



HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORTS 2015

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - page 2

GROUNDS COMMITTEE - page 5

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - page 7

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP - page 9

PLANNING COMMITTEE - page 10

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

Good evening and welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting. This is not a formal Parish Council meeting, but an annual opportunity for residents to hear what the council has been doing over the past year and to ask any questions or raise any issues they would like to. The council is interested to hear the views of residents, but I should point out that the meeting has no decision-making powers.

This year marks the end of a four year term for parish councillors, and a new parish council will be in office from May. Parish Councillors are all unpaid volunteers who give their time to do their best for the village, representing the views of residents to other bodies in local government and making improvements to the environment and facilities in the village, within the powers of the parish council.

The demands on councillors' time and the complexity of the issues they have to deal with have increased immeasurably over recent years, and cut backs in funding for county and district councils have also placed more demands on towns and parishes.

The challenges faced by parish councillors are well illustrated by the government's introduction of Neighbourhood Planning. The concept of giving local communities more say in development is a laudable one, but in practice the delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in the south east with the immense pressure on housing, is a very complex and difficult process. The parish council has to produce a plan which conforms to government planning regulations, assesses housing need against robust criteria, is defensible to challenges by developers, and contributes to District housing targets. This sort of work would in the past have been done at district level by professional planning officers, not by willing volunteers without a background in planning.

The parish council has to canvass and take account of the views of residents, which may differ widely depending on where in the village they live and how they view development. At the same time, the District is not meeting its five year land supply, and developers are bringing forward planning applications on sites in the village, which have to be dealt with. Not providing any new housing is not an option, but coming forward with defensible proposals which are acceptable to the majority of residents is a very difficult task, and it will not be possible to satisfy everyone's expectations. The council has appointed a planning consultant and extra resources to help deliver the plan, and the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will give more detail of progress to date, but this exercise illustrates the sort of pressures parish councillors now face in working for the community.

We will receive reports from the council's sub committees on their individual areas of responsibility, so I will not pre-empt these reviews, but give a general overview of the council's work.

The council has once again been working hard to deliver services and amenities to the village within a tight budget. The Memorial Garden in Adastra Park has been renovated and new planting has been carried out which will bring more colour and interest to the garden. The council has continued to fund a programme of street tree planting in the village, which has proved very popular with residents, and is greatly enhancing the street scene, keeping a rural feel to the village. The council has pressed WSCC to prioritise the examination of the parking survey among residents and businesses in the village, to come up with some plans for mitigation, and this is currently being progressed by WSCC.

We continue our co-operation with other community organisations in the village, and parish councillors serve on a wide range of groups, like the Hassocks Rail Group, the Community Partnership, the Police Neighbourhood Panel, the HAA and the Twinning Association. We have been working with the HAA on a number of initiatives, and the council agreed to fund a new bus shelter next to Spitalford Bridge, which was installed yesterday.

The Parish Council continues to lobby on behalf of the village on a number of issues, most notably planning, and made representations at the Planning Appeal on the land at the Ham.

The council continues to maintain the Adastra Park and its facilities to a high standard, and is trying to balance the increasing demands on use of the space by sports clubs and other organisations, with keeping the park as an open space available for residents to enjoy.

The Parish Centre continues to deal with a wide range of enquiries from the public and provide help and information on parish council matters and an information resource to direct residents to other sources of help and advice on issues not related to council activities. The office dealt with over 3,600 enquiries during the year. MSDC District councillors and the PCSO also run “surgeries” in the parish council where residents can come for face to face help and advice.

The council continues to fund mobile refuse collections in the village for those who have difficulty getting to the Burgess Hill Waste Recycling Site, and makes small grants to local organisations to help support their activities. Last year the council awarded grants a number of community and sports organisations and also helped to fund the Christmas Lights and the HAA’s planting schemes in the village.

I would like to pay tribute to the Parish Council staff for their dedication in providing a high level of service to councillors and residents. This year Pat Elliott, who has been an office assistant for eight years, retired, and we were very sorry to lose her as she was a very valuable member of the team. We were pleased to welcome Jane Barker as the new office assistant.

