

14th April 2014

Chairman's Report

My first year as Chairman has certainly been eventful – with the legal and community issues we have faced and perhaps partly explains why we are having trouble finding new councillors to take on the responsibilities of the role.

The development of a skatepark for the community is a simple case of the council doing what they feel is right to look after the youth of Steyning and ensure we have as many “ticks in the box” for those people with young families deciding whether to stay and raise their families here. Likewise for those who want to move to Steyning and reside here full-time and raise a family.

Sadly not everyone feels the same way and our processes have been challenged with 2 judicial reviews taken against us - neither of which was successful. We have also been reported to the Information Commissioner which was not upheld but was taken to appeal. The appeal Tribunal found in favour of the Parish Council. This process is costing the residents of Steyning valuable financial resources. We believe that the Parish Council has done the right thing and this was supported by the majority of the electorate in a well-attended town poll. We truly hope all the community will now get behind us so that we can see this project through to completion and give the youth of the town the skate-park that they have wanted for so long.

The current position is that the Horsham District Council was due to hear the planning application for the Skate Park in April. This has been delayed till the May meeting but we are still confident of success at this meeting.

In February we held our bi-annual Showcase to highlight the reasons we all love to live in Steyning. It was once again a resounding success. It was so successful; we are considering holding a Youth Showcase as many of the groups present would like to see a greater youth membership in their groups. I was party to a discussion between the Bowls Club and the Grammar School, and hopefully this will lead to more youngsters joining these sorts of activities. I certainly never realised that a current world champion is an 18 year old young British lady. Good for her.

We have decided to participate in developing a Neighbourhood Plan. We are going to do this in conjunction with Bramber. I hope all will agree we have similar ideals and certainly common facilities and infrastructure so it makes sense to go this route. It will need substantial public support and I hope those with a positive approach will step forward from both communities and offer their time and knowledge to assist the focus groups in creating a long term plan development plan which will balance the needs for new housing in the community – particularly for starter homes – against the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the town .

Sue Rogers and a group of both councillors and residents are working hard at developing a plan to support “Isolation and Loneliness”. This is very much work in progress, and we all have concerns that as our older residents approach their senior years, that the services and support structure are there to help them, especially those who are not fortunate enough to have family support in the immediate vicinity. Isolation and loneliness does not, of course, just target older people and can include young single people or single mum's with young children.

The Steyning Area Youth Service (SAYS) goes from strength and our full time youth worker, Emma Edwards is doing sterling work throughout the area. As always she needs more volunteers so if you feel you have some spare time, please contact Emma at the Cuthman Centre or Sue Booth, our parish clerk.

Our wardens, Paul and Michael, continue to work tirelessly with our PCSO's to make Steyning a safer place to live in. It is comforting to know they are at the end of a phone and they respond well to our needs. A great vote of thanks to Paul & Michael.

I would like to thank our councillors, and especially those who have worked hard this past year to help me settle in and also cope with the substantially increased workload we have had to bare. Also thanks must go to our District Councillors, Sue Rogers and George Cockman, and County Councillor David Barling who all work hard to get the best for Steyning residents.

All our Steyning centre staff are due a substantial vote of thanks. Our caretakers and Deputy Clerk, Hazel, work hard for the residents of Steyning – sometimes with little thanks. Please think about that next time you see them and they do something for you.

This goes doubly so for our clerk Sue Booth, who has sadly decided to retire. Sue will leave us later in the year and work is already underway to find a replacement. We will get the best person we can but Sue will be a very hard act to follow. Many thanks Sue for all you and your team have done for the community and for me personally. I could not have got through the last year without you.

Best wishes to you all

Phil Howell MBE
Steyning Parish Council Chairman.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

This last year has presented financial challenges through 2 unsuccessful Judicial Reviews against the council on the skate-park, an election and a Town Poll called by local residents. Fortunately, the majority of the costs for the Judicial Reviews were covered by insurance, but the town had to bear the costs of the election and Town Poll.

Fortunately, an appeal, against the Information Commissioners Office upholding the council's refusal to answer a Freedom of Information Act request, has been dismissed, as has the application for costs.

It was regrettable that the committee had to recommend an increase in the council precept for the coming financial year of 18.2%, equating to 25p per household per week in a band 'D' property, to cover any further potential legal costs and additional staff that are required to cover the increased workload due, amongst other things, to the burden that FOI and other requests put on the clerk's office.

