



# Slinfold Parish Council

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2014

**Mrs Camilla Gibson**  
**Chairman of the Parish Council**

## CONTENTS

- Chairman's Overview and Introduction
- Reports from the Committees
- Acknowledgements

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## **The Council**

**Chairman:** Mrs Camilla Gibson

**Vice Chairman:** Vacancy

### **Councillors:**

Simon Bailey	9 Six Acres, Slinfold, RH13 0TH	01403 790866
Gordon Constantine	7 The Cobblers, Hayes Lane, Slinfold, RH13 0SA	01403 791138
Lesley Day	23 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, RH13 0SA	01403 790167
Camilla Gibson	Collyers, The Street, Slinfold, RH13 0RR	01403 790277
Martyn Haines	Starr Inn House, The Street, Slinfold, RH13 0RU	01403 790842
Paula Redmond	Jackdaws, Hayes Lane, Slinfold RH13 0SA	01403 790187
Hilary Sherwin-Smith	Starlings, Lyons Road, Slinfold RH13 0RY	01403 790403
Jane Slipper	12 Greenfield Road, Slinfold RH13 0SF	01403 790702
Gael Stenton-Chandler	Eagle Cottage, Stane Street, Slinfold, RH13 0QX	01403 790149
Mark Wellesley-Wood	Dolphin House, Hayes Lane, Slinfold, RH13 0SN	01403 790120

## **Council Staff**

**Parish Clerk:** Mrs Mary Burroughs

**Environmental Cleansing Operative:** Mr Tobias Mothe

## **Council Structure**

Committee, Group Membership and Representatives on Outside Bodies were agreed at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2013, details of which can be found on the Parish Council website.

## **Chairman's Overview and Introduction**

When I agreed to be Chairman 12 months ago, I had no idea what a busy and interesting year lay ahead.

September saw the completion of the village car park next to the School, in time for the start of the new school year. The sympathetic remodelling of the area to provide additional parking spaces succeeded in retaining the rural feel of the conservation area and I am pleased to report was completed on time and to budget. The Parish Council is also working with the School on the restoration and ongoing maintenance of the ancient hedgerow which runs between the playground and the car park.

The extreme weather in December brought floods and power cuts to the village, with nine properties in Hayes Lane being particularly affected. The emergency repair and rectification work undertaken by West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) has alleviated the problem for the short term; however, years of neglect have resulted in crushed and compacted pipes and it will be some time before the drainage system is functioning properly again. The Parish Council has carried out a full inspection together with WSSCC and is committed to working with them and the residents of Hayes Lane on a long-term plan for repairs and maintenance.

In response to the 2011 Localism Act which introduced statutory Neighbourhood Planning in England, the Parish Council set up the Slinfold Neighbourhood Plan Forum, comprising parish councillors and residents, to take forward a Neighbourhood Plan for Slinfold. A unique opportunity to develop a "framework for the future", the Plan will give us more of a say in where new housing is placed and help to protect those important green areas around the village. We await approval from Horsham District Council for our Area Designation Plan and have submitted our application for Tranche 1 funding. Work can now begin in earnest on the draft plan and we will be keeping you updated on developments over the next twelve months.

Currently under consideration by Horsham District Council is the planning application from Slinfold LLP for the redevelopment of land at the rear of 1-25 Hayes Lane. The Parish Council supports this development which will provide 23 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, and has negotiated a range of community benefits, including improved facilities for the tennis and football clubs and the transfer of the freehold of the Cherry Tree field to the Parish Council, thereby preserving in perpetuity this key green recreational area within the village.

As you may be aware, part of Slinfold parish is on the Gatwick flight paths. The Civil Aviation Authority is proposing changes to usage patterns for airspace in the whole of the South East including around Gatwick. If you notice an increase in aircraft noise, you can call the Gatwick Noise Line on 0800 393070 with your name, postcode and the time of the incident.

