



# ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR

01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

Mr Paul Berry  
Chairman of  
Billingshurst Parish Council

## **Chairman's Report**

This is the last Annual Report for the term of this Council as there are full Parish Council elections on 07 May 2015. At the time of writing and presenting this report, nomination packs are available for people considering standing for election. You are encouraged to drop in to one of the Parish Council workshops at the Billingshurst Centre to find out more about the work of our Parish Councillors. These are being held on Saturday 14 March 2015 10.00am – 12noon or Monday 16 March 2015 6.00 – 8.00pm. We finish the Council term with 13 Parish Councillors and have given our thanks to Roy Grantham, David Hart and Colin Milne who resigned this year and welcomed Sue Kingston to the Council.

One of the things we have concentrated on this year is improving communication with our parishioners. This has been achieved by more traditional means such as posters on notice boards, banners to advertise the Annual Parish Meeting and full page features in the Village Tweet which is distributed monthly to every household. The Council has also embraced more modern methods of communication including using the electronic sign in Budgens, regular updates on Facebook and Twitter and keeping the Parish Council website regularly updated.

Continuing the theme of communication with our parishioners, the Parish Council has worked in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Community Partnership on a Community-Led Plan for Billingshurst called 'Billingshurst Today and Tomorrow'. The plan details the community's wishes and aspirations for the period 2015 – 2020. 5,500 copies of the Plan have been distributed to village households. The Plan is structured under seven 'Topics': Economy, Transport and Parking, Senior Citizens, Youth, Open Spaces and Environment, Community Safety, and Health and Wellbeing. Each Topic has its own stated Objective and an Action Schedule that identifies the issues, how they will be addressed, with whom, and when.

New legislation was enacted last year which requires Councils to be more open and transparent. The Council participated in the South of England Show last summer promoting the work of Parish Councils and encouraging people to stand for election. Our website has a wealth of information about the Council, its policies and services and our meetings are open to members of the public.

Further development and infrastructure has dominated the Council's year again. The Council discussed the Airports Commission consultation on additional runway capacity and gave an overview of its comments about potential impact on the parish. The Council was represented at the public examination on the Horsham District Planning Framework by its Planning Consultant Keith Nicholson. Mr Nicholson put forward a detailed case to the Planning Inspector on the need for the village to have time to assimilate the recently permitted development into the community before the village is asked to accommodate even more housing. As part of the permission for the 475 houses on land east of Billingshurst, some £1.72 million has been allocated for community facility improvements.

The Parish Council, Chamber of Commerce and Community Partnership have been working with Horsham District Council on a Village Centre Supplementary Planning Document looking at how this money can best be spent to secure improvements to our village centre. There will be a consultation on these plans and residents are encouraged to take part and have your say.

Cllr. Wilding has worked tirelessly with residents affected by flooding driving this infrastructure concern high up the agenda with Horsham District Council and West Sussex County Council. If you have been affected by flooding in the village, please do contact the Council with details and in particular any photographs you can obtain to add to our portfolio of evidence. You are also welcome to join the Billingshurst Action Group who are working together on a co-ordinated approach to get our ditches and culverts cleared so that surface water run-off can flow unimpeded to the main rivers.

Young people and employment remain prominent actions for this Council and we are pleased that Community Youth Worker Dan Jenkins has established a very popular Youth Club at Jubilee Fields. The Council has helped several people on their Journey to Work programme by providing work experience at the Billingshurst Centre. It has provided them with work experience and a reference to find suitable employment and brought new skills into the Centre to improve and maintain this important community facility. The Council remains committed to delivering high quality services to the community and you might be truly surprised at the number of facilities and services provided by this Council. Why not take a look at our website [www.billingshurst.gov.uk](http://www.billingshurst.gov.uk) and click on the facilities tab.

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

- Horsham District Planning Framework Submission Stage consultation
- HDC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule
- HDC Draft Broadbridge Heath Quadrant Supplementary Planning Document
- HDC Strategic Housing Sites Land Availability Assessment
- HDC Polling District and Station Review
- WSCC Proposed Expansion and Building of New Schools in Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex
- WSCC Highways and Transport Draft Works Programme
- WSCC Strategic Transport Investment Programme
- WSCC Draft Fire and Rescue Service Proposals 2015 – 2016
- Airports Commission runway capacity
- Gatwick Airport Second Runway
- Gatwick Airport Flight Path Trials

**Paul Berry**  
**Chairman**

## **Planning and Environment Committee Report**

The Planning and Environment Committee has again needed to meet at least once and sometimes twice a month over the last year and has commented on 136 planning applications. Pressure for the village to take more development continues unabated.

This year 12 dwellings and a commercial unit were permitted at Lamina Di-Electrics in Myrtle Lane despite the Council's strong objection and 50 further dwellings were permitted by HDC Development Management Committee at land adjoining Blackthorne Barn, Marringdean Road.

