



Slinfold Parish Council

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ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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

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The Council

Chairman: Mrs Camilla Gibson
Vice Chairman: Mr Simon Bailey

Councillors:

Simon Bailey	9 Six Acres, Slinfold, RH13 0 TH	01403 790866
Gordon Constantine	7 The Cobblers, Hayes Lane, Slinfold, RH13 0SA	01403 791138
Lesley Day	23 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, RH13 0SA	07980 280852
Camilla Gibson	Collyers, The Street, Slinfold, RH13 0RR	01403 790277
Paula Redmond	Jackdaws, Hayes Lane, Slinfold RH13 0SA	01403 790187
Hilary Sherwin-Smith	Starlings, Lyons Road, Slinfold RH13 0RY	01403 790403
Edward Skeates	44 Six Acres, Slinfold, RH13 0TH	01403 790037
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 2014, details of which can be found on the Parish Council website.

In common with other parishes in the South East in close proximity to London, Slinfold faces many challenges with ever increasing pressure on housing, transport and infrastructure.

A year ago, I announced the formation of the Slinfold Neighbourhood Forum to take forward a Neighbourhood Plan for Slinfold. The last twelve months has seen the Forum become a Working Group, chaired by Cllr Mark Wellesley-Wood, with its own Terms of Reference and a new website where you can keep up-to-date with progress and give us your views on what we are doing – www.slinfoldnplan.org

The Neighbourhood Plan is extremely important for Slinfold, since once adopted by Horsham District Council, it will form part of the statutory development plan for our area and as such take precedence over the Local District Plan in determining planning permission for local (non-strategic) development. I would like to thank all the members of the Slinfold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group who have given literally hundreds of hours of their time for free.

Involvement of and engagement with the local community is essential for the success of a Neighbourhood Plan; more than 200 people attended the recent Public Consultations on Sites which shows that Slinfold residents have certainly become engaged in the process. There is still a great deal of work to do to get our Neighbourhood Plan to completion and I would ask everybody to get involved in some way, however small. Please come and talk to me or any of the councillors about how you can help or email us – info@slinfoldnplan.org

Our Vision for Slinfold's Neighbourhood Plan is "to ensure a sustainable rural community for everyone within the parish, embracing the countryside whilst providing for the future". Slinfold is still a predominantly rural parish with working farms, many ancient woodlands, orchards and hedgerows. So, when part of the ancient hedge along the front of the School, which had become overwhelmed with ivy over the years, was found to represent a health and safety risk, the Parish Council agreed to fund its rejuvenation. The hedge has been re-planted with native deciduous species including hawthorn, spindle, hazel, beech and holly which will in time create a species rich habitat. My thanks go to Cllr Lesley Day who together with our tree wardens, Rob Sims and John Burrell, worked so hard to preserve this important feature of our village which future generations will be able to enjoy for another 150 years.

As reported last year, the Parish Council negotiated a package of community benefits with the owners of the land behind 1-25 Hayes Lane. The final legal agreements were signed in February and work is about to start on the development of 23 houses. The Parish Council now owns the freehold of the Cherry Tree recreation field and an additional piece of land between the football pitch and the bluebell woods, which will become a wild "eco" area. It is hoped that work on the new football pitch, tennis pavilion, car park and pond (paid for by the developers) will be completed this year. Funding has also been made available for improvements to the existing pavilion. My thanks go to Cllr Simon Bailey who led the negotiations on behalf of the Parish Council, for all his hard work in securing this key green recreational area within the village in perpetuity.

The peace of Slinfold has been disturbed for much of the year by increased aircraft noise, as a result of Gatwick Airport (GAL) having re-routed flight paths closer to the village at the same time as trialling a new navigation method (P-RNAV) which concentrates flights (and therefore noise) along narrow corridors rather than dispersing them as previously. The Parish Council joined with Warnham and Rusper parish councils to object to the trial and this contributed to a decision by Gatwick to postpone further trials. Gatwick is now fully aware of the problems over Slinfold and is working with the Air Traffic Control Centre to improve matters. In recognition of its work on behalf of Slinfold residents, the Parish Council supported the action group CAGNE's request for grant funding. In addition, along with HDC and WSCC, the Parish Council has objected to the proposed Second Runway at Gatwick.

