



ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR

01 April 2009 – 31 March 2010

Mr Gavin Collins
Chairman Parish Council

Chairman's Report

Billingshurst Parish Council has had yet another especially busy year, and I am delighted to report that progress has been made on new community assets through partnership working with members of the public who join our Working Parties and local clubs and organisations.

The Parish Council received a request by 15 members of the electorate for the Council to provide allotments in the parish. Legally the Parish Council is only obliged to provide allotments in the locality, so could have referred the request on to Horsham. However your Council felt very strongly that this facility should be provided here in Billingshurst and created an Allotments Committee to progress the idea. From there, an Allotments Society was formed and a recommendation has been made to the Council to change the use of the Manor Fields playing field to split use for children's play area and allotments. There is still much work to do, layout of the allotments, applying for planning permission, legal agreements and so on, but the Council hopes this new facility will be available for use soon. Special thanks to Carl Woods, Chairman of the Allotments Society, for his time and effort to drive this project.

During the course of the year, the Council has also formed Working Parties to investigate Neighbourhood Wardens, new locations for bus shelters and a skate park. The Council in setting its precept, that is the parish element of your Council Tax, decided against the inclusion of funding for Neighbourhood Wardens at this time. The Bus Shelter Working Party conducted a postcard consultation with our September newsletter and identified four locations for new bus shelters. The Parish Office completed a lengthy application for grant funding to WSCC, only to be advised that due to the harsh winter and deteriorating roads, the grants would be held over until April 2011. The Parish Council is still pursuing planning obligation funding for three bus shelters in Forge Way. The Skate Park Working Party is continuing to work on a location for a new skate park.

The Friends of Station Road Gardens continue their work and this year we have seen the installation of the park style railings and drainage improvements to the former cricket field. The ball court and youth shelter are now open and ready for use in time for the better weather. Work is progressing on seeking funding to continue the improvements to the gardens by our group of volunteers who are also keen to start some of the digging, planting and landscaping of the gardens. The Friends would welcome more volunteers to join them with the project, please contact the Parish Clerk for details.

Billingshurst Village Hall had structural repairs carried out last summer on the advice of the structural engineer. Whilst some of the movement problems have been addressed, it would appear that the main hall is still subject to seasonal movement. Monitoring of the cracks will continue before a decision is made whether to install movement joints or provide underpinning to the south west corner of the building. Legal negotiations are ongoing to separate the Parish Council from the Village Hall charity, and it is hoped that this will be completed this year.

The Parish Council said goodbye to Mr Paul Leaney this year who has contributed greatly to the maintenance of the Council's property, and welcomed back Mrs Helen Abbott after a nail-biting bye-election tie determined on the drawing of lots. Our Councillors have attended two training sessions this year on powers and duties, roles and procedures, and a training course on the power of well-being. The power of well-being enables the Parish Council to spend money on projects or activities that

contribute to the social, economic or environmental well-being of the parish. Sadly, 80% of our Councillors are required to have had this training for the Council to be able to use the power, but four Councillors were unable to attend the training session, so we await them to undertake the training before we can use this new power from central government.

Our staff continue to maintain very high standards for the Council's property and administration. Congratulations to our Clerk, Beverley Bell, and Assistant Clerk, Liz Berry, for passing their playground inspection examinations, and also to Beverley for achieving her membership upgrade to Principal of the Institute of Local Council Managers for recognition of her outstanding contribution to local government over the last ten years.

The Council is looking to apply for re-accreditation of Quality Status in 2011, and as part of this commitment, has introduced a new format quarterly newsletter. Clubs and societies are invited to send articles for the newsletter (max. 100 words) to the Parish Clerk.

And finally, the big issue that everyone has been talking about this year apart from the general election – development in Billingshurst. The Parish Council was delighted that it had been successful in opposing the strategic site allocation at Adversane/North Heath and would like to thank everyone that joined our campaign, and in particular thanks should be given to our Parish Clerk Beverley Bell for her knowledge and support. The Parish Council continues with its mandate to oppose development on land east of Billingshurst. In the coming weeks, Horsham District Council will be finalising their Preferred Strategy for development; the Parish Council will keep you informed of progress through its website, electronic sign in Budgens Supermarket and the Community Forum.

Gavin Collins - Chairman

Planning and Environment Committee Report

Following the Planning Act 2008, and revision to permitted development rights, the Parish Council has reduced its Planning Committee meetings from two to one per month and has commented on approximately 132 planning applications for this parish this year. The Committee has had presentations from the Thakeham Village Action Group against proposals for landfill at the Laybrook brickworks quarry. This Council voiced its opposition to the landfill site and is delighted that the application has now been withdrawn.

A2 Dominion Homes attended the meeting in February to show their plans for land south of Gillmans for 150 houses, and in March Stephenson Developments presented their plans for 36 one and two bedroom flats at Station Mills in Daux Road.

