

Annual report 2013/14

The past year has seen much of the Council's efforts directed towards ensuring that the imminent major developments identified as part of Wokingham Borough Council's SDL (Strategic Development Location) programme, take into account the needs of our existing Parishioners.

In addition, wherever feasible and practical, enhanced facilities and amenities can also be delivered. In order to achieve the required outcomes, we have worked hard building close working relationships with Wokingham borough councillors and officers, as well as the developers themselves.

Various public forum and consultation events have been held on a regular basis, a policy that will be continued throughout the rollout of the development programme. In the case of the latter, we have been able to pilot the process using the BOVIS / Bellway Mitford Fields development in Three Mile Cross and as a result much has been learned.

In parallel with the above, the Parish Council, as facilitated under the Government's Localism Bill, is in the final stages of producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan which sets our collective vision for the Parish through until 2026. This process, led by the Chairman of our Planning Committee, Peter Hughes, culminates in a Public Referendum which will determine whether or not it will be adopted and implemented. If you've not already done so, you will find more information at www.shinfieldplan.org.

shinfieldplan.org

Special mention has to be made of the large numbers of volunteers who work tirelessly within the community in order to help others. They help in such areas as youth workers, transport providers, IT educators as well as those who regularly pick up litter as part of our 'Adopt a Grass Verge' Scheme.

With regard to the Parish Council itself, the past year has unfortunately seen the departure of Councillors Marjory Bisset, James Kirby and Rachel Gibbs. The former has been replaced by Halina Czajka, to whom we extend a warm welcome. We are still seeking members for Shinfield North, Shinfield Village and Grazeley wards and anyone who is keen to be involved in the exciting times ahead, is urged to contact Jacqui Barnes, Clerk to the Council, on 0118 988 8220.

Finally a vote of thanks to all of the staff, council and committee members of Shinfield Parish Council, for their outstanding contribution in terms of both time and effort throughout the past year.

Mike Gough,

Chair
Shinfield Parish Council.



Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 24 April 2014, 7:30 pm
St Michael's Church, Spencers Wood

Guest Speaker: Sir David Bell
Vice Chancellor, University of Reading

Recreation and Amenities Committee

The year started with the planting of four oak trees in different parts of the parish to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.



Grazeley diamond jubilee oak tree

It has been a busy year at Spencers Wood Pavilion, with the Chapel Lane playgroup signing a long-term lease for their new area, the Volunteer car scheme moving its operations to work from the meeting room three mornings a week and the 'understanding computers' class utilising the room one morning a week.

Following on from the refurbishment of the very popular skate park, the council also refurbished the children's playground at Spencers Wood recreation ground.



Spencers Wood recreation ground

In Shinfield, the parish council has recently taken lease of some land at Deardon Way from the borough council. This land is currently being cleared of brambles and will shortly be put to community use.

Once again the parish council has run two very successful competitions, the best kept front garden competition and the best kept allotment competition.

The parish allotments continue to thrive and I extend a thank you to Angela King for her contribution to managing the sites.

Ian Clarke

Chair, Recreation
and Amenities Committee

Communications and Policies Committee

The Communications and Policies Committee promotes the work of the Council and ensures that it communicates with residents and businesses in the parish in an efficient and timely manner. It does this through the quarterly newsletters, notice boards, articles in Loddon Reach, our website www.shinfieldparish.gov.uk, Facebook and Twitter.

We are continually looking at new ways to keep in touch with the residents in our parish.

The council has recently reviewed the parish website, updated it and given it a fresher appearance.

The committee has produced quarterly newsletters that have been distributed to all households within the parish, providing residents with updates on the parish including the ongoing South of M4 Strategic Development Location, the Neighbourhood plan and the changes to local youth facilities.



Parish newsletters and publications

The committee organised the Annual Parish Meeting, which, in 2013 was hosted by Shinfield Players Theatre, with a presentation from their Youth Theatre Group following their recent award winning youth production, the launch of the Neighbourhood Development plan consultation document and a presentation from Cherish Risi-Elford, on the Shinfield Community Flat. The event was well attended and the council received positive feedback on both the venue and the content.

