



ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR

01 April 2011 – 31 March 2012

Mr Paul Berry
Chairman of
Billingshurst Parish Council

Chairman's Report

It is quite daunting preparing my first report as Chairman of the new Council, which was elected in May 2011. 18 candidates stood for the 15 places, meaning the Council had a contested election. Of the 15 Councillors elected, only seven were from the previous Council, so 8 new faces. I have been very proud how well our new Councillors have settled in to their roles and how hard they have worked in the past year on the Council. Our Clerk and her staff held a reception for the new Council and our District and County Councillors before the first Council meeting so that everyone could meet for the first time and get to know one another. Your new Council elected me to the office of Chairman, and Doug Rands to the office of Vice Chairman. One of our first tasks was to lead the Council through re-accreditation for Quality Status. I am very pleased to announce that the Council has been re-accredited and this is a reflection of the hard work by your Councillors and Parish Council staff to achieve and maintain a high standard of public service.

During the year we have lost Councillors David Duke and Carl Woods who both brought considerable knowledge and enthusiasm to the Council and they are both missed. We welcome Roy Grantham and Alan Grant to the Council.

During the year, the Council has revisited its scheme of Members Allowances and has opted to pay a basic Members' Allowance to those that wish to claim it to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to join our Council.

There have been a number of staff changes this year. Wendy Wright retired as our Deputy Clerk after 11 years service and we were very sad to lose Litter Warden Ted Muir who died suddenly last year. Liz Berry has been promoted to Deputy Clerk, Jo Booth to Assistant Clerk, Sarah Meyer to Office Admin Assistant and Shaun Marshall has joined us as a Litter Warden. We are very lucky to have over 25 years experience in local government between our staff in the Parish Office and I thank them for their patience and dedication to the provision of a high standard of service to our community.

In preparing for this Annual Report, I have been quite overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work undertaken by the Council in the last year and will try to give you an overview of just some of its achievements:

- Manor Fields has been formally appropriated for the provision of allotments.
- The Council has decided to remain the Sole Managing Trustee of Billingshurst Village Hall, which has changed its name to Billingshurst Centre, and the Council's occupation of the Parish Office is being formalised.
- Station Road Gardens is coming much closer to reality now with the planning application and grant bids submitted. Special thanks must be made to Keith Brown and the Friends of the Gardens who are driving this project on behalf of the Council.
- The wonderful new skate park is fully operational in Jubilee Fields and enjoyed by our younger residents.

Your Council continues to be involved in consultations that affect our parish and has Councillor representatives working on the relocation of the signal box and crossing expansion, a CCTV system for the High Street and Station Road, on street parking consultation and retail needs study.

A great deal of the Council's time has been spent trying to protect the area from mass development. Members of the Council spend time keeping up to date with new legislation and changes to the system.

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

- WSCC changes to bus services
- West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Merger
- Youth Support and Development Service Public Consultation
- HDC Budget Proposals 2012 – 2013
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport consultation to examine the deregulation of Schedule One of the Licensing Act 2003
- WSCC Integrated Works Programme 2012/13 and Forward Programme 2013/14
- Southern Water Drought Plan

There has been extensive press coverage about the dedicated youth facility called the Eye Project. The Parish Council unanimously agreed its support in principle for the project, but did not agree to lease part of Station Road Gardens for the project. Unfortunately some of the press coverage has focused on the Council's relationship with the Billingshurst Community Partnership and it is such a great shame as in parallel with the Council achieving Quality Status re-accreditation, Billingshurst Community Partnership has been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and they should be commended for this achievement. The parish is very fortunate to have two organisations working for the improvement of services and facilities for all our community. Both organisations need to respect the differences between the two groups. The Parish Council is answerable to its parishioners and has a duty to spend their money with thought and care; sometimes the Council will not feel it is able to support a particular project. Whilst needing to respect and understand the differences between the groups, members of both the Council and the Partnership must do their utmost to work together for the community; it is what our community expects and deserves. One of my main hopes in the coming year is that the two groups will work together more than ever before and I look to individual members of both organisations to help achieve this.

Finally, I would like to say how honoured I have been to act as the Council's Chairman for the past year. I have received a great deal of support and encouragement from fellow Councillors, members of the public and of course the Parish Office staff, all of which I am very grateful for.

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 126 planning applications for the parish this year. The Council has seen an increase in the number of ad-hoc planning applications for small scale development in the parish, which the local planning authority is finding difficult to resist whilst there is a district wide shortfall in a 5 year housing land supply. The Parish Clerk and local residents attended a Public Inquiry into the planning application for 150 houses on land south of Gilmans, and despite a valiant effort from our Clerk in front of the developer's barrister and Government Inspector, the appeal was allowed and permission granted for 150 houses. However the residents that fought the appeal for 55 houses on land east of Daux Avenue were successful and the appeal was dismissed, and the subsequent application for 49 houses was also refused by Horsham District Council. It is so important for residents to participate in planning consultations and make their opinions known.

