



Slinfold Parish Council

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Chairman's Annual Report 2017/18

As we welcome new residents to what the Estate Agents have branded the 'Prestigious Hayeswood Development' (Cherry Tree to you and I), it is worth reflecting why our village has become such a popular destination, and therefore why we are privileged to live here.

To quote the Marketing Blurb:

Picture cosy country pubs, family owned boutiques and heritage architecture. Add to this a friendly local atmosphere, plenty of green space and a chance to be part of a quintessential village; Slinfold offers the best of rural England.

Well, there is one body which contributes hugely to this endorsement – and that's your Parish Council!

It has been another extremely busy year for us with over 25 formal meetings.

A good part of council time is devoted to consideration of planning applications. The Planning Advisory Committee has been led by Gael Stenton-Chandler for many years and she has developed an encyclopaedic knowledge and understanding of the multiplicity of considerations and factors influencing our deliberations on these matters. During the year we commented on 70+ applications and approved the development of 10 new homes. The Planning Advisory Committee also approves works to trees in the parish taking advice from our Tree Wardens. Due to their careful consideration and knowledge we have preserved as much as possible of our arboreal habitat.

One particular application has received considerable attention this year, and that has been the proposal for development of the Nowhurst Business Park into a 22,000 square meter industrial site. While the development of this brownfield site has always been envisaged, the original application was highly intrusive, both visually and in extent. The Parish Council (PC) has been actively engaged both with residents and with Horsham District Council (HDC) to reduce its impact and to bring forward mitigation measures in such areas as light pollution, screening, reduced building heights and hours of operation.

After several delays and false starts beyond our control, the Slinfold Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) has finally been approved by the Examiner, and it is now with HDC for final

consultation. We therefore expect the Referendum to go ahead this year. There have been ongoing discussions between the PC and HDC over options to modify the Examiners recommendations. These will continue until the consultation period closes on 4th May. However, it is vitally important that residents make their views known. Ed is available to discuss in more detail tonight and provide information. I would also like to thank Ed Skeates and the SNP Working Group for all their hard work over the last 4 years.

Over the life of the plan, which runs to 2031, we envisage approximately 77 new homes being built. Given our current housing stock of 820 homes, this is a responsible and manageable growth rate, and, indeed is in line with our original forecasts at the start of the process.

Given the further relaxations in government planning policy in the offing, it is even more important that we achieve the protections and benefits this plan offers us all. Otherwise we might be left with the stark choice between having 70 houses or 700!

Over the last four years we have invested over £40,000 in producing the plan, not allowing for the hundreds of volunteer hours which have gone into it. Of this we have received grants of approximately £14,000 but this still represents a huge outlay for the PC. It is sincerely hoped therefore that residents do come out and vote in the referendum as we have a serious stake in its outcome now.

In February, Slinfold Parish Council received confirmation that it had been awarded an initial grant of £17,138 from the **Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF)**. RCEF is a £15 million programme, delivered by WRAP and jointly funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (DBEIS). It supports rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects which provide economic and social benefits to the community (see Note 1).

In the coming months, we shall be working with Carbon Smart, our chosen contractor, who will investigate the feasibility of sites which may have the potential to host renewable energy systems. Look out for further information on who may be eligible to benefit from the scheme in future communications and well done to Thomas Nicklin and the Clerk for putting together a successful application.

At last we have, a local person, Sam Graycon, running the village shop. Sam has gradually been building up stock and facilities, and, in case you hadn't been aware there is a very handy ATM machine hidden away at the back. Now that we have a better appointed village service I commend everyone to support it. In 2017, we introduced a quarterly Village Shop Committee, chaired by Nick Parker, so do come along to the meetings if you have any suggestions for the shop.

Cherry Tree is now looking very smart. The new tennis clubhouse was opened officially last month, the football pitch is now 'maturing' and the Football Club have funding of £19,000 to refurbish their pavilion. It has been a fantastic transformation.

We were pleased to support the Cricket Club in organising a Village Day in June, to the tune of £1,100. Also, Santa came to Slinfold at Christmas! I would like to thank both Jane Slipper and Nick Parker for creating a wonderfully seasonal atmosphere as we all

gathered around the Christmas tree, sang carols and enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine. I wonder who Santa was though?