Despite the lack of inclusion of secondary school places for children arising from the permitted 475 houses, in the recent consultation on school expansion West Sussex County Council permitted the re-development of the Weald School including new 3-storey infill teaching block and other facilities. The Parish Council had objected to these plans as they felt that the plans were out of date and they should be re-thought after drainage and other issues have been addressed.

However the Parish Council has had two notable successes in objection to planning applications, 14 dwellings at Nyewood Court were refused on the grounds that the application would represent over development of the area and an outline application with all matters reserved for development of 36 houses and flats and neighbourhood store on land west of Parbrook House, Natts Lane was also refused due to concerns about flooding and infrastructure.

Countryside Properties held a public exhibition on their plans for 100 dwellings off Marringdean Road, in addition to the 200 houses already permitted on land south of Gillmans. To date, no planning application has been received. Inazin Power Limited attended a meeting of the Committee to present their intention to secure a site for a 4.99MW capacity solar park on land at Five Oaks, which could produce enough power for the average use of 1,000 households.

A decision on a Neighbourhood Plan for Billingshurst was deferred to the new Council to learn the outcome of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) public examination. HDC is consulting on a major modification to the HDPF from 23 March until 05 May, after which the new Council will be in office and will be able to decide, using details of that consultation, on the timeliness of commencement of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Celtique Energie have been granted planning permission and installed the phase 1 works at Broadford Bridge to provide access to the site for conventional drilling operations to search for shale gas or oil. Phase 2 of the works is to bring in the drilling rig. This site is often referred to as being in Billingshurst parish, but is in fact within the parish of West Chiltington.

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 if required 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 main focus of the Committee's work this year has been the much needed replacement of the play equipment and skate park at the Lower Station Road Recreation Ground and play equipment at Cherry Tree Close. The Committee successfully obtained s106 planning obligations funding totalling over £100,000 for these projects. Young people were involved in the design of the new skate park which saw the metal ramps replaced by a concrete quarterpipe and driveway. This park provides a different skate experience to that of the wooden ramps at Jubilee Fields and caters for different skating styles. The Committee worked with several play companies to consider competitive tenders for play equipment that would be inclusive and cater for all age groups. Particular attention was paid to including provision for a kick about area at Cherry Tree Close that deflected the direction of ball travel away from neighbouring properties. Further s106 funding was secured by the Committee to upgrade the skate facility at Jubilee Fields too.

A team of dedicated volunteers led by Keith Brown continue to maintain and improve Station Road Gardens. Following comments from the members of the public, the Council agreed to continue to permit dogs in the Gardens, but fenced off the play area.

A new contractor was appointed to install and commission the Christmas lighting scheme in the village, and the Council is delighted with the finished results this year achieved by securing the icicle lighting with a catenary wire.

Manor Fields allotments are becoming well established. The Committee worked with the Allotments Society to make access for plot holders easier by the installation of an access gate and new pedestrian access path.

Over the years, the Parish Council has committed substantial public funds towards the repair and maintenance of the church clock in St Mary's Church. The Committee has worked with the Church and Diocesan Advisory Committee Clocks Advisor to look at future maintenance of the clock. The Parish Council has offered a grant to electrify the clock which will allow for an hour strike whilst maintaining the clock mechanism in situ for heritage purposes.

The Committee is grateful to the Council's regular contractors and Litter Wardens who work tirelessly to keep the Council's property clean and in good condition.

## Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

In October, the Parish Clerk presented the Finance and General Purposes Committee with a five year Financial Plan covering the period 2015 – 2020 to help guide the new Council. The Council adopted this plan in October which was based on the actions in the Community Plan and previous expenditure profiles. The plan looked at the Council's current service level provision and maintaining its many facilities and services. The plan was then used to set the budget for 2015/16.

The budget for 2015/16 is the third budget this Council has prepared including the Council Tax benefit grant. In the first year, parishioners were asked by the District Council to pick up the 10% shortfall in the grant. In the second year, Horsham District Council cut this Council's grant by 22% in line with their grant reduction from central government. The Parish Council decided not to increase the precept and instead cut its budget to mitigate the impact of this change on parishioners. Now for the third year, the Council Tax Benefit grant has been cut again by a further 30%. In order to be able to support organisations within our community, the Parish Council has decided to increase the precept by 1.28%. This will enable the Council to provide extra cuts and herbicide treatment at Jubilee Fields, a late Spring clearance of the Parbrook, budget for maintenance at Station Road Gardens, continue to fund a Community Youth Worker, and provide grants to the Village Agent, Luncheon Club and the Billingshurst Centre for the Centre Management Services Agreement. The 1.28% increase represents less than £1 on the average Band D Council Tax bill.

