



ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR

01 April 2012 – 31 March 2013

Mr Paul Berry
Chairman of
Billingshurst Parish Council

Chairman's Report

The Parish Council has had yet another busy year and one of its highlights has been the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Sincere thanks should be given to Hazel and Barry Barnes and Ann Rodwell for ensuring that this village participated in the celebrations. The Parish Council installed a flagpole at the front of the Billingshurst Centre as a permanent reminder of this happy occasion.

The past year has been difficult for many organisations in the current economic climate and the Council has been pleased to help village organisations where it can. Further on in this report you will see a list of donations made by this Council. The Council was pleased to be able to help the committed volunteers of the Billingshurst Sports and Recreation Association with a grant of £6,000 to enable them to purchase a new lawn mower for use at Jubilee Fields. This continues to be an excellent facility for parishioners and is now being enjoyed by more young people using the skate park facility. Facilities for young people has been a strong theme for this Council over the last year and I am delighted that the Council has been one of the front runners in providing a Community Youth Worker shared with Pulborough Parish Council. Whilst some may have been disappointed that the Council rejected the idea of a land swap in Station Road for the Eye Project Youth Facility, the Community Youth Worker project and financial commitment of £10,000 demonstrates this Council's commitment to our young people.

The Council as Sole Managing Trustee of the Billingshurst Centre charity has worked hard this year to help the charity with grants for equipment and expertise to assist the Centre with improvements to encourage new business. At the time of going to press, the kitchen at the Centre is being replaced using s106 planning obligation funding and future improvements funded by grants are in the pipeline in the new financial year.

The allotments at Manor Fields are eagerly awaited following the completion of the necessary legal paperwork by the Parish Council. Station Road Gardens has really taken shape this year and is proving to be a very popular facility for all generations of our community. My thanks to the volunteers of the Friends of Station Road Gardens.

Looking to the future, the Council is in a time of ever changing legislation and endeavours to keep pace with all the new legislation and powers handed down from central government. The Council has actively embraced the Localism Act of 2011 adopting the General Power of Competence in October 2012 which enables the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do, rather than being restricted by specific statutes to undertake improvements for the benefit of the parish. The Council has nominated five assets of community value to Horsham District Council: Public Conveniences in Mill Way, Mill Lane and Jenger's Mead Car Parks, Women's Hall including the Mothers' Garden and Billingshurst Library. If the Council's nominations are successful, in the future if any of these community assets are made available for sale, the Parish Council will be notified and given six weeks to express an interest that it wishes to bid to purchase the asset.

The Parish Council was sorry to see Mrs Valerie Gray leave this year and welcomed the return of Mr Colin Milne, who has been very helpful to the Billingshurst Centre charity with his knowledge of Sage and accounting.

Your Parish Councillors, Parish Office and Billingshurst Centre staff continue to provide an excellent standard of service for this parish and for this I thank them all.

The Council has also submitted responses on behalf of its residents to the following consultations:

- HDC Electoral Arrangements Consultation
- HDC Green Space Strategy
- HDC Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Preferred Sites Consultation
- Lower Tidal River Arun Strategy
- WSCC Adversane Lane Traffic Regulation Order consultation
- WSCC Alternative Owners for 10 Gypsy and Traveller Sites including Adversane and Cousins Copse
- WSCC Billingshurst Residents Parking Scheme Proposals
- WSCC Draft Highways and Transport Works Programme
- WSCC Proposed Expansion of Primary Schools in the North of West Sussex
- WSCC Waste Local Plan Consultation
- West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service: consultation on Service Plan 2013/14 and proposals for savings

And finally, I would like to record my thanks to all the other volunteers in our community that work with the Parish Council for the benefit of others, and in particular, our District and County Councillors. It has been a pleasure to serve the parish of Billingshurst as Chairman of the Council for a second year.

Paul Berry - Chairman

Planning and Environment Committee Report

The Planning and Environment Committee has continued to meet once a month and has commented on approximately 107 planning applications for the parish this year.

