



## **WEST HOATHLY PARISH COUNCIL**

**representing Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly**

The Parish Office North Lane West Hoathly West Sussex RH19 4QG

Tel: 01342 811301 email: [clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk)

### **Annual Report of the Parish Council for year 2021/2022**

#### **Parish Council Update**

The Parish Council represents the interests of the communities of Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly. It does this in the following ways:

It:

- Looks after the assets that the Council owns;
- Changes/improves things by undertaking projects; and
- Lobbies and makes representations to other authorities and organisations on matters of concern to residents.

In the last year, your Parish Council has looked after the parish owned assets:

- Finche Field and the Allotments;
- North Lane Rec, Pavilion, Playground and Toilets;
- Sharpthorne "Old" Playground;
- Grit Bins, Dog Bins and Traditional White Finger Signposts.
- Bluebell Woods

In the last year, your Parish Council has been working on the following:

#### **Bluebell Woods**

A working group was set up in 2020, the group consists of parish councillors and Bluebell Lane residents. The Bluebell Woods working groups meet informally and then make recommendations to the Parish Council for items that need approval. Work has taken place to clear the site of the large amount of debris; with the bulk of the debris now removed.

During Spring 2021 a Land Condition Report was commissioned for the site, this will help the working group plan the next steps for the project.

It is expected to be a long-term project but once complete, a great asset to our community

#### **Pavilion**

Following approval of the planning application in 2020, work has continued with the Pavilion replacement project, however funding opportunities have proven to be limited

for this size of project. The council are however committed to the project and continue to explore grants that can support the replacement.

### **Public Works Loan**

As part of the council's agreement to accommodate the local history archive in the Village Hall, at the start of 2021 the council gained public support to apply for a Public Works Loan of £20,000, which will then be given as a grant to the Trustees of West Hoathly Village Hall. The council have now received approval for this loan, and it is ready to drawdown when the Trustees are able to proceed with the project.

### **Community Orchard**



Work has taken place over the winter to replace the failed fruit trees in the community orchard. Following donations there are now enough funds to purchase a disabled access picnic bench to be placed at Finche Field, overlooking the orchard. The bench will be ordered in the springtime when the ground is a little drier.

### **Parish Tidy Day**

As covid restrictions have finally eased, the council are pleased to be able to hold a Parish Tidy Day again this year, as has been done in previous years. The event is planned for the 5<sup>th</sup> March. This is a great opportunity to work together as a community and to keep our parish looking beautiful.

### **Queens Green Canopy**



West Hoathly Parish Council were one of the first parishes in West Sussex to plant trees in connection with the Queens Green Canopy. On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022, members of the Parish Council were joined by three Deputy Lieutenants for a

planting ceremony. Three trees were planted along the fence line, in the centre of Finche Field to celebrate the Queens Green Canopy.

### **Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

The Parish Council have been working with local community groups to put together a series of events to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. The council are currently preparing to light the beacon located at Finche Field, on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June as part of a nationwide initiative. Further events are planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> June at North Lane rec, these will soon be advertised by the Queens Platinum Jubilee working party.

### **Portable SID**

West Hoathly Parish Council has use of two portable Speed Indicator Devices. These devices are shared on a rota basis with neighbouring parishes and are in the parish for six weeks at a time, four times a year.

These devices will help with the continued effort to address the speeding issues on the C319.

### **C319**

During the past year the council have lobbied West Sussex County Council extensively about the importance of the issues relating to traffic along the C319. The Parish Council continues to press this matter with the County Council.

### **Planning**

In its representative role the Parish Council:

Commented upon 83 Planning Applications. Of the 83 applications, 9 were for work on trees in a Conservation Area, 72 for building alterations or extensions and 2 for new residential dwellings.

## **Chairman's Annual Report**

The pandemic continued for a second year and again disrupted the way the Parish Council (PC) operates. The government forced all levels of Local Government to resume statutory meetings in person during the year. It could be said that this had more impact at Parish Council level where, statistically, members are of a greater age and hence more vulnerable to the virus. Social distancing, wearing of masks during meetings and use of sanitiser both personally and on surfaces before and after meetings remained normal practice. Levels of infection in Mid Sussex rose to very high levels during the first three months of 2022; at least three members and two staff went down with the virus.

Last Summer four members of the Parish Council stood down. I would like to recognise in particular Anne Halligey who for five years was my predecessor as Chairman. Anne was a fair and firm chair of meetings and a very experienced former local government lawyer. We have missed her knowledge and wisdom. Claire Hilton, who led on the Bluebell Wood project also left us but has offered to remain involved with that project

as it moves forward. We welcomed four new members through co-option who have or will join the Council until May 2023 when the next elections take place.

The PC continues to maintain and where necessary build up reserves for expected future spending on Bluebell Wood, the Pavilion on the Rec, the Village Hall, a new Neighbourhood Plan and if contested, the next PC election in May 2023. Despite these demands the PC managed to keep the increase in the precept at a very modest level considering the inflationary pressures suddenly and unexpectedly looming large.

