



WARNHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 2018

As usual before writing the Annual Report I took the opportunity to reread our minutes and unsurprisingly speed and quantity of traffic remains a headline issue. We, as a Parish Council, as detailed later in this report, continue to make every effort to tackle these problems for ourselves.

Traffic may be a headline issue but Gatwick is not far behind with what sometimes feels like a barrage of consultations to which we need to respond. It is a great help in ensuring we are kept abreast of any consultations and potential problems by having Sally Pavey, Chair of Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions (CAGNE), on the Parish Council.

The Planning Application to WSCC for Recycling, Recovery and Renewable Energy Facility by Britaniacrest at a site close to the landfill tip east of Warnham railway must also be seen as a headline issue. The waste plant would be an immense industrial building and chimney which would dominate the local countryside. This proposal has generated considerable opposition and although it is not within Warnham Parish the Parish Council have drafted a strong objection to the most recent application.

Local planning applications are considered twice a month by the planning committee which continues to meet in public with a published agenda. This gives members of the public the opportunity to air their views prior to or at the meeting. Sadly we have not seen many public at these meetings.

In the last year 59 planning applications were considered. On only 7 applications did the committee recommend refusal. In 3 cases the Planning Committee's recommendation of No Objection were not upheld by HDC.

The Planning Committee do not comment on two categories of application: 1) Certificates of Lawful Development and 2) Approval of Conditions.

With the relaxation of constraints on changes to domestic residences a number of applications are for confirmation of Lawful Development. The decision on these is solely subject to verification of compliance with national regulations which is undertaken by HDC.

Approval of Conditions follows where HDC have granted planning permission subject to conditions, generally relating to construction and materials. These are matters solely for HDC to decide. The most significant planning matter currently being pursued is the Neighbourhood Development Plan but does not strictly form part of the Annual Report as it is being prepared by an independent Steering Group. The Steering Group is, however, chaired by Parish Councillor, John Hamer and six other Parish Councillors form part of the Steering Group and the preparation of the plan is partly financed by the Parish Council. I therefore feel justified in including a small update. As indicated in last year's report, progressing the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) has, for reasons beyond our control, been a somewhat slow and tortuous process. However, that process is now reaching its final stages. The Plan has been submitted to Horsham District Council and is currently subject to public consultation by residents of the parish and statutory consultees. Following any necessary revision, it will then be submitted for further review by an independent, external Examiner to ensure that it has been prepared in conformity with national and local policies, and that it contains a coherent set of policies. Finally, the NDP will be subject to a parish-wide referendum managed by

Horsham District Council in which all those on the electoral roll will be entitled to vote. The NDP will need to receive majority approval for the NDP to be endorsed.

The main features of the NDP are:

- the number of housing units will be limited to between 50 and 60 up to 2031
- this rate of development is similar to the historic growth rate since 1975
- two sites have been allocated for development from the four short listed sites supported by the parish
- the sites are the fields to the north of Freeman Road and to the north of the Warnham School
- the football pitch is retained on lease to the parish council
- the sites are bounded by established hedgerows which will be retained
- the housing units will be predominantly smaller size with a mix of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units
- the Plan establishes a new pedestrian route to link the footpath from Threestile Road to Tilletts Lane
- no other areas within the parish are identified for development within the Plan
- the Plan promotes housing design to provide for the need of older people
- policies in the Plan promote high quality planning and housing design, the development of cycle routes and footpaths, the retention of landscape vistas and additional public car parking spaces
- the provision of a car park at the railway station.

As mentioned speed and quantity of traffic throughout the Parish continues to be the issue which raises most concern. The Parish Council is regularly focused on highway matters and maintains a close liaison with West Sussex County Council. We are promoting a number of schemes to make traffic conditions safer in the parish including traffic calming in Friday Street and Bell Road, and a reduction to 40 mph on the A24 in the vicinity of the village. We have also engaged with WSCC on options to improve traffic conditions and to provide a safer place to cross the A24 in Kingsfold. The County Council have very limited budgets for minor roadworks and the Parish Council has budgeted to undertake some of these, including sign cleaning, drainage maintenance, upgrading road signs, refilling salt boxes, providing roadside bollards and marker posts, and maintaining the electronic speed warning signs. Unfortunately the Parish Council has no ability to advance pothole repairs even though the need is clearly obvious and urgent.

The issues that have occupied the Recreation Advisory Group this year are familiar ones:

Maintenance and improvement of the playground area

Generally this creates few problems. The area is well used and not abused, but inevitably it is subject to wear and tear and has required rather more extensive maintenance than in recent years. As indicated last year, we have been looking at ways of improving the playground and adding to the range of equipment provided. But this ambition has been rather more elusive than originally envisaged. Some of the new equipment we have been considering does require a lot of space and this is not easy to achieve in what is quite a small area. However, we remain optimistic that a major overhaul and replacement of equipment will take place in the near future.

Whilst on the subject of children's play equipment – a reminder that there are items of outdoor gym equipment close to the play area available for use by those aged seven to seventy and above. So, for all those anxious to improve their levels of fitness ... the machines await.

Youth provision

The Horsham Matters community youth worker funded by a cluster group of the parishes of Warnham, Broadbridge Heath and Slinfold has now been in post for almost five years and the decision has been made to renew the contract for a further period. His time is not strictly divided between the three parishes and he responds to opportunities and needs as they arise. As reported

last year he engages with young people from Warnham in a variety of ways, including school visits. Although provision in Warnham is limited by the lack of suitable venues, the activities planned to take place in Broadbridge Heath and Slinfold are also available to young people from Warnham.

As I reread the minutes the hard work that many Parish Councillors put in to ensure that our Parish is well looked after shines through. Work for which, often, very little thanks are given although people are quick to complain when they don't like something the Parish Council has done. An example of this is the reaction to the very necessary works to the oak in the playground adjoining the Village Hall. Questions have been asked as to why we have "butchered" this tree – in fact careful reduction of the overall size has been undertaken in order to prolong the life of this much loved tree which has serious disease problems. The Parish Council is conscious that the public do not always feel informed and during this year have been making efforts to improve communication. Our Facebook page is now back up and running, reports are placed in The Warbler after each meeting and our Clerk ensures that our website is kept up to date.

I take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Parish Council, our County Councillor, Christian Mitchell, together with our District Councillors, Stuart Ritchie and Tricia Youtan, for keeping us up to date with what is happening at County and District levels.

Finally it only remains for me to thank you all for your hard work during the year; particularly our Vice Chairman, Geoff Read, and our group leaders, Roger Purcell and John Hamer, whose input into this report and throughout the year is invaluable.

Mrs H Farquhar – Chairman of Warnham Parish Council
April 2018