The threat of large scale development still looms over the parish, but the Parish Council strongly opposed the Interim Statement on Managing Development proposed by Horsham District Council and has vehemently objected to the planning application for 550 houses on land east of Billingshurst. The Council maintains a heavy involvement in planning consultations, attends all the Strategic Planning Advisory Group meetings at Horsham District Council and employs the services of a planning consultant to provide comprehensive responses to development consultations.

Horsham District Council has been reviewing its policy on the allocation of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Representatives of your Council and the local community participated in focused consultation sessions and the number of proposed permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites was reduced from 3 to 2 due to landscape character setting and noise issues associated with the close proximity of the A272 to the Fewhurst site.

The Committee has reviewed its Emergency Contingency Plan which was called upon in August when there was a large fire at the Four Seasons Fuel Depot and the necessity to evacuate the vicinity and provide an emergency rest centre at the Billingshurst Centre. Special thanks to everyone that attended and worked together to support the displaced residents, who bore their unfortunate circumstances with great dignity and patience.

The Planning and Environment Committee will continue to meet usually on the first Thursday of every month and warmly welcome members of the public to attend its meetings.

Property Committee Report

The Committee was delighted to see the installation of the skate park at Jubilee Fields in late summer and it was an immediate hit with the younger members of our community. Access arrangements have been made for emergency vehicles as unfortunately there have been some accidents that required a trip to hospital. The Council has a pager that will alert key holders to the need to open the height barrier at Jubilee Fields. The amount of litter around the skate park has needed careful management and the Chairman has personally visited the park with black bags and asked young people to tidy up. The Council has also provided a large litter bin by the pavilion building for our Litter Wardens to deposit all the rubbish collected which had been filling the boot of an estate car each week! Our Litter Wardens do a sterling job keeping our public open spaces clean and tidy, but it is such a shame that our beautiful parish is desecrated by litter in the first place and the Council will be looking at ways to reduce littering.

With grateful thanks to Mrs Hart, the Council is able to provide a recreation ground at Five Oaks and the new lease was finalised this year.

At the time of writing, the upgraded street lighting is being installed in East Street and once this is finished, these lights will then become the responsibility of West Sussex County Council to maintain.

Special thanks must be made to our County Councillor Amanda Jupp who was instrumental in having the footpath No. 1937 between Natts Lane to Myrtle Lane footpath re-surfaced.

In the Adversane hamlet, the Parish Council owns Adversane Hall and is very grateful to the Adversane Hall Trustees who work so hard to maintain the hall, largely at their cost reducing the burden on Council tax payers. In the last year, the drains

became blocked and it was necessary for the Council to call out emergency drainage contractors to rectify the problem.

Four new bus shelters have been installed in the parish in the last year, two in Forge Way, one in Station Road and one in Five Oaks. Funding was obtained from s106 money and WSCC bus shelter grants. The provision of bus shelters involves an inordinate amount of work to obtain the necessary permissions and licences and thanks must be made to everyone on the Bus Shelter Working Party for seeing it through to the completion of the project.

The Council would like to formally thank Budgens supermarket for allowing the Council to have a prominent site at the front of their store for the electronic sign. This sign is such an important communication tool for the Council and the community.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

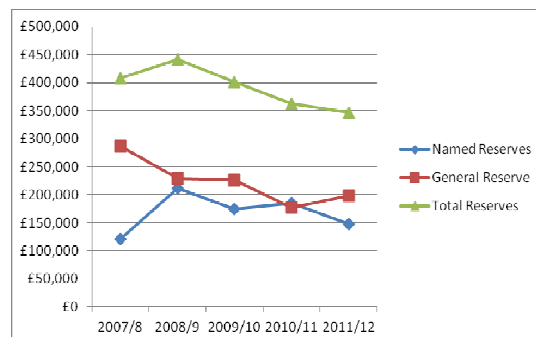
The new Council agreed to consider a budget plan for the four year term of the Council; the Finance and General Purposes Committee implemented this decision and looked at the funds needed to maintain Council services over the whole Council term. This year they used modern technology when setting the budget and had an interactive meeting updating the spreadsheets and calculating the impact of changes to the budget on precept. The Council has also implemented the Code of Practice on Data Transparency for Local Authorities and included all accounts for payment on its website along with budget reports to keep the community fully informed of Council expenditure.

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 to £346,621 as at 31 March 2012. This is as a result of the Council underwriting the structural repairs to Billingshurst Village Hall and expenditure from named reserves for Council projects.

The Council's income for the financial year was £307,427 from the precept of £242,214, bank interest of £1,366, environmental cleansing grant of £14,867 from Horsham District Council and the remainder of the income derived from grants and planning obligations funds.