Whilst on the subject of Gatwick, the Airports Commission shortlisted a second runway at Gatwick in its December 2013 report and the public consultation has now started. Details can be found on the airport website ([www.gatwickairport.com/consultation](http://www.gatwickairport.com/consultation)), and public exhibitions are being held in the area; the nearest of these is on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May from 11.00am to 3.30pm at the Drill Hall, Horsham. The deadline for responses is 16<sup>th</sup> May.

The issue of broadband speeds in rural areas has been much in the news and this year the Slinfold Faster Broadband Group was set up to lobby WSSCC for faster broadband for the parish. The Communications Manager for the Better Connected Broadband team is Jo Furber who can be contacted at [jo.furber@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:jo.furber@westsussex.gov.uk) or go to the WSSCC website for more information.

Last year, Slinfold Parish Council formed a partnership with Broadbridge Heath and Warnham Parish Councils to fund a Community Youth Worker for our three parishes. We now have an agreement with Horsham Matters to deliver a range of services and support to benefit the young people of Slinfold.

We also welcomed our new PCSO Tracy Field to Slinfold and I am delighted that she is able to attend our Annual Meeting together with Sgt. Rachel Mundy to update us on police matters.

Following requests from residents, the Parish Council purchased a defibrillator for the village which is located in the outside porch area of The Cobblers, Hayes Lane, by kind permission of Saxon Weald and the residents. A series of First Aid courses, including a demonstration of the

defibrillator have been held in the Village Hall and the Parish Council will arrange more in the future if there is a demand. Our thanks go to Billingshurst Lions, Billingshurst and District Rotary, AJW Aviation, G&N Medical and Southern Cranes for their generous donations that helped make this possible.

### **Reports from the Committees**

#### **Councillor Simon Bailey, Chairman Finance**

The Parish Council complies with statutory requirements in the management of its accounts and financial affairs. The Audit Commission's appointed auditor is Littlejohn of London; the independent internal auditor is Mark Mulberry & Co of Epsom. The Parish Clerk is the Responsible Financial Officer and reports regularly to the Finance Committee and the full Parish Council.

The Parish Council's internal audit is scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and the annual accounts will be submitted to the external auditor early June. The full accounts will be available for inspection by residents soon after. The following figures are therefore unaudited balances.

Total income 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 was £94,806, which includes precept of £51,279. We have reclaimed VAT, grass cutting contributions for Cherry Tree, Environmental Cleansing and Youth Worker Grants from HDC, interest on bank accounts, S106 contributions for the village car park, contributions towards a defibrillator and other small refunds, in all totalling £43,527. Total expenditure for the same period was £98,527 on staff costs (Clerk and Environmental Cleansing Officer), the PWLB loan, the village car park, administration, office supplies, hall hire, grass cutting, insurance, subscriptions, audit, playground upkeep and inspections and grants to the community.

Total cash holdings and investments at 31 March 2014 are £314,958, which includes a ring-fenced balance for Six Acres of £150,330. Other ring-fenced reserves include £44k for replacement of play equipment and £20k for new facilities in the KGV field. Other monies are earmarked for general maintenance (e.g. the bus shelter and support for community work), drainage and community projects (e.g. the Village Hall and the Scouts).

The precept for 2014/15 has been set at £51,279, again exactly the same as last year; the Parish Council has not sought an increase. We recognise that some households may have seen a very small increase on their Council Tax demand as a result of the way Horsham District Council calculate and allocate our precept request.

#### **Councillor Gordon Constantine, Chairman Highways**

Hayes Lane and Lyons Road - we have worked very closely with WSCC with regard to drainage issues in the village this year. Unfortunately Hayes Lane suffered badly at Christmas with properties being flooded. As noted in the Chairman's report we will continue to battle on for better drainage.

Severe Weather - your Parish Council continues to work closely with WSCC and HDC and our 'winter' requirements are considered annually. This year two salt/grit bins were purchased and were sited and filled in anticipation for snow and ice in the winter. Provision was made for the delivery of grit bags should we have needed them. The heavens delivered rain instead!