Having lost the appeal for 150 houses on land south of Gillmans last year, the Parish Council was very disappointed to have also lost the appeal for 46 houses on land east of Daux Avenue despite a comprehensive written objection and attendance at the Public Inquiry from the Parish Council and members of the public. This being the second planning appeal for this site, the first successfully dismissed following comprehensive objections from members of the public. Unfortunately this Appeals Inspector was of the view that the latest planning application provided greater certainty that the ancient woodland could be protected and was satisfied that the proposal does not pose a risk to Daux and Rosier Woods.

The Parish Council also attended the Development Management Committee meeting at Horsham District Council in July and successfully saw the application for 550 houses on land east of Billingshurst refused. This application is also being taken to appeal by the developers and will be heard by way of Public Inquiry in October this year and final decision made by the Secretary of State as it involves proposals for residential development over 150 units which would significantly impact on the government's objectives to secure a better balance between housing demand and supply and create high quality, sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities.

Following the expiry of the one year grace period following the introduction of the government's Neighbourhood Planning Framework and until Horsham District Council has a new Local Plan in place, Horsham district has a shortfall of a 5 year housing land supply making Billingshurst vulnerable to ad hoc planning applications outside of the built up area boundary. Horsham District Council are working on the review of their Local Plan including strategic site allocations, and it is so important that members of the public respond to consultations and have their say on the future shape of the parish.

The Parish Council has reviewed its Winter Maintenance Plan and had measures in place to assist in the severe weather events this winter. Litter Wardens Shaun Marshall and Tobias Mothe worked extremely hard clearing pavements of snow and gritting using the limited resources supplied by West Sussex County Council. The Parish Council had repeatedly requested grit supplies for multiple locations throughout the parish, but unfortunately they never arrived. In future severe weather events, please contact West Sussex County Council for a supply of grit and salt, their telephone number is 01243 642105.

The Planning and Environment Committee will continue to meet usually on the first Thursday of every month, with a second plans only meeting later in the month and warmly welcome members of the public to attend its meetings. Please see our website or noticeboards for plans only meeting dates.

Property Committee Report

The Council was very disappointed that the land owner at Five Oaks decided to terminate the Council's lease for the playing field. This area of our parish is now without a recreation ground after many years use of the field behind Hayes Wood Road.

Work on the allotments for Manor Fields has been ongoing and the Council has signed the management agreement which it awaits back from the Allotments Society. The developer at Townlands very kindly donated scalplings for use to create the access paths around the allotments in exchange for temporary use of the car park at Manor Fields.

The skate park at Jubilee Fields continues to be very heavily used and plans for future improvements are being discussed with the users of the ramps. The Council gives grateful thanks to Cllrs. Barnes and Homer for installing barriers around the top of the skate ramps following the Council's annual safety inspection. New procedures were brought in to provide emergency access to Jubilee Fields in the event that emergency services need to gain access through the height barrier. Notices around Jubilee Fields give the pager number for summoning a key holder to unlock the barrier. The Council has also installed an emergency vehicle access track to the skate park.

The Committee heard plans from the Billingshurst Tennis Club to replace their existing clubhouse at Lower Station Road recreation ground and agreed to allow the Club to use an extra strip of land to increase the size of their clubhouse to meet their future needs.

The Parish Council is grateful to Devine Homes plc for allowing a dog litter bin supplied as part of the Windmill Place development in East Street to be installed in Station Road Gardens. The Gardens project has advanced significantly this year with the installation of the footpaths and the Committee looks forward to seeing the planting and play equipment commence shortly. The Parish Council has placed an order for a refurbished road sweeper as the current sweeper has reached the end of its useful life despite the expertise of Litter Warden Tobias Mothe keeping the sweeper operational for as long as possible. The Committee planned for the replacement and had budgeted for it for a number of years. The Property Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the young people of the parish in the coming year to investigate improvements to the skate park at Jubilee Fields and thanks them for taking such an interest in their community facilities.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