The Council's expenditure this year was £323,525, including £19,915 on the new skate park, £4,900 on new bus shelters, £4,759 on street lighting upgrade, £4,320 on memorial safety repairs and £6,344 on Village Hall structural repairs. The remaining expenditure was on the Council's open spaces, operating contracts and staffing.

The Council's named reserves have decreased from £184,930 at the start of the financial year to £147,844, and the Council's general reserve is £198,777 at year end. The Council has set the precept for 2012/13 at £244,151 which equates to £68.89 per annum for a band D Council Tax property and a reduction of 0.01% on 2011/12.



Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2012

| 31 March 2011 £ | INCOME | 31 March 2012 £ |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| -2,400 | Parks and Open Spaces | 610 |
| 12,823 | General Admin | 12,278 |
| 35 | Salaries | 0 |
| 17,147 | Highways | 22,033 |
| 1 | Public Lighting | 1 |
| 246,481 | Precept | 242,214 |
| 689 | Interest | 1,366 |
| 34,131 | One Off | 28,706 |
| 2,867 | VAT | |
| 0 | Unp chq 009566 | 29 |
| 311,774 | Petty cash | 200 |
| | | 307,437 |
| | EXPENDITURE | |
| 37,795 | Parks and Open Spaces | 39,772 |
| 45,616 | General Admin | 35,722 |
| 122,505 | Salaries | 122,307 |
| 20,372 | Village Hall | 22,207 |
| 4,004 | Highways | 4,738 |
| 2,728 | Public Lighting | 3,114 |
| 3,866 | s137 | 2,979 |
| 0 | Election | 7,577 |
| 113,096 | One Off | 85,057 |
| | POSB | 54 |
| 349,983 | | 323,525 |
| | General Fund | |
| | Balance B/Fwd | |
| | 01/04/11 | 362,709 |
| | Add Income | 307,437 |
| | Deduct Expenditure | 323,525 |
| | General Fund | |
| | 31/03/12 | 346,621 |

Reserves as at 31 March 2012

| Reserve | Amount |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Open Spaces | £1,840 |
| Trees | £1,000 |
| Cemetery | £8,802 |
| Memorials | £83 |
| Village Hall | £0 |
| Station Road Gardens | £41,155 |
| Civil Emergency | £1,200 |
| Street lights | £30,578 |
| Play Equipment | £16,000 |
| Skate Park | £0 |
| Bus Shelters | £2,025 |
| Allotments | £7,954 |
| Planning | £9,452 |
| IT | £1,196 |
| Christmas Lights | £3,560 |
| Community Event | £3,000 |
| Toilets | £8,000 |
| Trespass Legal Fees | £2,000 |
| Football Field | £10,000 |
| Named Reserves Totals | £147,844 |
| General | £198,777 |
| | £346,621 |

Donations were made to the following local organisations this year:

| Date | Organisation | Amount |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 25/05/2011 | Victim Support Sussex | £50.00 |
| 14/12/2011 | Royal British Legion | £18.50 |
| 14/12/2011 | Billifest | £2,000.00 |
| 27/07/2011 | West Sussex Association for the Blind | £50.00 |
| 29/06/2011 | Unitarian Chapel | £75.00 |
| 25/01/2012 | West Sussex Mediation Service | £100.00 |
| 28/03/2012 | St Catherine's Hospice | £100.00 |
| 29/02/2012 | Women's Hall | £500.00 |
| 28/03/2012 | HDC Planning App Fee Jubilee Flagpole | £85.00 |
| | | £2,978.50 |

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council has processed five requests this year at a cost of £225 to the Council.

The basic parish allowance is set to NIL for financial year 01/04/11 – 31/03/12 and there was one payment of travelling expenses to Cllr. Homer for £2.40 parking fees.

Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2012

Chairman: Mr Paul Berry **Clerk:** Mrs Beverley Bell
Vice-Chairman: Mr Doug Rands **Deputy Clerk:** Mrs Liz Berry

Council Offices

The Billingshurst Village Hall,
Roman Way,
Billingshurst,
West Sussex
RH14 9QW.

Tel: 01403 782555
Fax: 01403 787699

Email: council@billingshurst.gov.uk

| Parish Council as at 31 March 2012 | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 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 Roy Grantham | 5 Pine Close, Billingshurst | 01403 782895 |
| Mrs Lesley Gray | Ladymead, Coneyhurst, Billingshurst | 07954 249296 |
| Mrs Valerie Gray | 32 Arun Road, Billingshurst | 07926 385715 |
| 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 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 14 Parish Councillors and one vacancy. 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 |
| Station Road Gardens | meets quarterly |
| Allotments | |
| Complaints | |
| Parish Plan | |

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, Bank Reconciliation and Budget and Working Parties: Bus Shelters, Skate Park, Newsletter, Health and Safety, Internal Audit, CCTV, Emergency Planning and Parking Strategy.