

Steyning Parish Council



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Steyning Parish Council

Chairman's Report for 2015 / 16

Chairman's introduction

I would like to welcome you all to the Steyning Parish Council, Annual Parish Meeting and a special welcome to our guest speaker, Tom Crowley, who is the Chief Executive of Horsham District Council.

Firstly, I would like to thank all my colleagues on the council, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the caretaking staff for all the hard work they have put in over the last year.

All the Councillors are volunteers, committed to achieving the best that they can for the parishioners and the council has achieved much in the last year as you will hear in the committee reports.

Horsham District is recognised as being one of the best districts to live in in the country and, Steyning, is considered one of its key towns. Councillors have worked hard and, will continue to do so, to ensure that Steyning continues to prosper and maintain its vibrancy and diversity.

To maintain the services we provide such as the Youth service, the Wardens and contributing annually to the Leisure Centre - all assets that most other councils do not have – to cover rising costs this year we have had to raise the precept by 7.89%, which includes pension provision for the caretaking staff.

Three new councillors were elected in May 2015; Cllrs Sarah Sullivan, Gary Sullivan and Rodney Goldsmith. A further four new Councillors were co-opted in June; Cllrs Deborah Hanson, Michelle Syred, Steve Northam and Brian Picking which brought us to our optimum level of 15. These new councillors are familiarising themselves with their responsibilities and settling into projects that utilise the knowledge and experience that they bring to the Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group continues its excellent work alongside over 80 members of the public who make up the Focus Groups. Heritage, Community, Transport & Accessibility, Environment and Housing Focus Groups have met to analyse public survey responses and undertake the further research that will inform the draft Plan. The Steering Group were particularly pleased that so many members of the public attended two recent Public Consultation events held in January and were able to provide the feedback that is an essential element of the process. The draft plan is likely to be submitted to HDC hopefully in the next few weeks, followed by a statutory public consultation period, and a referendum expected in the Autumn.

I would like to thank the Steering Group for the huge amount of work they have undertaken, particularly Steyning Cllrs Nick Muggridge, Steve Northam and Deborah Hanson. A special thank you also, to Bramber Cllr Nick Mills,



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Chairman of the Steering Group. Information on progress to date is available on the Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst & Bramber (SWAB) Neighbourhood Plan website - www.swabneighbourhoodplan.org

Our Neighbourhood Wardens, Paul Conroy and Michael Pearce continue to work closely with the community to address concerns that members of the public may have and to build positive, working relationships with all age groups. Wardens have successfully dealt with incidents of anti-social behaviour and driving and have been very proactive in offering advice to residents, particularly with regard to theft-prevention, door step callers and 'scams'. There is no doubt that the wardens continue to be a valuable asset to the town.

Steyning Parish Council is pleased to be able to fund the Youth Service and in August 2015 Senior Youth Worker, Emma Edwards, was able to provide an excellent presentation to Full Council regarding her essential work with young people, including topics such as fun events, raising aspirations, early intervention and community benefits. The Youth Service is always in need of volunteers and would welcome applications from local residents.

Our monthly film evenings continue in popularity, with audience numbers in the region of 150 – 180. Councillors are pleased to offer an opportunity for a social gathering that also benefits the community, since profits raised – approximately £3,000 - are put towards the maintenance of the Steyning Centre. Films are shown on the first Wednesday of the month.

The Steyning Parish Council Showcase 2016 was another well-attended and successful event. 55 local groups and organisations were able to promote their activities and recruit new members. It has been noted that older members of the community were particularly well represented and it is hoped that a 'Youth Showcase' could alternate with the current bi-annual event.

Cllr Tim Lloyd and Cllr Michael Willett were elected as District Councillors to represent Steyning and Ashurst in May by an overwhelming majority and we will both work hard to promote both areas at HDC.