We are extremely fortunate in Slinfold to still have a Church, a School, a Pub and a Shop (with Post Office) – the "beating heart" of village life. The new tenants, the Patel family, have settled in well and the Slinfold Village Store appears to be thriving. In recognition of its importance to the community, the Parish Council has agreed to pursue the possibility of taking over responsibility for the premises from the Slinfold Village Shop Association Ltd (SVSAL), subject to SVSAL members' approval.

A lot of the Parish Council's work is done by the committees – a brief summary of the work undertaken in the last year has been prepared by each committee chairman.

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 P J Consulting. 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 in May 2015 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 2014 to 31 March 2015 was £108,038, which includes precept of £51,279. We have reclaimed VAT, grass cutting and insurance contributions for Cherry Tree, Environmental Cleansing, Drainage and Neighbourhood Plan grants from HDC and WSCC, interest on bank accounts and a contribution towards legal costs and other small refunds, in all totalling £56,759. Total expenditure for the same period was £104,684 on staff costs (Clerk and Environmental Cleansing Officer (ECO)), Neighbourhood Plan, drainage, legal costs for Cherry Tree, 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 2015 are £318,312, which includes a ring-fenced balance for Six Acres of £148,833. Other ring-fenced reserves include £46k 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 2015/16 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.

My thanks to members of the committee who have been involved with Finance and Establishment matters this year.

Councillor Gordon Constantine, Chairman Highways

Flood Action Group (FAG) - Following the terrible flooding in Hayes Lane the winter before last, the Parish Council established FAG to improve flooding and drainage issues across the Parish. This has resulted in a successful grant application for funds from WSCC to conduct improvement works in Hayes Lane. The first tranche of these works will be completed shortly. Elsewhere we have been working closely with WSCC to reduce flooding in both Clapgate Lane and the corner of Lyons Road and Five Oaks Road. The Parish Council has also funded additional gully cleaning in Hayes Lane. The underground infrastructure within the village is somewhat antiquated and residents are asked to ensure that all ditches and gullies within their vicinity are kept clear as much as practically possible. My thanks go to Cllr Mark Wellesley-Wood and Cllr Lesley Day for their expertise and efforts on this project.

Severe Weather - your Parish Council continues to work closely with WSCC and HDC and our 'winter' requirements are considered annually. Fortunately, the two salt/grit bins were refilled in anticipation for snow and ice in the winter, thankfully not required!

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. Our footpaths and bridleways are inspected annually and matters of concern should be reported to the Clerk and prow@westsussex.gov.uk or call 01243 777620

Speed Limits - the Parish Council is due to meet with Sussex Police to try to encourage Traffic Officers to attend more regularly and carry out speed checks in the area particularly on the A281 between the Clemsfold and Roman Gate roundabouts and on the A29. We have asked that unmarked police bikes patrol these roads on sunny weekends and stop and caution riders of noisy and speeding motorbikes.

PCSO Tracy Field is keen to work with volunteers from the village to check speeds on the approaches to the centre of the village; i.e. Lyons Road, Hayes Lane and Park Street. If excessive speed is of concern to you and you would like to be involved in trying to ensure that drivers stick to the speed limits, please get in touch with Tracy on 07766 997894.

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 Jane Slipper, Chairman Recreation, Youth & Environment

This committee last met in November 2014 at which time a review of the play area inspection report was undertaken. The most significant finding was that one of the toddler swings from the Six Acres play area needed replacement. The chains for both swings were replaced and a new seat purchased. Other minor matters have been attended to by the handyman or ECO.