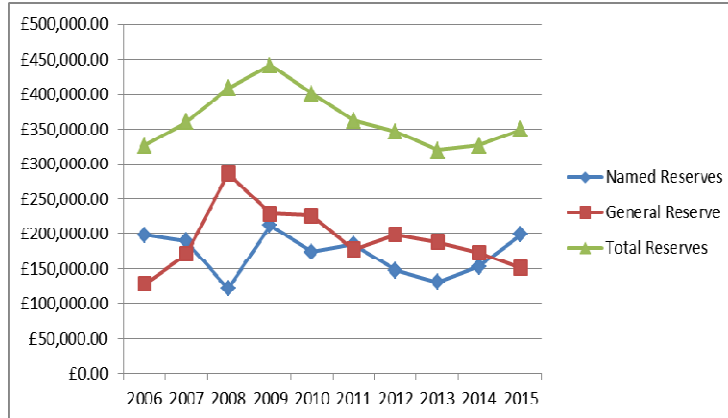
### Donations were made to the following local organisations this year:

Date	Cheque	Organisation	Amount
30/04/2014	010744	Victim Support Sussex	£50.00
25/06/2014	010810	Age UK	£50.00
30/07/2014	010843	West Sussex Association for the Blind	£50.00
17/12/2014	010983	Central & Sussex CAB	£100.00
29/03/2015	011060	St Catherine's Hospice	£150.00
29/03/2015	011061	Billingshurst Community Partnership	£100.00
24/09/2014	010892	Friends of Station Road Gardens	£100.00
26/11/2014	010949	Friends of Station Road Gardens	£100.00
17/12/2014	011977	Friends of Station Road Gardens	£100.00
26/11/2014	010968	Billingshurst Community Transport	£1,000.00
30/07/2014	010844	Kent Sussex and Surrey Air Ambulance	£50.00
22/05/2014	010770	West Sussex Mediation Service	£100.00
30/04/2014	010743	St Catherines Hospice	£100.00
			<b>£2,050.00</b>

## Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2015

31 March 2014 £	<b>INCOME</b>	31 March 2015 £
600	Parks and Open Spaces	525
7,609	General Admin	7,764
0	Salaries	0
24,775	Highways	23,490
1	Public Lighting	12
247,415	Precept	233,563
2,651	Interest	1,792
11,953	One Off	142,654
<b>295,003</b>		<b>409,800</b>
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
36,981	Parks and Open Spaces	40,394
58,590	General Admin	35,639
115,808	Salaries	137,631
20,257	Village Hall	20,295
5,720	Highways	3,842
3,181	Public Lighting	3,214
4,044	Elect	1,750
0	Election	0
43,878	One Off	142,168
<b>288,458</b>	VAT b/wd	1,271
		<b>386,205</b>
	<b>General Fund</b>	
	<b>Balance B/Fwd 01/04/14</b>	<b>326,083</b>
	Add Income	409,800
	Deduct Expenditure	386,205
	<b>General Fund 31/03/15</b>	<b>349,679</b>

## Reserves as at 31 March 2015:



Reserves	Amount
Open Spaces	£11,000
Trees	£10,000
Cemetery	£9,500
Memorials	£4,000
Village Hall	£2,500
Civil Emergency	£1,350
Street lights	£5,792
Play Equipment	£36,000
Road Sweeper	£2,450
Skate Park	£5,500
Bus Shelters	£2,525
Planning	£5,073
IT	£7,530
Christmas Lights	£4,330
Toilets	£27,000
Trespass Legal Fees	£2,000
Football Field	£10,000
Elections	£13,500
Parish Office Phone	£2,000
Youth grants	£8,862
BPC Youth	£225
HR Support	£5,000
Swimming Pool	£20,000
Clock	£2,850
Named Reserves Totals	£198,987
General	£150,690
	<b>£349,677</b>

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council has processed three requests this year at a cost of £150 to the Council. The basic parish allowance was set to £440 for financial year 01/04/14 – 31/03/15. Cllr. Rands was paid £100 members' basic allowance, travelling allowance of £17.75 and £115.62 were reimbursed to Cllrs. Homer and Leaney respectively.



## **Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2015**

**Chairman:** Mr Paul Berry  
**Vice-Chairman:** Mrs Lesley Wilding

**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  
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[www.billingshurst.gov.uk](http://www.billingshurst.gov.uk) Find us on Facebook and Twitter too

<b>Parish Council as at 31 March 2015</b>		
Mr Barry Barnes	13 Carpenters, Billingshurst	01403 780660
Mr Paul Berry	8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst	07437 287241
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
Miss Lesley Gray	Ladymead, Coneyhurst, Billingshurst	07954 249296
Mr Dave Homer	24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst	01403 782824
Ms Sue Kingston	15 Daux Avenue, Billingshurst	01403 782820
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 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 13 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:-

<b>Planning and Environment</b>	meets monthly
<b>Property</b>	meets monthly
<b>Finance and General Purposes</b>	meets monthly
<b>Billingshurst Centre</b>	meets monthly
<b>Working Practices</b>	meets every other month

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, CCTV, Youth, Community Plan, Health and Safety, Internal Audit, Emergency Planning and Parking Strategy.