Village Car Park - the project to resurface and increase the size of the school car park was completed, using S106 monies from Slinfold Golf Club and AJW. I would like to thank Monica Edmonds and Mark Wellesley-Wood for their expertise and efforts on this project.

**Footpaths and Bridleways** - the Parish Council is in liaison with WSCC Countryside and Access Rangers to keep paths and bridleways in good condition and safe to use. Any matters of concern should be reported to the Clerk and Mary-Ann Edwards, WSCC Access Ranger, [mary-ann.edwards@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:mary-ann.edwards@westsussex.gov.uk)

**Speed Limits** - the Parish Council agreed not to pursue a 20mph speed limit in the conservation area, primarily because residents advised that there had been opposition against this, it would have resulted in more signage and was probably unenforceable. We are looking again at a 50mph limit on the A281 between the Clemsfold and Roman Gate roundabouts, and also between the Slinfold village signs on the A29. It is not an easy process but we will be working with our new County Councillor, Liz Kitchen and WSCC Highways, to achieve this if it is what the village wants.

Many other highway issues have arisen during the year, including 'pot-holes'; litter on the verges on the outskirts of the Parish, overgrown vegetation and obscured signage. The Clerk works closely with the appropriate authorities to ensure that corrective action is taken.

### **Councillor Martyn Haines, Chairman Recreation, Youth & Environment**

This committee met in July 2013 and again in February 2014. Our Community Youth Worker, Dan Fairchild is now in place and has been busy getting to know everybody. Following feedback from the open morning held in January, Dan will be bringing a mobile skateboard park to Slinfold on Thursday evenings, for five weeks from 25th April. He is looking at setting up a Youth Club for Slinfold and would also be interested in hearing from any young people who would like to be part of a Youth Council for Slinfold and the surrounding area. Dan can be contacted at [danfairchild@horsham-matters.org.uk](mailto:danfairchild@horsham-matters.org.uk) or on 07702 815925.

The committee has carefully listened to the work being performed by the Neighbourhood Plan Forum, and continues to consider the recreation, youth and environment needs of the village. With current oversight of the Tennis and Football Clubs facilities in Hayes Lane, the committee has agreed to consider the needs of the Scout Group and Cricket Club.

**King George V Field** – The Parish Council are the trustees for the field and submit an annual return to the Charity Commission. Following a previous unsuccessful grant application for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in the field, the Parish Council has allocated a reserve of £20,000 for the future development of this proposal, and will consider a smaller MUGA and other ways to provide some sports activity in the field.

**Six Acres & KGV Play Areas** – Safety inspections by ROSPA, HDC and our Environmental Cleansing Officer are carried out during the year. The annual ROSPA inspection highlighted a few minor (low risk) matters, which have been attended to. The Parish Council continues to build up a fund to be used as and when the play equipment needs to be replaced. The missing toddler swing in Six Acres will be replaced soon!

**Slinfold Sports Association (SSA)** - The Parish Council are leaseholders of the Flint Group (now Slinfold LLP) for the Cherry Tree sports field and pavilion. The football and tennis clubs are sub-leaseholders to the Parish Council. SSA meet every four months or so. The Parish Council is represented at these meetings and representatives from SSA will attend future Recreation, Youth and Environment Committee meetings. Significant developments of this site have been proposed, linked to the Slinfold LLP planning proposal for land to the rear of 1-25 Hayes Lane.

**Upkeep of our environment** - HDC devolves environmental cleansing to the Parish Council with an annual grant for the provision of the service. Our Environmental Cleansing Officer provides a good service to the parish by, not just collecting litter, but also being vigilant and reporting other issues such as problems in the play areas, overflowing litter and dog bins. This year he has been cutting

grass, clearing leaves, unblocking drains and has received training to repair safety surfacing in our play areas. If there are any Environmental Cleansing issues that you are concerned about, please contact the Clerk.