Our Highways, Recreation and Environment Recreation Committee, led by Jane Slipper, pay special attention to maintaining our green and open spaces so that we can all enjoy our environment. There have been improvements to KGV and the kick about area at the back of Six Acres, and shortly we will be making parts of Cherry Tree more accessible to the community. Thanks to Adrian Roberts, we shall soon mark our Circular Village Walk, and next year I will ask all attendees to this meeting to confirm that they have completed it.

Note 1 for more information on RCEF, visit www.wrap.org.uk/renewables

MasterChef has nothing compared to the great culinary skills demonstrated by Hilary Sherwin-Smith, Jane and Gael at a very well attended Senior Citizens lunch in September, and we intend to repeat this event as a permanent part of our social calendar. Also, at the other end of the age spectrum the Youth Club has continued to grow, with around 30 young people attending each session. It has become so popular that they have divided up into two groups, with the older ones using the upstairs room. As such the leaders have been able to engage with them on more mature topics, around mental health, self-harm, sex and relationships.

Last year I said a lot about the congestion in our skies. This year the focus has been more on road traffic. It seems that, with the opening of the new link road between the A24 and Newbridge roundabout, there has been a notable increase in rat running through the village. Consequently, we have initiated a number of measures designed to keep us safe and control the flow of vehicles passing down Lyons Road, The Street and Park Street.

Firstly, I must commend Chris Leyland who has been supported by Neil Beer and a team of volunteers for organising the Community Speedwatch programme. You may have seen them in their High Viz jackets out at all hours. I even know some people in the village who have been caught by them, but they shall remain nameless.

We also lobbied hard with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to get yellow lines painted in front of the War Memorial to ease the congestion around the bend by allowing a passing place and enable the bus to come through. Hopefully this will prevent the need for unsafe 'backing up' manoeuvres. We have also successfully obtained consent for a Keep Clear box to be painted on the junction of Lyons Road and the A264, which should shorten your travelling time into Horsham in those all-important Rush Hour times.

You will recently have received a questionnaire asking if you would support traffic calming measures through the village. This consultation is the first step in engaging with WSCC, Highways. If supported, we hope to examine options which may include the feasibility of installing pinch points on the entrances to the village and building a raised dais or ramp between the pub and the shop.

In the meantime, it is quite nostalgic to see the return of the old fashioned Lollipop Man at school times controlling the traffic.

Thanks to the direction given by our Finance and Establishment Committee and its Chairman Nic Lewis, our finances remain in good shape, even though we did need to dip into reserves to fund all our community projects this year. The Council spent approximately

£66,000 in keeping your village neat and tidy and supporting community activities this year. There was a small increase in the precept for the coming year of 2.7% bringing the charge per Band D tax payer to a modest £61/year. I am sure you will agree with me that this represents excellent value for money.

I am delighted to say that we have finally entered the world of social media and now contribute to the Slinfold Parish Facebook Page. Why don't you 'Like It' too and join, already, there are 530 followers!

Finally, as you are all probably aware, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice. To honour the occasion, we have bought a Silent Soldier to remind us of the ones who never came back. So look out for him, and other mementoes of the Great War, as we approach Remembrance Day.

I have been extremely fortunate in having the support of a strong core team of councillors and this year we were pleased to welcome Graham Brett. It has been a delightful experience working with them. Councillors give their time for free, and are all volunteers. Hence they really do deserve your support and recognition for their contribution to the community. As ever our Clerk, Mary Burroughs applies the 'oil' to make our machinery run smoothly. Thank you again Mary. If you would like to see more of Mary, you will have a chance once the new Parish Office opens in the refurbished Football pavilion, as she will be resident there for one day a week!

To close, I would like to emphasise that your Council is here for **YOU**. We are always very pleased to see you at our meetings, or to receive grant applications in support of local projects, endeavours or schemes that could benefit the community.

Mark Wellesley-Wood

Mr Mark Wellesley-Wood, Chairman, Slinfold Parish Council

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