The Horsham District Planning Framework was approved at HDC in November 2015 and Tom Crowley will talk about this and the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan

Last year we had the summer fair and late night Christmas shopping events, both of which were hugely successful and well attended and this year we have the Steyning Festival. All these events draw in large numbers of visitors and are important in driving our local economy and ensuring that we keep our vibrant High Street, when so many small town High Streets around the country are struggling.

The Steyning & District Partnership has also been very active last year, finishing the Walks for All project that provides safe riverside walking with wheelchair access: the Food and Drink festival which was well attended and the partnership has provided a new sign on the A283 from Storrington that replaces one removed by WSCC some years ago. This should direct more casual visitors into the town.

We have continued to support the Business Chamber and contributed to the new Christmas lights, which were well-received by the community.

The council completed its Business plan in 2015 which sets out what the council does, how it is financed, how it manages its assets and sets out action plans for the future. It is a working document and will be updated annually. The plan can be viewed on our website.

All our local groups are prospering and the Parish Council continues to provide grants to support where it is able to, particularly to Steyning in Bloom who do a fantastic job in providing the floral displays in the High Street. Our thanks to all of their volunteers whose contribution is important in helping to make Steyning a destination town for visitors.



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Lastly, it is with regret that our town Clerk, Rebecca Luckin, has handed in her notice and will be leaving at the end of April. Rebecca has been an excellent Clerk and has updated most of the council's protocols and procedures during her time here and will leave the council in good order for her successor. It has been a pleasure to work with her and, I am sure, all the council wish her well in the future.

Lastly I would like to thank all those residents who have supported the council over the last year, it is much appreciated.

Finance & Community

The F&C Committee can report that overall this year it is expected we will be under on expenditure but over on income, due to the committee's close management of the budget.

The committee recommended its budget to council for the 16/17 year with an increase in precept of 7.89% which included the provision of pensions for the caretaking staff. This was accepted by council.

The F&C committee continued to support local groups and amongst others gave grants to Royal British Legion, Steyning in Bloom, Steyning and District Partnership and the Business Chamber for the Christmas lights.

The Youth Service provided by the SAYS charity took up a great deal of committee time and it was finally resolved to recommend to council that SAYS used its reserves, with a top up from the councils, to contract with Horsham Matters directly for one year. This would give the council time to agree with the other parishes, the way forward. There would be a small loss of VAT but it was felt that this was outweighed by the reduction in cost to the council tax payers in the coming year.

The committee discussed a Steyning Lottery proposed by Cllrs. Northam and Picking and this is on-going but is expected to be run by the local residents independently of the council, to fund local projects.

Both the internal and external audits were done without comment.

The committee recommended to council an Equality Statement, Community Engagement Policy, Business Continuity Plan and an Emergency Plan which were approved.

The new neighbourhood Warden Contract for the next three years was approved.

Cllr Tim Lloyd

Planning

It has been a busy year for the Planning Committee with a consistently high level of Planning Applications to review.

The length of the twice-monthly meetings has been extended from 30 to 45 minutes to try to cope with this, but there will be further time pressures from April when Horsham District Council is ceasing to send paper plans to be studied. This means the plans will have to be sourced from the internet and projected on a screen at each meeting which may well be more time-consuming, so the timing of the meetings will have to be kept under review.

In the main the applications this year have been for extensions, often involving the incorporation of garages into properties. In general this will lead to fewer small properties in Steyning and more on-street or driveway parking. A lot of work has been put into finalising the revised Conservation Area Character Assessment Document, and agreeing it with Horsham District Council. It is accompanied by an application for an Article 4 Direction for the Conservation Area, which will extend planning controls on unlisted residential properties which currently do not require planning permission for permitted development. The Assessment Document is now out for public comment, with copies available on our website, in Steyning Library and in the Parish Office. This work is part of our agreed plan to work to enhance and promote the historic and cultural heritage of Steyning and safeguard its unique identity and natural and built environment.