This year the meeting will be at St Michael's Church, Spencers Wood, continuing the plan to hold the meeting at various locations around the parish. The guest speaker will be Sir David Bell, Vice Chancellor of the University of Reading.

Suzanne Madigan

Chair, Communications
and Policies Committee

Finance and Staffing Committee

The Parish Council receives income from a number of sources but the main one is our precept, which you pay as part of your Council Tax. We have been able to keep our precept unchanged for the last couple of years and it has in fact gone down since 2010/11.

In 2014/15 we have decided to increase our precept and the charge this year will be £57.60, up from £46.80 per annum for a Band D property. This is about a twenty pence per week increase.

There are a number of reasons for the increase, including the recruitment of staff to continue the local youth provision, recently cut by Wokingham Borough Council. The Parish Council is actively participating in discussions, on behalf of the parish, with the development consortium and Wokingham Borough Council on the future design of the new village centre. We are actively looking at the possibility of acquiring the site next to the Parish Hall, currently owned by the British Legion, with the idea that the new centre can be

built next to the parish's existing building to act as a focal point for the community, in line with the wishes you have expressed in the public consultation exercises.

In the past few years, we have balanced our budget by taking money from our reserves rather than by increasing our precept. In 2013/4 we paid for the new playground in Spencers Wood from our assets and also budgeted to use another £37,000 to balance our books (although in practice we will need to use less than this amount). We cannot continue to do this indefinitely and have decided this year to set a balanced budget.

As we mentioned last year, the Government has made changes to the way in which Council Tax Benefit is collected and, unfortunately, it has taken the opportunity to pass on some of that cost to local government. We absorbed this increase last year but cannot do so indefinitely.

Peter Ratcliffe
Chair, Finance and Staffing Committee

Budget report

Your parish council tax charge 2014 - 15

Summary	2013-14	2014-15
Precept	£ 205,143	£ 264,470
Annual charge Band D property	£ 46.80	£ 57.60
Change on previous year's charge	0%	23%

What we spend our money on

	Annual Expenditure	2013-14	2014-15
Finance Committee	Administration, salaries, grants, building renewals, youth services, and forward planning.	£ 134,450	£ 155,480
Recreation Committee	Facilities management, sports grounds, waste services, allotments, countryside, playgrounds, grounds maintenance, bus shelters.	£ 82,650	£ 77,500
Planning Committee	Street lighting, street signs, village signs, Neighbourhood Planning.	£ 54,000	£ 38,000
Communications and Policy Committee	Newsletters, website, information leaflets and walk leaflets.	£ 7,500	£ 6,150
New projects	2013 - CCTV, new playground 2014 - new community building	£ 16,000	£ 35,000
Total expenditure		£ 294,600	£ 312,130

Where our money comes from

	Annual budget - income	2013-14	2014-15
Precept	<i>Funds raised through council tax charge</i>	£ 205,143	£ 264,470
Grant from Wokingham Borough Council	<i>Council tax grant</i>	£ 13,954	£ 8,520
General income	<i>Amenities and investments</i>	£ 38,000	£ 39,140
Met from balances	Subsidy from savings and reserves	£ 37,503	£0
Total income		£ 294,600	£ 312,130

Grant payments

The Parish Council seeks to maintain a balanced provision of grants with the principles of best value being applied in considering all applications.

Grants to organisations or charities serving the community as a whole take priority.

The purpose of the grant should be in the interests of, and bring direct benefit to, the parish or its inhabitants.

The grant may be a contribution to the funds of a charitable body for the furtherance of its work in the local community.

A total of £16,670 was paid in grants during the 2013/14 financial year.

The following organisations were the recipients of grants:

Berkshire County Blind Society, Homestart, Keep Mobile, Local schools, Mobile Information Centre (MICE), MS Therapy Centre, Readibus, Reading Citizens Advice Bureau, Relate, Shinfield Association, Shinfield Baptist Church (community event), Shinfield OAP Club, Shinfield Rangers, Shinfield Rise Community Flat, Shinfield Scouts, Shinfield Volunteer Car Scheme, Spencers Wood Carnival, Spencers Wood Guides, Sue Ryder Hospice Care, Swallowfield Community Responders, Thames Valley Cruse Bereavement Care and Wokingham Citizens Advice Bureau.