War Memorial - The Parish Council makes an annual donation to the Royal British Legion, Slinfold Branch for planting around the memorial.

The Parish Council has a contract with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to ensure that the graveyard is open for burials. £1,000 per year is awarded to the PCC for this and for maintenance of the area.

### **Councillor Gael Stenton-Chandler, Chairman Planning**

It has been another busy year for planning with 62 applications considered from HDC for the year to 31 March, as well as applications where the Parish Council is a neighbouring consultee, such as the new development at Broadbridge Heath.

Almost all applications are now reviewed using the planning application search tool on the HDC website. The Parish Council objected to a number of applications including the erection of a double garage in Six Acres and a building at Mead Farm, as these would have set a precedent which could allow further such development in the vicinity.

This year the Planning Committee has looked closely at the development of houses behind Hayes Lane, the application goes to HDC's Development Committee for a decision in May. Whilst the Parish Council supports the application, we have commented that we would have liked to have seen some smaller properties to accommodate local housing needs.

The Parish Council (PC) strongly objected to the erection of a new dwelling in Park Street. HDC has changed the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) in Park Street and the PC is contesting that due process and diligence was not followed. The PC strongly believes that the boundary should not have been changed based on the feedback that HDC received and that such a change should have been properly consulted upon. As a result of the change in the boundary, outline permission has been given to build a three-bedroomed dwelling next to The Cottage in Park Street. We await a full response from HDC as to their decision, together with evidence to support the change in boundary.

Not only does this committee look at individual applications but it also considers consultations relating to planning issues and listens to applicants who are looking to submit an application to the local planning authority. We also review planning appeals and enforcement matters which have been referred to HDC.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Parish Council has undergone a number of changes this year. We said goodbye to three long-standing councillors who between them served on the Parish Council for a total of 33 years – Margaret Dunkerton (11 years), Rosemary Hillyard (16 years, 5 as Chairman) and David White (6 years). In December, our Vice Chairman, Monica Edmonds, stepped down.

Happily, there appears to be no shortage of people keen to “do their bit” for Slinfold and we co-opted five new councillors. In June, Simon Bailey, Lesley Day, Hilary Sherwin-Smith and Mark Wellesley-Wood were co-opted and in August Jane Slipper. This means that there is just one vacancy for which an application has already been received; so I am hopeful that we will start the year in May with a full complement of councillors.

We also have a new look website where you can find information about all the Council's work. Please have a look at [www.slinfold-pc.gov.uk](http://www.slinfold-pc.gov.uk)

In closing, I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard on behalf of the Council and the village during the last year.

Mary Burroughs, our Clerk and Financial Officer, is always ready and willing to deal with whatever is thrown at her and provides a great deal of support and guidance to me and the other councillors. Thanks also go to Tobias Mothe, our Environmental Cleansing Officer, who provides an invaluable service and remains cheerful even when the weather is not.

Sadly, our long-serving County Councillor, Mick Hodgson, lost his battle with cancer in August. He had worked tirelessly on behalf of Slinfold and we were extremely grateful for all that he did. We are pleased to welcome Liz Kitchen, our new County Councillor, who knows the area well as she is also District Councillor for Rusper. Despite a busy schedule, Liz attends most of our meetings and thanks go to her for all the work that she does on behalf of the village at County level.

Our District Councillor, Trish Youtan, continues to represent the Parish Council's concerns to Horsham District Council and keeps us updated on District matters. District Councillor Stuart Ritchie also attends our meetings and provides updates.

Along with other Parish Councils (particularly in the South East) Slinfold faces many challenges as a result of changes in weather, government policy and County/District Council spending plans. We are extremely fortunate to have councillors with the breadth of experience and knowledge to tackle these on behalf of their community. My sincere thanks go to all the councillors who give their time voluntarily to serve on Slinfold Parish Council.

*Camilla Gibson*

Mrs Camilla Gibson, Chairman, Slinfold Parish Council