The C319 road through the Parish has, as always, been a major issue. During 2021 the Highways Authority, West Sussex County Council (WSSCC), resurfaced major parts of the section through West Hoathly and Sharpthorne. Still, several months on, some snaggings need to be completed such as the restoration of the rumble strips at the west end of the works. The PC continues to share two Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) with neighbouring PCs and together these are in place for over eight weeks of the year. This year South East Water have closed the road completely several times whereas WSSCC and other utilities use traffic lights. The PC is discussing with that one utility as to why their policy is so inconsistent.

During 2021 the Planning Authority, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), issued a 'Call for Sites' to identify land suitable for new housing. Only one site in the Parish was approved – on land behind Hoathly Hill. The two 'brownfield' sites that were submitted, Ibstock Brickworks and Philpotts Quarry were both rejected. I understand that the consultation period has been deferred and this may be due to MSDC reviewing its policy on 'brownfield' sites.

New housing has become an area of major concern in both Mid Sussex and West Sussex as a whole. The constraints imposed by the AONB and the South Downs National Park force developers to consider land outwith these boundaries. On top of those constraints Natural England has effectively stopped all major developments in our neighbouring Horsham District by imposing a ban on taking water from the River Arun. Housing demand from land constrained Brighton and Crawley forces development ever outwards. Massive development proposals exist for 3,500 homes in Sayers Common and frighteningly 10,000 to 12,000 houses mostly in Rusper Parish between Crawley and Horsham. The Annual Parish Assembly on 7<sup>th</sup> March will be devoted to the issue of housing.

There are also proposals to dig up and 'restore' a 50 metre wide strip to accommodate an underground cable through the National Park from Climping Beach to Bolney in connection with the controversial Rampion 2 Windfarm and the proposal by CentreParcs to develop a new site near the Cowdray Arms – the first development of ancient woodland to the east of the so far protected area east of the A/M23. Development pressures are getting ever closer to the Parish.

Following the resolution to last year's problems at West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC), training, legal advice and support for Parishes has continued and indeed grown. I was re-elected Chairman of WSALC at the AGM and am pleased to report that virtually all the near 150 Parishes in West Sussex have re-joined or confirmed that they will re-join in May 2022. I represent WSALC at the National Association (NALC) which itself has the ear of government. As such we have as much influence as the Local Government Association, representing the higher tiers of local government.

I would like to say a special thank you to Leanne Andrews, our Parish Clerk, for the hard work she has undertaken during continued trying times and to welcome Anita Emery, our Responsible Finance Officer who was appointed in September 2021. Also, to say thank you to all my fellow Council Members who continue to contribute so much to the work of the Parish Council. Thank you to our local part time and casual staff who make such an enormous difference to the appearance of our internal and external assets and whose contribution behind the scenes is so important it would only be noticed if it was absent.

Douglas Denham St Pinnock, Chairman

## **Financial Matters (figures based at 28.2.2022)**

### **Parish Council**

- Income

During the financial year, the Parish Council received £79,599.

Of this

- £76,399 came from the precept.
- Other sources of income were allotment rent and football fees for use of North Lane Rec,

- Expenditure

The Council made payments of £62,557 covering salaries and other administrative costs, maintenance of parish assets and projects.

47% of the Parish Council's expenditure was spent on General Admin activities, 53% was spent on managing Parish owned assets.

Of the General Admin expenditure:

- 52% is salary related including pensions (31% of total expenditure)
- 3% is insurance, audit fees etc
- 6% is grants and donations.

The total grant budget is currently £3,700. Most grants are small or given for a specific purpose. The largest grants are those made to St Margaret's PCC and Highbrook PCC in both cases for the maintenance of the churchyards and a donation to the Highbrook Village Hall Management Committee. The Parish Council also provides a grant to the Ashdown Forest Conservators.

### **Focus for the year 2022/2023**

In addition to ongoing tasks, the Parish Council plans to;

- Continue with the project to replace the Pavilion on North Lane Rec

- Continue with the project to make Bluebell Woods a safe area for all to use
- Make improvements/ replace the access steps to Finche Field
- Work with local community groups to plan events to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee
- Manage the trees and woodland on Council owned land

The Parish Council will continue to make representations to other authorities and organisations about matters of concern to residents and will press for improvements wherever possible.

## **Trustees of West Hoathly Village Hall (figures based at 28.2.2022)**

The Village Hall is the responsibility of the Parish Council as sole trustees. Its Management Committee is made up of 5 – 6 Councillors plus representatives from the various users, but unfortunately at the present time we do not have any representatives from any of the users though these would be very welcome to join us.

We meet three times a year, but the day-to-day running of the hall is undertaken by Leanne Andrews, our Clerk,

In the past year, West Hoathly Village Hall management committee has continued to work on the Local Archive store and staircase replacement project. Staircase drawings have been obtained and work is ongoing to establish the best way to proceed with the project.

The Trustees of West Hoathly Village Hall agree their own budget.

- Income

During the period April 2021 to 28 February 2022, the Trustees received £10,449.

Of this

- £6350 came from the rental of the flat above the Hall.
- The remainder came from hiring of the Hall.

- Expenditure

The Trustees made payments of £8,053.

Since covid restrictions lifted in Spring/Summer 2021 the hall has again benefited from regular hiring from groups like the West Hoathly Pre-School, Sharpthorne and West Hoathly WI groups, Karate, Table Tennis and Pilates groups along with the Parent Toddler group.