In concluding, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for appointing me as Chairman of the parish council for the last two years, and I would like to thank councillors, particularly those who are standing down, for all their hard work and commitment over the last four years.

Everyone has made a significant contribution to the work of the council, but I would like to say a personal thank you to my Vice-Chairman, Ian Weir. Ian has been a great support, and has pursued a number of initiatives in the village including the traffic and parking survey, improvements to the path in Parklands Copse, replacement of the existing litter bins, and working with the HAA to provide the new bus shelter by Spitalford Bridge.

I would also like to thank Leslie Campbell, who has chaired the Planning Committee very ably, which is not an easy task as planning often arouses strong views, and Paul King, who chaired the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group until March of this year, and who was instrumental in appointing an excellent planning consultant to assist with the technical aspects, and in involving non-council members in the working group who are helping to drive the Plan forward.

As the number of people standing for the parish council did not exceed the number of councillor vacancies, there will not be a parish election on 7 May, so I look forward to welcoming the newly appointed councillors, and those who are continuing to serve, to the first meeting of the new council on 19 May.

I would now like to ask the committee chairmen to give their reports, and then members of the public are welcome to raise any issues or make any comments they would like to.

David Cumberland, April 2015

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28 APRIL 2015
Grounds Committee Chairman's Report

The Grounds Committee has had a busy year with several major projects undertaken and difficult financial decisions made in order to keep the Council's assets secure for the future enjoyment of parishioners. It is heartening to see how much the local community uses the park for so many club and social activities – long may it continue

In Adastra Park the Council used money available from developers to overhaul drainage in the North field to improve the playing surface in wet weather. We were also able to accommodate changes in the pitch sizes to meet the Football Association requirements for the junior team numbers. A new charging structure for use of the pitches for games and training has been agreed with the Hassocks Junior Football Club which better reflects charges made by Mid Sussex to other clubs in the area.

A new entrance to the children's play area was constructed for use during the winter months as the existing entrance opposite the bowling green was prone to flooding. We also made the decision to replace some playground equipment which was becoming worn out and I am happy to report that the installed 'tarantula' equipment seems to be popular with children using the playground, and the climbing rock near the skatepark has proved very popular with boys and girls of all ages. All the play equipment is subject to an annual engineering inspection by the Council's insurers, and is regularly maintained.

Sadly, the Community Pavilion bi-fold doors were vandalised and other problems arose with the bi-fold door mechanisms. This was made more difficult to resolve as the door supplier was located in Huddersfield. However, a quotation from a local supplier to replace the doors has been accepted and this work should be completed in early May. It is hoped that this will mean the new doors are both more resilient and should any attention be needed we would be able to secure a faster response. The Committee also sought advice on additional security for the pavilion and equipment garages and a number of measures will be taken in the near future as a result of the advice received.

The committee had a very fruitful meeting with members of the Bowling Club as a result of which the committee provided funds for the ongoing maintenance of the bowling green and surrounding paths.

The Memorial Gardens in the park have been subject to ongoing renovations and maintenance, and although the whole renovations are not yet completed, the gardens look much better, especially around the stone pergola which is much more of a feature now that it is no longer partially obscured by a large conifer. By planting climbing roses and clematis on the uprights we will add colour and scent to this area of the gardens. We have also reduced the bushes

next to the road to integrate better with the village centre as the gardens can be seen more easily from Keymer Road.

The Burial Ground at Keymer has had a second memorial wall constructed, as the original wall was running out of room for plaques. We have learned lessons from the siting of the original wall which restricted the number of plaques available and the new wall should provide spaces for many years to come.