It is worth mentioning that your precept pays for a number of facilities that the council provide, that other councils either don't have or, have in part. These include; the Neighbourhood Wardens and Youth Service funded jointly with Bramber and Upper Beeding and Ashurst; the Steyning Centre which is a valuable revenue resource and amenity for the local community; we run our own High Street toilets and bin collection; we manage our own road sweeping in the High Street as well as the management of the MPF, other open spaces and 5 play areas, and, we contribute a substantial sum to the Swimming Pool.

The committee have worked hard this year on revising and updating a number of procedural and other matters within the council. The committee has completed an Emergency Plan and a Business Continuity Plan. The Emergency Plan is for the emergency services, police and other authorities and, councillors, to have a detailed plan of facilities and resources available in the event of a major incident. The Business Continuity Plan is an internal document to ensure that the functions of the Parish Council's administration, to help and support the community, can continue to function should the Steyning Centre be damaged by fire or, some other major incident.

New Complaints Procedures, Standing Orders, and Financial Regulations have also been produced. It is expected that a review of the Local Government Act Section 150 (2) is likely to be published in the near future and therefore the Financial Regulations may need looking at again in the light of new guidance.

The Committee is also reviewing the council's Risk Assessment policies.

The committee has also had to look at the new Local Government pension regulations to be operative from April 2014. Current payroll software would need upgrading to calculate the new contributions but also to deal with pension auto enrolment. The committee is looking at outsourcing this function.

Sadly the parish Clerk Sue Booth, has indicated that she would like to retire later this year - we shall miss her guidance and hard work in running, so efficiently, what is a growing parish administration – and this has necessitated us going out to recruit a new parish clerk. The adverts for this were sent

out this month. This would also be a good moment to thank Hazel Roxby, our Deputy Clerk, for all her support this year, particularly in running the Steyning Centre bookings and updating the website.

In February the council ran the second Steyning Showcase, which was hugely successful and thanks to good weather, well attended. The day made a surplus of £132 which will be used to either fund a proposed Youth Showcase or, the next event.

The council has joined with Bramber to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and the steering group is being put together to manage the initial processes and if there is anyone who would like to be on the Neighbourhood Planning Committee or one of the Focus groups to send their names through to the clerk.

The Neighbourhood Plan is significant for this community as it enables communities to draw up a Plan for their area and is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area (within certain limits and parameters).

These plans will be used to decide the future of the places where community lives and works giving opportunities to:

- choose where it wants new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have its say on what new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings it wants to see go ahead.

The Youth Service continues to prosper and the Steyning Area Youth Service is negotiating a new agreement for the use of the Cuthman Centre, which is being re-furnished in the summer break.

The committee has put together a working group for Older People in Isolation . The idea is to invite community leaders to attend a seminar, i.e. Church, G.P's, Steyning Good Neighbours, Dingeman's etc. to take up actions to address loneliness and isolation, to make people aware of pointers for someone who may be isolated.

This year the committee had to stop funding the Saturday 106 bus as usage was low and costs per journey too high.

Also, this year the committee had to approve a payment of £5,452 to bring the play equipment up to standard following the Annual Play equipment inspection and this was taken from the reserve fund.

The committee have agreed a new deal with BT for our business line and broadband with 3 months free rental on our broadband lines and 500 free talk minutes on each of our office lines.

The committee also have put in place a new maintenance agreement of the town clock. It was recognised that the clock maintenance is of a specialist nature and the town clock is temperamental so it was decided to use the same company that had maintained it for the last 10 years.

Lastly, a working group has been formed to look at World War 1 celebrations in the town.

Tim Lloyd – Chair of the Finance and Community Committee

April 2014

Highways and Lighting Committee Report

The Highways and Lighting Committee has had a busy year, with a number of long-running projects. I would like to thank my fellow committee members for all their support and hard work – and my remaining fellow councillors, because we have roped them in too!

The Committee has asked all parish councillors to be involved in two monitoring programmes. The first is to monitor the High Street, Conservation area and play areas, to check litter bins and the state of the pavements for litter and debris; the High Street is particularly important as this area is contracted out of the Horsham District Council cleansing programme and carried out by a private contractor, whose three-year contract has recently been renewed.