Amongst plans the Council considered were applications by the Nyetimber winery for the Brinsbury campus, which was subsequently withdrawn, 14 houses adjacent to Hammonds in East Street decision awaited, and 67 houses for Godden Land. The last application was refused by Horsham District Council because of its impact on this prominent entrance into Billingshurst High Street and affect on the master planning of land east of Billingshurst. The refusal was taken to appeal by the developer Rydon Homes. The Parish Clerk attended the resulting Public Inquiry in March, the outcome of which is unknown at the time of going to press.

The Committee are delighted to report that West Sussex County Council will be planting two new oak trees to replace the diseased oak tree felled in Broomfield Drive last year. The Committee has also strenuously opposed the felling of trees on land east of Billingshurst, and has been in correspondence with Horsham District Council who have assured the Parish Council that the trees can be managed by a strategy which does not preclude the use of emergency TPO's should it become necessary.

Horsham District Council are in the process of introducing e-consultation for planning applications and slowly withdrawing the production of paper plans, which will present a significant challenge to this Council in the coming months. However the Council is committed to involving the community in consultation on planning applications and welcomes you to attend meetings of the Planning and Environment Committee usually held on the first Thursday of the month.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

As part of the new requirements by our external auditors, the Committee appointed two Councillors to attend the bi-annual internal audit of the Council's accounts and report on the effectiveness of the internal audit. The Councillors were pleased to report that the internal audit, conducted by an independent assessor, is very rigorous and gives the Council positive assurance about its financial transactions.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council has processed five requests this year.

The Budget Sub-Committee were tasked with preparing three budgets this year: the Council's budget based on previous year's expenditure, one which included funding for Neighbourhood Wardens, and one which included £20,000 to top-up the Council's reserves. After much debate, the Council agreed to set the precept at £246,481 which includes £20,000 to top-up the Council's reserves. This equates to £70.46 per annum for a band D Council Tax property and a reduction of 2% on last year.

The Council's income for the financial year was £304,080 from the precept of £248,496, bank interest of £2,242 a mere 11% of the interest received last year, environmental cleansing grant of £11,515 from Horsham District Council and the remainder of the income derived from grants and planning obligations funds.

The Council's expenditure this year was £344,198, almost £100,000 more than last year. This can be accounted for by including costs for structural repairs to Billingshurst Village Hall, the new scheme of Christmas lighting, churchyard maintenance, Billifest grant, election costs, swimming pool running costs contribution and repairs to the Church clock.

The Council's named reserves have decreased from £212,229 at the start of the financial year to £174,556, and the Council's general reserve is £226,362 at year end. This is slightly under one year's precept and in accordance with audit regulations guidance that the Council should keep approximately one year's precept in reserve for contingency.

For the coming financial year, the Council will see its named reserves reduce yet further as projects continue such as the Village Hall structural repairs, churchyard memorial repairs, skate park plans, allotments project, street lighting upgrade and Station Road Gardens.

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2010

31 March 2009 £	INCOME	31 March 2010 £
920	Parks and Open Spaces	4,225
7,193	General Admin	11,013
226	Salaries	623
15,669	Highways	21,157
4	Public Lighting	2
246,147	Precept	248,496
20,296	Interest	2,243
9,740	One Off	12,214
392	Void Chqs	4,107
1,253	POSB	
301,840		304,080
	EXPENDITURE	
54,192	Parks and Open Spaces	41,005
49,561	General Admin	50,775
112,445	Salaries	117,705
20,989	Village Hall	20,295
2,666	Highways	3,231
2,925	Public Lighting	3,523
551	s137	2,275
4,634	Election	8,950
21,070	One Off	96,439
269,033		344,198
113	Reverse VH VAT Debtor	
268,920		344,198
	General Fund	
	Balance B/Fwd 01/04/09	441,036
	Add Income	304,080
	Deduct Expenditure	344,198
	General Fund 31/03/10	400,918

Reserves at 31 March 2010	
Open Spaces	£3,976.63
Cemetery	£277.50
Village Hall	£53,096.00
Memorial Gardens	£45,000.00
Civil Emergency	£1,200.00
Lighting	£40,000.00
Play Equip	£22,000.00
IT	£3,005.00
Xmas Lighting	£0.00
Billifest	£1.32
Community Event 2008	£1,000.00
Toilets	£3,000.00
Trespass Legal Fees	£2,000.00
	£174,556.45

Donations were made to the following local organisations this year:

Organisation	Amount
Victim Support Sussex	£50.00
Billingshurst Community Transport	£1,000.00
Billingshurst Community Partnership	£1,800.00
YES Project	£500.00
Royal British Legion	£16.50
Billifest	£2,000.00
St Marys Church (lighting)	£140.00
Unitarian Chapel	£75.00
Billingshurst Football Club	£685.00
West Sussex Mediation Service	£100.00
Sussex Crimestoppers	£100.00
The Purple Bus	£100.00
Just Different	£100.00
St Catherine's Hospice	£50.00
	£6,716.50

Property Committee Report

The main focus of attention of the Property Committee this year was the memorial safety inspection of the St Mary's churchyard. The churchyard was closed by order in 1969, and the Parish Council accepted responsibility for its upkeep in 1984. The Council recognised as part of its Risk Assessment that the memorials in the churchyard should be inspected by a competent inspector and invited contractors to tender for the work.