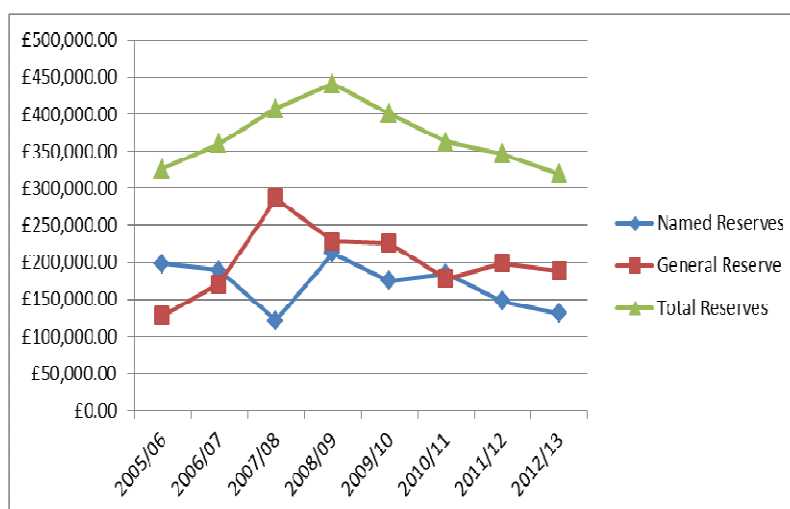
The Committee spent a long time this year defending the changes brought about by the Local Finance Act 2012 to the localisation of Council Tax benefit. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 passed down the responsibility for devising Council Tax schemes to local billing authorities, in our case Horsham District Council. However billing authorities will now only receive 90% of the Council Tax benefit grant and this reduction in grant has been passed on to Parish Councils in the Horsham district with the resulting impact that our precept (the Parish Council element of your Council Tax) has increased by 1.2%, whereas in fact due to careful budgetary control, the Parish Council has actually reduced its budget by 0.1% on last year.

The Parish Council replaced its ageing Parish Office computers this year and gave the Billingshurst Centre a grant to upgrade the WIFI router for the Centre.

The parking proposals for Billingshurst and Traffic Regulation Order for a 50mph speed limit for Adversane Lane were considered by the Committee and comments submitted to West Sussex County Council.

The total fund holding of the Council is still reducing year on year from £441,036 as at 31 March 2009, £400,918 as at 31 March 2010, £362,709 as at 31 March 2011, £346,621 as at 31 March 2012 to £319,538 as at 31 March 2013, as the Council has been using its reserves in an effort to reduce the financial burden on Council Tax payers. The Council's income for the financial year was £281,727 from the precept of £244,151, bank interest of £1,000, environmental cleansing grant of £19,889 from Horsham District Council and the remainder of the income derived from grants and planning obligations funds. The Council's expenditure this year was £308,810, including £38,000 match funding for Station Road Gardens, £4,786 to improve the street lights in East Street, £3,610 to replace the Parish Office computers and grant for WIFI router, Jubilee celebrations grant of £491, access track to the skate park £5,298 and £1,514 to replace faulty Christmas lights. The remaining expenditure was on the Council's open spaces, operating contracts and staffing.

The Council's named reserves have decreased from £147,844 at the start of the financial year to £131,182, and the Council's general reserve is £188,356 at year end. The Council has set the precept for 2013/14 at £227,352 when combined with the Council Tax benefit grant equates to £69.73 per annum for a band D Council Tax property and an increase of 1.21% on 2012/13.



Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2013

31 March 2012 £	INCOME	31 March 2013 £
610	Parks and Open Spaces	825
12,278	General Admin	1,401
0	Salaries	0
22,033	Highways	28,309
1	Public Lighting	2
242,214	Precept	244,151
1,366	Interest	1,000
28,706	One Off	5,212
29	Unp chq	827
200	Petty cash	
307,437		281,727
	EXPENDITURE	
39,772	Parks and Open Spaces	40,016
35,722	General Admin	33,084
122,307	Salaries	112,628
22,207	Village Hall	20,257
4,738	Highways	5,572
3,114	Public Lighting	3,139
2,979	s137	3,644
7,577	Election	0
85,057	One Off	90,470
54	POSB	
323,525		308,810
	General Fund	
	Balance B/Fwd 01/04/12	346,621
	Add Income	281,727
	Deduct Expenditure	308,810
	General Fund 31/03/13	319,538