The second programme that has been instigated is that each councillor has agreed to monitor a sector of the streets in order to report on potholes, road and pavement defects, overgrown banks and foliage, blocked drains and street lighting.

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) has set aside a sum of money to carry out works to unclassified roads around the county. Steyning, along with the other parishes, has submitted a list of priority roads in our area and information received from councillors on their sectors will be fed into this list to help achieve our goal of better road surfaces throughout the parish.

As part of their monitoring, councillors will report areas where dropped kerbs on pavements are absent and would be desirable to improve access to the high street and schools. Notification of pavements lacking a dropped kerbs at key locations or ones that are not fit for purpose (i.e. not low enough or not matched up with another on the opposite side of the road) will help our survey of footway access through the town to the High Street for residents with a mobility problem, principally users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters, wheeled walkers and pushchairs and prams.

We are very pleased that Horsham District Council has provided two additional disabled parking bays in Fletcher's Croft Car Park, now providing a block of four bays close to the Steyning Centre.

The WSSCC process for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), which is the mechanism by which new pedestrian lights, double yellow lines, speed limits etc. are suggested, approved and introduced, has been improved to speed up implementation. It also ensures that requested TROs are what residents in the locality actually want and it is not just a request from a single resident. Parish Councils will be a much bigger trigger to this process; requests will be investigated and if viable it will come forward as a priority for the County Local Committee (CLC) to look at. There will now be no limit for TROs but they will be governed by resources available. Road safety measures for Steyning Primary School and Steyning Grammar School have been included on the CLC TRO list, supported by County Councillor and fellow Parish Councillor David Barling.

There are now two new road signs on the north and south side of the mini-roundabout at the junction of the High Street, Church Street and Newham Lane. We hope that the superfluous road signs will be removed soon, to reduce clutter on the highway.

Dog fouling has been a problem, particularly through the wet winter. An anti-dog fouling campaign was organised last autumn. Fouled areas on pavements, twittens and the MPF were highlighted with chalk and also flagged. The volunteers monitored various areas and then cleaned it all up at the end of the fortnight. It made a difference for a short while but unfortunately not for long. I would like to

remind dog owners that allowing your dog to foul in a public place is illegal and the penalty can be significant – up to £1,000.

Last year, WSCC changed its winter management operation with regards to deliveries of grit/salt mix, and delivered to all councils in the autumn, well before any severe weather, with no top-up deliveries during the winter. The Committee produced and lodged a Winter Maintenance Plan with West Sussex County Council. We obtained six more permanent grit/salt bins and extra bags of grit/salt mix, which we stored ready to place around the town in strategic locations.

In the event, the mild weather meant that these were not needed because water, not snow and ice, featured large last winter!

Thankfully, our area did not suffer as much as some parts of the country. Last autumn, WSCC contractors carried out works to alleviate the flooding that regularly occurs along the Horsham Road by unearthing and clearing a number of drains along the verge. It seems to have made an improvement for the road generally, but the area opposite the Leisure Centre still flooded during the heavy rains in the winter and needs further work.

Another area that floods regularly, and caused problems during the heavy rains, is Dog Lane at the junction with the Lower High Street, which suffered some serious flooding during the winter. We were successful in getting funding to improve the situation in the short-term by clearing foliage and silting, jetting culverts and clearing ditches, which will start shortly.

Mouse Lane has also been badly affected by the heavy rainfall, with water running down the road for many, many weeks, bringing with it rubble and silt from the fields, resulting in many potholes and erosion of the road surface. In addition, some of the steep banks along the road collapsed under the weight of saturated ground.

Investigations into the problems of flooding in Mouse Lane, and traffic travelling too fast have been taken up by WSCC, meeting with the Wiston Estate, residents and councillors. It is hoped that long-term solutions will be found that the residents are happy with, which will result in the flow of water down Mouse Lane being managed, with consequent amount of rubble and silt that end up at the bottom of Mouse Lane being reduced.

Finally, one of the highlights of last summer was the fabulous display of flowers in tubs and troughs arranged by Steyning in Bloom. We have now provided a water butt collecting rain water off the roof of the High Street bus shelter to make watering in dry spells easier for the volunteers, and also agreed some additional positions for planters. We would like to thank Steyning in Bloom for all their hard work; the spring flowers blossomed despite their wet winter and have certainly enhanced the town and cheered us all up, and we look forward to another lovely display of summer flowers.