The Committee was able to agree a formula for future allotment charges with Hassocks Allotment Holders Association (HAHA). I am grateful for the work put in by Murray Thomson as the HAHA representative on the committee, both for his proposals for a clear, mutually agreed charging system and for the way he has led the Association to improve and upgrade the allotment facilities. The committee are aware that there remains a waiting list for allotment plots and agreed to some further sub-division of plots where appropriate. The committee also agreed to fund further improvements to vehicle and foot access around the allotments, following the successful use of interlocking plates on part of the car park.

The committee is also aware of its wider environmental duties and to that end has undertaken tree maintenance work in Talbot field and has arranged a safety inspection of the trees in Adastral Park.

Steven Ecroyd

Chair, Grounds Committee

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28 APRIL 2015
Environment Committee Chairman's Report

The Environment Committee works to improve the parish and village environment.

Following on from the work done by the Hassocks Parking Working Group (PWG) – West Sussex County Council have included the Hassocks Traffic and Parking Project in their Infrastructure Programme for 2015/16 and a consultant has been employed to produce an initial proposal for consultation; Mid Sussex District Council have also modified the Orion and Dale Avenue Car Parks to increase the number of off-road parking spaces; whilst progress with Network Rail over Station Parking is currently delayed due to the change of Franchisee.

A long term Tree Planting programme carried out in co-operation with Hassocks Tree Group and WSCC has resulted in a further 41 trees being planted this winter as part of a 3 year programme supported by the Parish Council. The Parish Council also supports the Hassocks Amenity Association Green Group in various projects around the village, which includes the planting outside the Pet Shop, and from this year the Green Group will take over planting the Horse Trough at Stonepound Crossroads as well as a project to provide additional greenery at the Keymer Parade shops.

Each year the village benefits from a colourful display from the Hanging Baskets which adorn Keymer Road and which the Parish Council maintains and is working to expand in co-operation with local shops over the next year.

The Parish council maintains the attractive '*Olde Worlde*' finger posts around the village, and last year replaced the post at Keymer crossroads.

The Spitalford Bridge Project in the village centre is a good example of HAA and the Parish Council working together and credit must go to Bob Kenhard of HAA for co-ordinating the project. The first stage is now complete and greatly improves that area; stage two, which should be complete in late Spring, includes a new bus shelter, seating and notice board funded by the Parish Council which will benefit bus users as well as providing an information point explaining the uniqueness of the Herring Stream which flows under the bridge. Work is also planned to provide seating inside the two older-style bus shelters in London Road.

The Council will also be replacing all the damaged and missing litter bins around the village with a new style attractive, durable and *easy to empty* bin in the next few months. Any bins that are still in good condition will be re-used to replace several damaged bins in Adastra Park.

For many years Hassocks has benefitted from a wonderful Christmas event plus our own Christmas lights all managed through the Light up Hassocks Team. The Parish Council supported the event this year through a grant of £600, and plans to increase the contribution to £1000 in future years to ensure the success of this popular event which is strongly supported by local traders and volunteers.

The footpath network around the village is well used even during the winter months and this has led to surface damage which makes some paths almost impassable during wet weather. The committee is aware that West Sussex has limited funds for maintaining Public Rights of Way and is more agreeable to improving paths and bridleways if the local community provides matched funding. The council has for the first time allocated funding to path improvement work with the aim of creating all weather walking routes around the village over the next few years. One part of this work is a major project to create an all-weather route through Parklands Copse which is owned by the Council. Work is due to start in the Summer to create both an attractive Nature Walk through the copse and a link to the permissive paths that run south of Downlands school and which have fantastic views of the Downs.

Whilst residents can report Highways matters direct to WSCC, the committee has been closely involved in raising and commenting on Highway matters and we have been strongly supported by our County Councillor Andy Petch. Combined action, last year, resulted in a significant improvement to the path from South Downs Garden Centre to the Jack and Jill Pub and the promise of further work to upgrade this well used route.

Finally I really want to thank both the committee and those individuals who have helped achieve the results I report on today.

