



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **FOR THE YEAR 2018 –2019**

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

As usual it has been a very busy year for the Council.

During the year, we have retained 15 Cllrs and have had no vacancies!

On **STAFFING**, we said goodbye to our Litter Warden Alan Swainson and welcomed Roland Clark.

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.

#### **Planning and Environment Committee**

During the past year, the Committee met on 19 occasions and considered 140 planning applications. The Committee did not object to 80 of these; six of which were subsequently refused by Horsham District Council. Of this six, three applications are currently in the appeal process.

The Committee objected or strongly objected to 20 applications; sixteen of which were granted permission. These applications included Horsham District Council's application for the development of the former garage block on Rowan Drive and an application by one of the developers of land East of Billingshurst to divide plots to increase the stock of smaller units. Decisions are still awaited on 22 applications.

At the time of writing, there are 2 applications with Horsham District Council relating to the provision of petrol stations and industrial units on the outskirts of the village. The Parish Council is broadly in support of these applications as they could bring much needed infrastructure and employment opportunities to the parish and in the past during various consultations, local residents have highlighted their desire for an additional petrol station. The Council did raise concerns about access and transport issues and potential noise and light pollution and has tried to encourage the developers to do as much as possible to minimise any inconvenience and reduce the impact on local residents if these plans were to be approved.

Committee members, in conjunction with the Local History Society, have suggested street names for 24 roads within the East of Billingshurst development. Names have also been suggested for a development on Marringdean Road and for the site next to the GP Surgery.

All suggested names were taken from the names on the War Memorial and developers have been asked to incorporate the poppy emblem of the Royal British Legion within the nameplates.

Barbara Childs, Director of Place, Horsham District Council, attended a recent Committee meeting to answer queries and explore ways in which our two organisations might work better together in future. When the new Council term begins, Ms Childs and some of her Planning Officers will organize a Planning Workshop for Parish Councillors and staff.

Continuing the planning theme, our **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY**, upon which sit representatives of several partner organisations, has made good progress in preparing a Plan for the Parish. It has now been screened by Horsham DC to ensure it is compliant with their own Local Plan and we are about to look at what they have said. It can then be put out for further consultation and hopefully go to referendum before the end of the year.

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. It too has been very busy over the past 12 months:

At Jubilee Fields:

- The Trim Trail has been resurfaced.
- WSCC has installed lighting on the footbridge across the bypass to the site following a request from the Parish Council.
- A consultant has been engaged on a long-term project to put the site on mains sewerage. This may assist with the possible provision of public toilets in the future.
- We are working closely with users on bringing forward various designs for a bigger and better skate park. These will be fully consulted upon.

At Station Road Gardens:

- The Gardens retained its silver gilt award in the South & South East in Bloom competition, joining the village which received silver. The hard work of the Friends of Station Road Gardens in complementing Council contractors and staff continues to be valued.

At Lower Station Road Recreation Ground:

- Tenders have finally been invited for the improvement of the main gateway to the site. This has proved to be a much more involved scheme than originally envisaged but we expect work to finally take place this autumn.

Elsewhere:

- The Public Conveniences in Mill Lane were awarded Gold in the 2018 *Loo of the Year* Awards and we are working towards achieving Platinum this year.
- A new planting contract has been awarded which should see more striking seasonal planting in our sponsored High Street planters and hanging baskets, the latter being reintroduced last summer.

- We have refurbished two benches, in Lower Station Road Recreation Ground and fronting Carpenters.
- An additional street light at Little East Street was finally installed in time for the winter months.
- We have funded four new flowering Cherry Trees in the High St, replacing some unkempt Rowans.
- New play equipment at Manor Fields is being installed this Spring and we have also carried out other works at the site to make it more welcoming.
- We hosted our first *Billingshurst in Bloom* awards evening last September. It was a great pleasure to present certificates to so many local worthy entrants and I do believe entries will be welcomed for this year's competition shortly.

The **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES** Committee continues to keep a close eye on the Council's finances. There will be a more detailed report from the Clerk towards the end of this report but I would like to say a little about the precept, the portion of your Council Tax which is collected by HDC on behalf of the Parish Council. There is of course a lot of controversy when Council Tax increases each year. In the past few years, the Council has tried to keep any increase in precept to a minimum, in fact even making reductions if possible. Any large increases have been made to fund specific projects, the most obvious example being the Neighbourhood Wardens. I am of the view that in recent years, 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, in the process being sensible regarding any increases in precept.

The Committee has continued to work with residents in Five Oaks and a Speed Indicator Device (SID) has been installed, at a site agreed between residents and WSCC. We are looking to move this around the hamlet to ensure motorists don't get too used to it being in just the one location.

We continue to receive requests for traffic calming, although in reality we are not able to offer any magic solutions. However we are, with WSCC looking to see what can be done to further reduce volume and speed of traffic in East Street and adjoining roads, following the opening of the new spine road, which will be designated the A272. This will hopefully have the knock-on effect of making our High Street more user-friendly.

Thanks to our efforts, the traditional black and white finger sign on the Natts Lane triangle was restored, at no cost to the parish.

The Council continues to fund regular youth sessions in the village, in partnership with Pulborough Parish Council. Unfortunately, the provider Horsham Matters has had to withdraw due to funding issues at their end, and we are delighted that *Sussex Clubs for Young People* will be taking up the reins.