Cllr Gill Muncey

Highways & Lighting

The main project for 2015-16 has been the drainage project at Charlton Court, aimed at re-directing some of the rainwater from the Downs away from Mouse Lane. This was completed in November and has achieved what it was designed to do- of course the natural springs under the lower part of Mouse Lane continue to flow so it will always



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be a wet area. Unfortunately the bridleway resurfacing completed by Balfour Beatty at the same time was very unsatisfactorily done so we have not paid for this and it is to be re-done in the Spring to a higher standard. We are

considering making a further bid to Operation Watershed in 2016-17 to undertake some further work in the Charlton Court/Mouse Lane area.

Separately, in the spring WSCC is going to repair underground damage to pipes near the Leisure Centre, to try to prevent the flooding problem there.

Further H&L projects for which we are seeking funding in conjunction with the Community Partnership are the provision of a streetlamp on the footbridge over the A283 between Goring Road and Kings Barn Villas, and a separate urinal for men in the High Street toilets.

Cllr Philip Howell

Playing Fields

The committee has met regularly during the year. At the end of the last Council we lost several long-standing members who retired. We thank them for all of their hard work and support during the past years, and are pleased to welcome four new members.

We continue with the practice of each committee member being responsible for one open space. This way we are able to keep an eye on things and deal with problems before they become too large.

The annual inspection of all play equipment was carried out and apart from some minor repairs we had a clean bill of health. The large "basket" swing on MPF has been out of use for some considerable time as it was dangerous. So far we have been unable to get the correct size replacement bolts. I would like to reassure everyone that as soon as we get the correct parts and the ground is firm enough to be driven over, this popular piece of equipment will be re-installed.

Dog fouling continues to be a problem, fortunately now we have the fence around the children's area we can exclude dogs from the play area.

The Community Orchard Group continues their good work at the top of the field and a number of new fruit trees have been planted. The hedge at the top of the field has been trimmed.

The new metal "kissing gate" has been installed, and although some were unhappy we did not go for a timber replacement, the ground was too wet in this area so this was a sensible choice. We thank the donor and the volunteers who installed it for us.

Cllr Gill Ness-Collins

Steyning Centre

Committee members continue to work to ensure that the Steyning Centre is kept in good order and with regard to Health & Safety legislation. Income generated by the monthly film evening is used towards the costs of repairs and renewals in the Centre. The film evening not only generates significant funds, but also provides a service that is well-received by the community and provides an opportunity for Councillors to meet with members of the public on an informal, social basis.

The Committee has monitored expenditure closely and has been able to include provision for an increase in caretaking staff salaries, in line with statutory requirements.

Cllr Michael Willett

Cllr Philip Howell MBE

Chairman of Steyning Parish Council



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Steyning Parish Councillors

Cllr Philip Bowell MBE – Chairman of the Council, Chair of Highways & Lighting, member of the Joint Parishes Burial Board and SAYS Trustee.

Cllr Tim Lloyd – Vice-Chairman of the Council and Chair of Finance & Community Committee

Cllr Gill Ness-Collins – Chair of Playing Fields Committee

Cllr Gill Muncey – Chair of Planning and Vice Chair of Highways & Lighting Committee

Cllr Michael Willett – Chairman of the Steyning Centre Committee

Cllr Nick Muggridge – Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee and member of the SAYS Management Committee.

Cllr Michelle Syred – Chairman of the SAYS Management Committee

Cllr Liz Trundle – Vice Chairman of the Steyning Centre Committee

Cllr Deborah Hanson – member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Cllr Steve Northam – member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Cllr Martin Toomey – HALC representative

Cllr Gary Sullivan – member of the Joint Parishes Burial Board

Cllr Brian Picking

Cllr Rodney Goldsmith

Cllr Sarah Sullivan

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Rebecca Luckin

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HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Cllr Tim Lloyd and Cllr Michael Willett.

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr David Barling - David.Barling@westsussex.gov.uk

WSSC Cabinet Member for Residents' Services.

RL/fullcouncil/apmmarch2016/chairmans report



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