The Independent Memorial Inspection company were appointed and carried out the inspection in September 2009, after the inspection was advertised locally. A number of memorials have failed the inspection and the Council is in the process of trying to locate their owners. If you would like to check if your family's memorial has passed the safety inspection, please contact the Parish Clerk with as many details as possible.

A Lower Station Road resident complained to the Council about noise from youths gathering around a bench at the bottom of their garden in Lower Station Road. The Council removed the ageing bench and replaced it with a new bench and litter bin across the other side of the playing field away from neighbouring properties. The Council also organised the removal of the bench on the west side of Alicks Hill following complaints by residents of youths congregating there.

Concerns were raised by local residents and businesses about young people using the leylandii trees on the former cricket field in Station Road to climb on to the roofs of the factories in Myrtle Lane and then jump from factory to factory. The Parish Council organised the pruning of these trees to prevent climbing on to the factory roofs and is grateful to Lamina for a grant towards the costs.

Following the Council's comprehensive property risk assessments and inspection schedule, the Parish Council carried out a five yearly electrical safety inspection of its Adversane Mission Hall with remedial work to rectify the defects found. The footpath across Adversane Green was replaced this year.

A member of public asked for the installation of hand rails in the toilets in Mill Way; the Council were delighted to be able to help and are grateful to their contractor for the excellent standard of cleanliness. The Council has entered into a three year service agreement for the Church clock after significant repairs this year to the collar washer and hands. West Sussex County Council have finalised the PFI agreement for the maintenance of street lighting, and the Parish Council has joined the scheme for the maintenance of its 44 street lights.

The Council has agreed in principle to give the Billingshurst Lawn Tennis Club permission for a fourth tennis court and looks forward to seeing their expansion plans soon. Public use of the third court can continue to be booked at Jake Private Hire.

In the coming year, the Council is negotiating a ten year lease agreement to ensure that the Five Oaks playing field continues to be available for public use, and of course we look forward to the Fireworks Display in Jubilee Fields.

And finally, the parish is fortunate to have a new community Police Office based at Billingshurst Village Hall and you are welcome to attend the community drop-in on Thursdays from 6 – 9pm to raise any matters of Policing concern with your Community Support Officer.

There is much to look forward to this year with the report from the skate park working party, development of allotments at Manor Fields and progress in the Station Road Gardens project – something for all members of our community. May I take this opportunity to thank Billingshurst Parish Councillors and all the volunteers that have worked with us over the last year for the benefit of our community.

Gavin Collins - Chairman

Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2010

Chairman: Mr Gavin Collins
Vice-Chairman: Mr Jake Edsor

Clerk: Mrs Beverley Bell
Deputy Clerk: Mrs Wendy Wright

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Parish Councillors 31 March 2010		
Mrs H. A. Abbott	White Cottage, Stane Street, Five Oaks	01403 783577
Mr B. L. Barnes	13 Carpenters, Billingshurst	01403 780660
Mr P.M. Berry	8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst	07881 825517
Mr M. Bobker	38 Rowan Drive, Billingshurst	01403 783809
Mr S. N. Buck	66 Arun Road, Billingshurst	01403 782599
Mr G. R. Collins	3 Cranham Avenue, Billingshurst	07912 368805
Mr D. Duke	19 Wicks Road, Billingshurst	07775 811559
Mr J. H. Edsor	Penfold, Parbrook, Billingshurst	07760 255433
Mr A. C. Grant	Tanners Cottage, Lordings Road, Adversane	01403 784165
Mr C. P. H. Griffin	Smithy House, Stane Street, Five Oaks	07803 908695
Mr D. A. K. Homer	24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst	01403 782824
Mr R. M. Margetts	47 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst	01403 784487
Mr C. Milne	8 Rosehill, Billingshurst	01403 785205
Mr D. F. Rands	62 Arun Road, Billingshurst	01403 783551
Mrs G. Yarham	9 Carpenters, Billingshurst	01403 782282

The Council was formed in 1894. There are currently 15 Parish Councillors. The next Parish Council elections are due in May 2011.

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

Station Road Gardens

Allotments

Parish Plan

Each standing Committee includes the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. 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 four Sub-Committees:- Cemetery, Christmas Lights, Working Practices and Budget and four Working Parties: Bus Shelters, Neighbourhood Wardens, Quality Status and Skate Park.