 83a High Street.

Looking to the year just started:

4. Due the rapid expansion of the village in terms of new housing, the Council has responded by adding 31 hours per week to the Litter Warden Team which is responsible for keeping the village tidy. The hours of the existing two-person team will be increased and they will be joined by an additional part time third member. A larger team will enable the Council to have the flexibility to litter pick high profile sites on Sundays and Bank Holidays which has been demanded by residents. The extra cost has been partly offset by taking in-house the

cleaning of the public toilets in Mill Lane, for which we plan to provide an even more responsive cleaning regime.

5. The Billingshurst Centre is requiring increased financial support to balance its books. Whilst some progress had been made pre-COVID on reducing costs, and some COVID alleviation grants have been received, the Independent Examiner of the Centre's accounts last year said that as Sole Managing Trustee of the Centre (a registered charity) the Council needed to consider how it would address continuing shortfalls. This coming year the Council has budgeted to increase its support from £2,000 to £22,000.
6. Overall the Council will be asking for an extra £35,454 to fund this program. This is 9.49% more than last year. Because there are more properties (largely due to house-building) than last year, the overall take is spread over more payers. Therefore, the extra per typical average Band D payer, is £6.22 or 6.97%.
7. The Council continues to undertake significant projects only where the majority if not all funds can be secured from grants and other sources.

**G C Burt**  
**30/04/2021**

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Balances b/f	373,249.00	446,285.00	434,393.00	409,175.00	394,208.00
<b>Income</b>					
Precept	280,790.00	258,408.00	335,932.00	352,463.00	373,325.00
All other receipts	77,420.00	121,328.00	125,768.00	545,826.00	194,270.00
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Staff costs	129,919.00	144,163.00	197,735.00	201,484.00	215,051.00
Loan repayments	20,257.00	20,257.00	20,257.00	20,257.00	31,088.00
All other expenditure	134,998.00	226,209.00	269,342.00	691,514.00	338,352.00
Balances c/f	446,285.00	435,392.00	409,175.00	394,208.00	377,312.00
Total value of cash & short term investments	434,825.00	409,033.00	387,437.00	269,275.00	355,127.00
Total fixed assets + long term investments + assets	1,446,992.00	1,452,972.00	1,461,720.00	1,778,620.00	1,779,179.00
Total borrowings	161,417.00	149,783.00	137,506.00	458,553.00	432,056.00