In the King George V play area the risk rating was graded medium (i.e. items marked as medium require appropriate action within resources). The reason that the area was risked medium is that the play surfaces require work and the surface is worn in front of the goal mouth. It is intended that some new equipment will go into KGV in 2015 and it was agreed that we should look to repair the surfaces at the same time.

Following cuts in Youth Services two years ago, the Parish Council joined with the neighbouring parishes of Broadbridge Heath and Warnham to fund the provision of youth facilities. Our Community Youth Worker, Dan Fairchild has been a welcome addition to Slinfold and he has been working closely with young people and local organisations. As well as a very popular mobile skateboard park during the summer holidays, he has been responsible for relaunching the youth club which takes place on alternate Fridays in the Village Hall and is proving very popular. Dan can be contacted at danfairchild@horsham-matters.org.uk or on 07702 815925.

The committee continues to consider the recreation, youth and environment needs of the village and is currently looking into options for a mini Multi Use Games Area in the King George V field, in discussion with Dan and young people in the village. To ensure that the committee is fully informed of the recreational and youth needs within the parish, representatives from the Cricket, Tennis and Football Clubs and the Scout Group will attend future meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for the 28th May 2015

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.

My thanks to members of the committee who have been involved with Recreation Youth and Environment issues this year.

Councillor Gael Stenton-Chandler, Chairman Planning Advisory Committee

It has been another busy year for planning with 69 applications considered from HDC for the year to 31 March 2015, as well as applications where the Parish Council is a neighbouring consultee, such as the new Heath Barn development on the Billingshurst Road.

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 in connection with the felling of trees and where it was unclear that a proposed annexe should be tied to the main dwelling (as without such a condition another dwelling could be developed in the future).

The Planning Committee looked closely at the development of houses to the rear of 1 to 25 Hayes Lane which was permitted by HDC last July. Whilst the Parish Council supported the application, observations were made with regard to house design and in connection with the S106 legal agreement.

Most recently, the Parish Council has been advised of Taylor Wimpey's application (DC/15/0591) for the erection of up to 50 residential dwellings, a new Scout hut, the formation of new vehicular and pedestrian access onto Hayes Lane and pedestrian access onto the South Downs Way, the provision of a children's play area, sustainable urban drainage system and associated car parking and landscaping on the land east of 1 to 25 Hayes Lane. The Parish Council's response to HDC will be submitted in May. Residents can comment on the application via the HDC website - <http://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/view-and-comment-on-planning-applications>

Enter the reference: DC/15/0591 and click on Search. Select the second tab "Comments". Residents are encouraged to comment so that HDC is aware of the strength of local feeling.

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.

My thanks to members of the committee who have given many hours of their time to consider and comment on the numerous applications received.

The Annual Report can only give a flavour of the hugely varied work of the Parish Council. I am sure many things would fall by the wayside without the hard work of our Clerk and RFO, Mary Burroughs, for which I and all the councillors are extremely grateful.

I would like to thank Jane Bromley, our Neighbourhood Plan Working Group administrator, for all that she has done since joining in October, including stepping in at short notice as Acting Clerk earlier this year. Thanks also to Tobias Mothe, our Environmental Cleansing Officer, who not only keeps everywhere tidy and litter free but checks the drains and helps out with minor repairs.

We are grateful to our County Councillor, Liz Kitchen, and our District Councillors, Stuart Ritchie and Tricia Youtan, who attend our monthly meetings whenever possible and keep us up to date with what is happening at County and District level.

Finally, I am pleased to report that we have maintained a full complement of eleven councillors this year; with just one vacancy arising when Martyn Haines had to step down in September due to work commitments. This was swiftly filled in November when Ed Skeates was co-opted onto the Council and happily, Martyn has not left us completely as he continues to be involved with the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. My fellow councillors are an eclectic group of individuals with a wide range of skills and experience who together make a great team working on behalf of Slinfold. My thanks to them all for giving so much time, effort and support during the past twelve months.

Camilla Gibson

Mrs Camilla Gibson, Chairman, Slinfold Parish Council