Planning and Highways Committee

The parish planning and highways committee has met every four weeks throughout the past year and is a statutory consultee for Wokingham Borough Council, our local planning authority, for every planning application submitted in the parish.

In the past twelve months, the committee has reviewed, on average, around ten to twelve new planning applications each meeting. These range from small home extensions through to very large developments such as the South of Croft Road/Three Mile Cross plans submitted by Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes for some 900 houses.

Our process for considering planning applications generally involves a member of the planning committee being allocated a site for which they are responsible for viewing the plans, making a site visit if necessary and then briefing the committee on their findings.

All plans are fully discussed at committee, where we have both paper and electronic copies of the plans available for viewing. We are also able to view the proposed sites using both a bespoke mapping aid and Google Earth.

In the last year the committee has had numerous meetings with developers to receive detailed presentations on major projects. The committee has also been involved with the borough council in developing plans for the new Village Centre at Shinfield and other similar projects.

The committee has contributed comments in a number of planning appeals and members have attended appeal meetings. Additionally, members of the committee have attended the borough's planning committee meetings to speak on behalf of local residents.

All our meetings are open to the public and there is a brief period at the start of any meeting where any resident or developer can make a short presentation to, or ask a question of the committee either in support of or to object to any matter we are dealing with.

Peter Hughes
Chair, Planning and
Highways Committee

Wokingham+ traffic forum

The Wokingham+ traffic forum represents a group of local town and parish councils who are concerned with the lack of traffic planning in and around Wokingham Borough following the development of some 13,200 new homes, half of which will be located in Shinfield and Arborfield.

Instigated by Shinfield Parish Council, this group now embraces some ten local councils in Wokingham and one in Hampshire, all of whom believe we are heading for much greater congestion from now on until 2026.

There are currently no plans to make any major road improvements other than some bypass routes within

the strategic development locations, which may improve some local issues but do not deal with congestion on any of the main routes into Reading and those leading into Hampshire.

There is no doubt that trips from home in private vehicles will increase in coming years and we want to work with the borough to help minimise possible congestion.

Peter Hughes
Chair, Planning and Highways Committee

Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan aims to make Shinfield an even better place to live, even with the addition of a further 3,000 homes south of the M4, effectively doubling the size of this area.

In May 2012 a steering group of parish councillors and residents was formed to develop the plan, building on the Shinfield Parish Community Plan and the Village Character Statements. Whilst these publications were accepted by both parish and borough councils, they have no legal status as planning documents, whereas the neighbourhood plan, once passed by referendum, has legal status and becomes part of local planning considerations.

Focus groups were set up involving a wide range of local people with varying interests, officers and experts from the borough council, our borough councillors and representatives from the University consortium. They have met frequently throughout the year, consulted with numerous outside bodies and produced issues logs from which the key points were drawn for our first main public consultation, the '19 questions survey' which was delivered to every home in the parish. Over 700 survey responses were received and the results can be viewed at www.shinfieldplan.org

For Sports and Recreation, specialist consultants were employed to approach our local sports clubs and a report was produced, setting out the current and future needs for local sports, which has been accepted by all parties.

Plans for the new village centre have continued to be developed throughout the year, by the team of parish and borough council representatives, along with the development consortium, with the aid of specialist urban planners. As the new centre will include a supermarket, a survey was carried out to get a view of what local people would prefer. There were almost 850 responses, and the top three choices were: Waitrose (51% of votes), Sainsbury's (11% of votes) and Tesco (11% of votes). The results of the survey have been passed to the development consortium.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan, incorporating proposed policies, will hopefully be published later in the summer of 2014 and will be distributed to every home for comment and for suggestions of improvements, before it is submitted for formal approval, inspection by an independent examiner and eventually put to a referendum for acceptance by the parish.

Our Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives

Our Vision:

'People working together, respecting our local history, building a vibrant community now and for the future'

Our objectives:

'To endeavour to ensure the new developments enhance the character of existing settlements'

'To develop a vibrant and prosperous neighbourhood by encouraging development that supports a good range of housing, schools, shops and services that meet the needs of local people and protects the quality of the local environment'

'To provide new and diverse leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy and crime free lifestyles for everyone'

Parish Councillor contact details

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Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross



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* Indicates a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group