Reserves as at 31 March 2013

Reserve	Amount
Open Spaces	£4,000
Trees	£5,000
Cemetery	£8,802
Memorials	£500
Village Hall	£1,000
Station Road Gardens	£3,095
Civil Emergency	£1,200
Street lights	£25,792
Play Equipment	£21,000
Road Sweeper	£5,000
Skate Park	£0
Bus Shelters	£2,025
Allotments	£7,954
Planning	£7,915
IT	£390
Christmas Lights	£2,046
Community Event	£509
Toilets	£13,000
Trespass Legal Fees	£2,000
Football Field	£10,000
Elections	£3,500
Members Allowances	£6,455
Named Reserves	
Totals	£131,182
General	£188,356
	£319,538

Donations were made to the following local organisations this year:

Date	Cheque	Organisation	Amount
30/05/2012	010123	Victim Support Sussex	£50.00
27/06/2012	010149	Age UK	£50.00
27/06/2012	010150	West Sussex Association for the Blind	£50.00
25/07/2012	010175	Unitarian Chapel	£75.00
24/10/2012	010271	Community Transport	£2,000.00
24/10/2012	010263	Life Centre	£50.00
28/11/2012	010297	Royal British Legion	£18.50
28/11/2012	010299	West Sussex Mediation Service	£100.00
28/11/2012	010300	West Sussex Mobile Youth Trust	£50.00
30/01/2013	010349	Community Partnership	£1,000.00
30/01/2013	010350	Billifest	£1,766.49
27/02/2013	010366	Billingshurst Centre	£200.00
			£5,409.99

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council has processed five requests this year at a cost of £450 to the Council. The basic parish allowance is set to £440 for financial year 01/04/12 – 31/03/13. Cllr. Rands was paid £100 members basic allowance and the following travelling expenses were paid: Cllr. Homer £3.40, Cllr. Leaney £153.65, Cllr. Longhurst £9.00.

Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2013

Chairman: Mr Paul Berry
Vice-Chairman: Mr Doug Rands

Clerk: Mrs Beverley Bell
Deputy Clerk: Mrs Liz Berry
Assistant Clerk: Miss Jo Booth
Office Admin: Mrs Sarah Meyer
Tel: 01403 782555
Fax: 01403 787699

Council Offices
Billingshurst Centre,
Roman Way,
Billingshurst,
West Sussex
RH14 9QW.

Email: council@billingshurst.gov.uk

www.billingshurst.gov.uk Find us on Facebook too

Parish Council as at 31 March 2013		
Mr Barry Barnes	13 Carpenters, Billingshurst	01403 780660
Mr Paul Berry	8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst	07881 825517
Mr Steve Buck	66 Arun Road, Billingshurst	01403 782599
Mr Garry Commins	130 Forge Way, Billingshurst	01403 780527
Mr Alan Grant	Tanners Cottage, Lordings Road, Adversane	01403 784165
Mr Roy Grantham	5 Pine Close, Billingshurst	01403 782895
Mrs Lesley Gray	Ladymead, Coneyhurst, Billingshurst	07954 249296
Mr David Hart	5 Rosier Way, Billingshurst	01403 782533
Mr Dave Homer	24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst	01403 782824
Mr Paul Leaney	11 Rowan Drive, Billingshurst	01403 783812
Mr Ken Longhurst	The Brier Patch, Marringdean Road, Billingshurst	01403 784039
Mr Roy Margetts	47 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst	01403 784487
Mr Colin Milne	8 Rosehill, Billingshurst	01403 785205
Mr Doug Rands	62 Arun Road, Billingshurst	01403 783551
Mrs Lesley Wilding	26 Carpenters, Billingshurst	01403 783192

The Council was formed in 1894. There are currently 15 Parish Councillors. The next Parish Council elections are on 07 May 2015.

The **full Council** meets the first Wednesday of each month and has the following Committees:-

Planning and Environment	meets monthly
Property	meets monthly
Finance and General Purposes	meets monthly
Working Practices	meets every other month
Complaints	

The Council's Chairman and Vice-Chairman, together with membership of Committees are elected in May of each year at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. The Council has two Sub-Committees:- Bank Reconciliation and Budget and Working Parties: Skate Park, Newsletter, Health and Safety, Internal Audit, Emergency Planning and Parking Strategy.