Ian Weir
Chair - Environment Committee

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28 APRIL 2015
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Committee
Chairman's Report

Great strides have been taken on the Neighbourhood Plan in the last 12 months, detailed information on progress is available on the Parish Council website

This would not have been possible without the tremendous assistance of the volunteers both parish councillors and co-opted members, thanks to them and I also echo the chairs thanks to Cllr Paul King who stood down from the NPWG during the year for all his preparatory work

We have conducted our own housing needs analysis indicating an unconstrained need in the range 250-400 dwellings. MSDC have indicated that our unconstrained share of the district need is 600 dwellings based on our population and number of existing dwellings. Building a strong evidence base in support of our need is fundamental

The NPWG are very conscious of existing infrastructure constraints and share the concerns of the community as to how the challenges further development will impact the infrastructure and the ability of district and county councils to meet statutory requirements. We continue to press those authorities for the adequate provision of services. However these are not elements which can be satisfied by the NP

We have conducted 3 consultation exercises starting with NP survey May-July 2014 relating to vision, objectives and topics followed by an event in September 2014 where these themes were expanded upon

In January 2015 we held a site assessment event where the community were invited to comment on potential sites for development which had come forward from a variety of sources. There were 429 responses but many more attended the event, we are shortly to publish quantitative and qualitative results of this exercise, some time ago we published the yes / no / neutral numbers

A further event is scheduled for early July 2015 when the community will be asked to confirm the preference order of sites derived from the earlier event or suggest an alternative giving consideration to additional information which is now available eg availability.

We are working towards production of a draft plan by late summer / early autumn 2015 and you have already heard that we are appointing further resources in addition to our professional advisors to help facilitate that goal.

Ian Credland, Chairman NPWG

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28 APRIL 2015
Planning Committee Chairman's Report

The Planning Committee of Hassocks Parish Council meets regularly to consider and comment on the Planning Applications received from the local Planning Authority, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). We also receive a few applications from the South Downs National Park Authority which covers parts of the Parish, such as Clayton Hamlet and the area around Oldland Mill, which are contained wholly within the National Park designated area. We strive hard to do our best for the community and listen to local views, but we can only recommend to MSDC acceptance or refusal of an application on specified Planning grounds. MSDC does not always endorse our recommendations, but are often in agreement.

We have had a busy year on the Planning front with the application from Gleesons for approximately 97 dwellings on land to the west of London Road known locally as Ham Fields, proving particularly controversial. The Parish Council had lodged an objection to this proposed development on the grounds of Highway safety with the increase of traffic and the pollution levels at Stonepound Crossroads which has been identified as an Air Quality Management Area. We are also concerned about the narrowing of the local gap between Hassocks and neighbouring Hurstpierpoint. It is important to retain the individual character of our two communities. MSDC originally refused the application, which went to appeal, but later withdrew its objections. The appeal hearing took place at the end of March and we await the outcome. At the end of March 2015, we received an outline Planning Application from Rydon Homes for residential development of 140 dwellings on land to the north of Shepherd's Walk and to the east of the Friar's Oak pub. The application also includes a change of use of part of the land to form a country open space. The Parish Council has recommended refusal of this application on a number of grounds. The access to the proposed development could be hazardous on the already busy A273, and the additional traffic generated by the development would add further to the congestion at Stonepound Crossroads and on other local roads. The area is subject to flooding as confirmed in MSDC's Draft Settlement Sustainability Review of March 2015. There was also some concern regarding the open and uncontrolled railway crossing to the east of the site. Other reasons for refusal include the lack of infrastructure and the narrowing of the Local Gap between Hassocks and Burgess Hill. We await a decision from MSDC.

There is expected to be an application for residential development on part of the Hassocks Golf Club. The Golf Club held a public consultation event at their headquarters at the end of last year, but to date no application has been received.

We continue to receive routine applications for minor extensions and alterations to existing properties. Unless they are deemed to be out of keeping with the street scene, or obtrusive to neighbouring properties, they are generally recommended for approval.

Finally, I would like to thank my committee and the office staff for their continued support and assistance over the past year. This has been very much appreciated.

Leslie Campbell, Chairman, Planning Committee