



# Slinfold Parish Council

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## Chairman's Annual Report 2018/19

It has been a busy and successful year for the Parish Council, with some major things coming to a conclusion. I am pleased in this report to note some highlights of the year, and to take a bit of a look ahead to what we hope next year will hold.

Our Friday Youth Club has continued to be strong through the year, with 30 to 35 young people attending weekly. A separate group of the older children meet separately so that they can talk about issues relevant to them. The Parish Council is proud of the success of this club, and we wish to record our thanks to all those involved who have made it so successful.

Unfortunately, the charity Horsham Matters, who have run the club for 4 years, are having to pull out following radical cuts in the grant they receive from West Sussex County Council. The Parish Council tried to explore the possibility of increasing our funding in order to enable them to continue, but this has not been possible. We are currently in the process of agreeing a contract with 4TheYouth, another registered charity who operate from Forest School in Horsham. It is probable that the Parish Council will need to spend more than planned on this service, but we consider this a worthwhile investment in the young people of the parish.

Four of our Councillors and the Clerk arranged a lunch for around 40 of our older and potentially more isolated residents, just before Christmas 2018. As well as cooking a very well-received Christmas lunch, the Parish Council picked residents up and dropped them back home afterwards. A Christmas 'Meals and Drinks on Wheels' service was provided for a few of our residents who were not able to travel.

From the substantial number of messages of thanks, it was clear that the event was greatly appreciated. We will certainly arrange a similar Christmas event in 2019, and also hope to have a few other get-togethers during the rest of the year.

The Slinfold Neighbourhood Plan was approved in a referendum across the parish. With a turnout of just over 31% - high for a referendum of this nature – the Plan was approved by 399 votes to 83. While I am aware that not everyone was happy with the Plan, this is a strong mandate for it, and it has now been "made" and is helping to guide development.

Our thanks go to all Councillors and volunteers who gave so much of their time and effort to preparing the Plan and getting it through the tortuous approval process. It is worth bearing in mind that the Horsham District Planning Framework is being reviewed and revised (which will continue through 2021), and this is likely to result in knock-on refinements being required to our Neighbourhood Plan.

Just recently, a full planning application has been submitted to Horsham District Council for the Spring Lane site. The Parish Council and local residents were able to discuss and help shape this before it was submitted. We are also aware of plans being prepared for the Crosby Farm site, which will include re-development of the Cricket Club pavilion, but this has not yet resulted in a formal planning application.

The Council has of course dealt with a number of other planning matters, including over 60 other applications during the year. The Planning Committee continue to provide stalwart and experienced advice and will always welcome and consider residents' comments.

Judging by emails and calls to our Parish Clerk and items on the Slinfold Facebook page, traffic in and through the parish continues to be a concern. I think there can be no doubt that traffic volumes have increased since the introduction of the new dual carriageway between the A24 and Newbridge Nurseries (Stooks), and we must await the potential impact of further forthcoming changes to the road system in that area.

It is a shame that the apparent level of residents' concern has not resulted in more volunteers for the Community Speedwatch effort. This has been carried out by just a handful of Councillors and Slinfold residents for nearly a year and a half. Their data indicates that the Speedwatch patrols do result in lower overall speeds on Lyons Road and Park Street. Without renewed support, though, I fear that this valuable community initiative will simply run out of steam – and after 18 months with such a small group, who can blame them? If you are concerned by vehicles speeding through the Parish, please volunteer and encourage your family and friends to volunteer too.

The Parish Council has continued to work to achieve improvements in traffic management, especially in the centre of the village. We have managed to get double yellow lines painted beside the war memorial, which appear to have improved the flow of traffic around the Village Hall corner, as well as some Keep Clear road markings at the end of Lyons Road which help the flow of traffic in and out of the village during busy times.

With the help of Slinfold's County Councillor, we have been pressing the County Council to provide advice and support for more traffic management options. I have to warn you, though, that it will be difficult to achieve a great deal – the County Council is severely cash-strapped and will not support schemes that would require it to commit to ongoing maintenance costs.

It has been pleasing to see the village shop develop through the year under Sam Graycon's tenancy, with improving stock and now Post Office services available once a week. Sam has also kindly supported village events such as the now-annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

Last year, we received a grant from the Rural Community Energy Fund, which allowed us to commission a report on the feasibility of installing renewable energy systems in various

Parish buildings. We are now proceeding with detailed investigation of solar panels on the village shop; these would reduce the shop's electricity bills and possibly generate a small income by exporting electricity to the Grid.

All development at Cherry Tree and in Brick Lane is complete and, I think, all houses are now occupied. We welcome these new residents to our parish. Although there are some aspects to be finally completed to the open space, this brings to a close a great deal of work led, mainly, by Mary Burroughs, our Parish Clerk.

The football pitch was completed and brought into use during the year, although there is some work needed to further improve the drainage. The Football Club is grateful to be able to play on their own pitch again. They have also completely renovated their clubhouse and changing rooms. The Tennis Club has installed new clay surfaces, making it the envy of other clubs around the area, and won the "Tennis Sussex" Club of the Year award for 2018.

Drainage in Hayes Lane continues to give trouble. The Council has arranged to clear the ditches and drains when needed and has been pressing the County Council and water companies to undertake major works to renew and replace the main drains. So far, we have not had success in this, but we will keep trying. Early in the forthcoming year, we aim to commission a substantial survey of the drains, hoping thereby to get the evidence we may need to persuade the others into action. The massive downpour we had in February resulted in large volumes of water flowing down Hayes Lane. Ditches backed up as a substantial amount of detritus was washed down. Grids and pipes were not able to cope, forcing the water out into the Lane.

The Council proposed setting up a Flood Action Group of local residents able to go out and clear material away from the drains and screens should we have a similar downpour again – protecting their own and their neighbours' property. Regrettably, we have just had two volunteers so far.

This year, the Parish Council has installed signposts for the Slinfold Village Walk – a short walk around the village, parts or all of which is already enjoyed by many residents. We are also looking into getting some maps prepared which would help walkers understand the various sights along the way. Hopefully the signposts and the map will encourage other residents and visitors to explore our parish.

The Parish Council was keen to keep the increase in precept (collected via Council Tax) to just about the rate of inflation. It is possible that with some additional costs next year, such as the new Youth Club provider, surveys or work on the Hayes Lane drainage, or installation of solar panels, we will need to use money from reserves or perhaps look to a bigger increase in 2020/21.

During the year, the Parish Clerk, Mary Burroughs, has moved into a "Parish Office" in the Football Club pavilion at Cherry Tree on Hayes Lane. She will be there for a couple of hours each week and would be pleased to see any residents who'd like to drop in. Please email or call Mary for her office times [clerk@slinfold-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@slinfold-pc.gov.uk) or 01403 785864 or 07733 359479.

All of us in Slinfold Parish are lucky to have a group of Councillors and a Parish Clerk who are willing to do so much for the Parish. I hope you all feel – as we on the Council do – proud of our Parish and keen to keep it special. Please consider joining the Council to help do this.

*Neil Beer*

Dr. Neil Beer, Chairman, Slinfold Parish Council

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