Mariella Alexander, Chair Highways and Lighting Committee

April 2014

Planning Committee Report

Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their continuing work and support during the past year. As statutory consultees in the planning process, we are sent planning applications relating to the Steyning Parish by Horsham District Council, which we consider at our twice-monthly meetings, after individually having viewed the plans and the location. Occasionally, we arrange on-site meetings to view and discuss complex applications.

Over the year, there have been a number of residential applications, mostly extensions and arboricultural requests, but also some applications for demolition and re-building. There were a few significant planning applications during the year.

The first, approved last November, was for the demolition of Britons Croft care home and erection of an affordable housing complex consisting of apartments and a communal lounge, prioritising older people. These are to be arranged in five blocks of four around a central spinal road, with 29 car parking spaces (one for each property and nine for visitors), bin storage, private and communal gardens. These will include affordable rent and shared ownership properties, with priority given to the over 60's. Demolition of the former care home has been completed and building is underway; it is scheduled for completion in Spring 2015. Anyone interested in the scheme should register their interest with Saxon Weald.

Approval was granted last year by Horsham District Council for demolition of the building on the Old Tannery site, at the junction of Breach Close and Tanyard Lane, and the erection of 4, two 2-bedded and two 3-bedded dwellings, with car parking. The Committee had objected on the basis of loss of industry and commercial floorspace, but we recognised that the building is in a poor state of repair and the space is under-utilised. At the moment, the building is currently empty but a prior approval notification has just been submitted to convert and renovate the existing building to form five 2-bedroom flats and two 1-bedroom flats, with seven parking spaces. So, if this progresses to a full planning application, the Committee will be considering it once more.

In Elm Grove Lane, the area between West's Printers and the back of Martin's newsagents is to be developed for office space, for which we requested that a operation management plan be put together to ensure as little disruption as possible to the High Street and local businesses and residential properties. Again, this work has not yet started.

Two projects to provide energy from alternative sources for supply to the national grid were submitted last autumn, both of which were looked at on-site by the Committee. Key to both projects is the proximity of the power lines that run along the flood plain of the River Adur that enable the connection of minor generating systems to the national grid. The first application, at Wappingthorn Farm, is to erect an anaerobic digester to produce methane gas, which will be used to generate electricity that then feeds into the national grid via the power lines. Maize will be grown on the farm and in other local fields to use as a substrate for the digester; slurry from Huddlestone Farm will also be used occasionally as a substrate. A number of residents have objected to this application and the Committee has concerns about the number of traffic movements on and across a difficult junction. This application has still to be decided by Horsham District Council.

The second application is for a solar farm on land belonging to Huddlestone Farm, north of the track that runs from the farm buildings to Wyckham Lane. The photovoltaic panels would ultimately connect via inverters and underground cable to the national grid via the power lines. Although a public footpath runs close to its boundary on one side, the Committee felt the site to be well-

chosen, as it is on ground sloping downwards north of the track, and with woodland on its periphery. We had no objection, subject to the Environmental Officers and Ecologists reports, but we stated that we would like to see some community involvement in the scheme. A number of local residents have objected and, again, Horsham District Council still has to decide on this scheme.

In recent months, during consideration of requests for listed building consent or conservation area approval, it has been apparent that the Parish Council Conservation Area Policy Document needs updating and strengthening. We wish to be clearer about the acceptability of types of materials used for replacement windows, renovating external surfaces, and colours for paintwork and rendered surfaces, not only in the context of the immediate street scene but also with consideration of the conservation area as a whole. We are in the process of producing a draft amended document and will begin to review and discuss it soon.

Looking to the South Downs National Park (SDNP) on our southern boundary, plans for its management and development continue to evolve. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) published its Partnership Management Plan towards the end of last year. This is its first five year strategy plan for the management of the SDNP and has been prepared by the SDNPA in close partnership with other bodies following consultation and debate with stakeholders.