We also support other voluntary organisations in the village by way of our **GRANTS** program and in 2018-19 awarded the following:

Applicant	2018-19
Victim Support Sussex	75.00
West Sussex Association for the Blind	240
Central & South Sussex CAB	150
St Catherine's Hospice	200
Billingshurst Centre CCTV	2,260.00
Billingshurst Centre	2,000.00
Billingshurst Community Partnership Luncheon Club	600.00
Billingshurst Community Transport	£2,000.00
Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance	250.00
Mary How Trust	200.00
	<b>7,975.00</b>

The Council welcomes grant applications at any time of year, and there is an application form available to download on our website.

Last summer saw us welcoming Barry Faust and Glyn Thomas as our first Neighbourhood Wardens. Funded largely by the Parish Council with the support of Horsham District Council who also employ them, they have become a welcome sight around the Parish dealing with a multitude of issues. I would urge people to visit the Council's website where the Wardens' very comprehensive monthly reports can be viewed which highlight the diverse nature of their role and show how very active they have been in trying to improve life for local residents.

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 Manager Norma Sullivan and her excellent team. Satisfaction amongst hirers remains high and the Centre continues to cover its revenue costs. This year the Council funded CCTV at the Centre for the benefit of users and staff. A drainage issue to the rear has we hope now been resolved and we are currently seeking planning consent to construct a new garage to the rear to house the Council's Litter Warden Team. The Centre has switched its accounting package from SAGE to RBS. Looking after and running community buildings can be fraught with difficulties and they can often turn in to money pits. I am very proud how the Centre has evolved over the past decade or so and that there has been investment in the facility to update and repair it in the process, with minimal financial support from the Council.

The Parish Council continues to try its best to communicate with its residents using different media such as Facebook, Twitter and a new website should be going live shortly. We continue to have a double-page centre spread in the monthly Village Tweet magazine. The Council works closely with our District and County Councillors and has representation on a number of other local groups.

We were delighted to co-host with the Rotary Club the recent Billingshurst Showcase here at the Centre. It was great to see over 40 stalls showcasing the many community

groups and societies that make our parish a better place. I was pleased to see it so well-attended and hopefully many new members and volunteers signed-up to help continue their good work. I very much hope that this can now be a regular event.

A full version of this report will be put on the Council's website but in closing may I please offer some thank yous. Thank you to all the Councillors in the past year for all they have done, particularly perhaps those who head up committees and specific projects. Please remember that your Parish Councillors are volunteers, have no allegiance to political parties, many work and have other commitments but serve on the Council to try to improve the area we all live in. Thanks to our Clerk Greg and his team in the Parish Office for running the Council's affairs with great care and diligence and for being great ambassadors for the Council. Thank you to all the team at the Billingshurst Centre, led brilliantly by Norma in the past year and of course to our hard-working litter wardens, Colin and Roland. Finally thank you to the members of the public who help the Council and who attend meetings and respond to consultations. Of course, local Councils cannot please all of the people all of the time but support for your Council in the past year has been good, and complaints rare so I hope that means that we get it right most of the time.

This is of course the last Electors' Meeting of this Council. May I thank all those Councillors who have not sought re-election for their services over many years to the Parish, namely Mrs Lesley Wilding, Mr Paul Leaney, Mr Adam Du Lieu, Mr Andrew Pearson and more recently Mr Brian Spicer. 14 residents stood for the 15 places on the Council, therefore an election was not required and there is one vacant position on the Council; this compares to May 2015 when only 10 people put themselves forward to stand for the Council. Following May 2015, the remaining spaces were filled so we ended the term with a full complement of 15 councillors. Moving forward, I am very confident that we will soon fill the remaining place and I look forward very much to working with our newest Councillors, Graeme Acraman, Edna Bengier, Sandy Duck and Mary Wild.

### **Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2019**

<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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Facebook: Billingshurst Parish Council  
Twitter: @BillingshurstPC

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

<b>Planning and Environment</b>	meets at least monthly
<b>Property</b>	meets bi-monthly

**Finance and General Purposes** meets monthly  
**Billingshurst Centre** meets monthly  
**Working Practices** meets bi-monthly  
**Neighbourhood Plan Steering** meets monthly

15 Councillors

0 vacancies

Next Parish elections May 2023.

<b>CHAIRMAN</b> Mr P M Berry	8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst, RH14 9TY	07880 507666
<b>VICE-CHAIRMAN</b> Mr A C Grant	Tanners Cottage Lordings Road Adversane RH14 9JE	01403 784165
Mr B L Barnes	13 Carpenters Billingshurst, RH14 9RA	01403 780660
Mr G C Commins	130 Forge Way, Billingshurst, RH14 9LN	01403 780527
Mr A P Du-Lieu	Contact Via Parish Office	
Mr D K Homer	24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst, RH14 9LA	01403 782824
Ms S L Kingston	15 Daux Avenue, Billingshurst, RH14 9SZ	01403 782820
Mr P Leaney	11 Rowan Drive, Billingshurst, RH14 9NE	01403 783812
Mr R E Margetts	47 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst, RH14 9NN	01403 784487
Mr A Pearson	Denecroft, Little East Street, Billingshurst, RH14 9PN	01403 782080
Mr J Perks	6 Hawthorn Way Billingshurst, RH14 9GX	0786 3336999
Mr K Peters	31 Saddlers Close, Billingshurst, RH14 9GL	07874 855387
Mr B Spicer	7 Wood Croft, Marringdean Road, Billingshurst, RH14 9XL	01403 785173
Mrs L D Wilding	26 Carpenters, Billingshurst, RH14 9RB	01403 783192
Mrs S L Wilson	37 Carpenters, Billingshurst, RH14 9RA	07990 755252