The SDNPA is currently preparing a Local Plan for the National Park. When adopted, it will set out the planning policies for the SDNP. Thereafter, all planning applications for development within the National Park will be judged against these policies. This will be the first time that the National Park will be planned for as a single entity. This is currently at an Options Consultation stage, which represents the first stage in developing the Local Plan. The SDNPA is asking for comments on the approach the Local Plan should take on various planning issues. It has identified 55 key issues and a number of options for how the Local Plan could deal with these issues. Comments on these matters are invited, as well as other issues and options that consultees think should be included.

The SDNPA is also asking for comments on the Community Infrastructure Levy - Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new system of planning charges that local planning authorities can use to raise funds from new development to pay for infrastructure. The SDNPA is preparing a Charging Schedule for the whole of the SDNP, which will set out the charges to levy on development within the area. The money collected will be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that will be needed to support development within the National Park.

The consultation period for these two proposals closes at the end of April 2014.

All in all, it was a busy year, with a number of novel issues to confront and I am sure my colleagues and I will have another busy year ahead.

Mariella Alexander, Chair, Planning Committee

April 2014

Report for Playing Fields Committee

The Committee has met regularly during the year and attended to a number of issues.

Considerable time has been devoted to the subject of Dog Fouling, ways of monitoring and controlling this.

The Committee organised a week of observation on the Memorial Playing Field. No one was caught but the regular observation did illustrate how many dog owners exercised their animals there.

Later in the year Councillor Muncey organised a week campaign throughout the town to highlight the "black spots" and to try and catch the offenders, yet again although there were incidences of fouling no one was actually caught allowing their dog to foul. Thank you to Councillor Muncey for her initiative. One positive outcome was that the committee decided to fence the children's play area on MPF.. This is going ahead, and we are just waiting to receive funding before works can start.

We inspected the fence along the side of Canada Gardens Allotments and as it was in a very bad state it will be replaced and the side boundary tidied up. Our Allotment Rules and Regulations are in the process of being reviewed and when the draft is completed all Allotment holders will be given the opportunity to comment before they are agreed.

We have been approached by the Steyning 10 -10 Greening Association with a proposal to have a Community Orchard in the MPF. We hope they will be able to prune and clear the ground around the few remaining trees at the top of the Memorial Playing Field. Although it is too late to do any pruning this Spring, providing the Committee agrees, this scheme will be in full operation next year.

We carried out an extensive list of maintenance work to the Play Equipment in our 5 play areas. This is an ongoing task but our monthly and annual inspections do keep us on top of the work.

Our grass cutting contract has now been tendered and renewed for a further 3 years to 2017.

In conclusion, thank you to all the members of the Committee for their support and the work they do monitoring all our open spaces

Gill Ness-Collins, Chair of Playing Fields Committee

April 2014

Report of the Steyning Centre Management Group

This has been a busy year, as ever, for the Steyning Centre. Business continues to be good and the centre is in use 7 days per week and more often than not for 12 or more hours per day. This means that the Centre only costs our residents a very small sum each year (£15k) to run and maintain. Costs do continue to rise, particularly our energy costs, so we would ask all our users to remember to 'Turn out the Lights!' please.

We have lost the services of 3 caretakers this year but have managed to recruit 3 excellent replacements and all our customers seem happy and are very complimentary of the new staff. I would like to thank them for all their efforts – continue the good work! Hazel, as always, works hard with the bookings and day to day operation of the Centre and I would like to thank her for her continued efforts.

This last year we have:

Had the floors in the two halls polished and re-varnished and next year they will be due for a complete sanding and re-polish. This is an expensive exercise but keeps our floor in such good condition for all our users.

Replaced the stage curtains which I am sure you will agree has given Coombe Court a huge facelift.

Replaced the skylight dome in the foyer which had almost completely disintegrated.

We have also, of course, carried out all the usual small, everyday maintenance jobs.

Our solar cells continue to be productive and to date, since installation, have earned us £2,694.30

For the coming year the committee is looking to replace the boiler, the current one being at least 20 years old, and although it is regularly maintained it is not as efficient as we would like.

We are looking at introducing a monthly cinema at the centre and we are investigating costs etc. More of this in the coming year.

Finally, I would like to thank the other members of this committee for the time and effort they put in to keeping the centre up to scratch and our Clerk, Sue for her tireless management and help with the running of the centre.

Roger Toms – Chairman Steyning Centre Management Group

April 2014