Pyecombe Parish Council – Annual Report 2015/2016

Thursday 12th May, 2016

Parish Council elections for Pyecombe a year ago resulted in just three names being submitted, but the shortfall was quickly re-instated with the co-options of two further members. In September last year the Parish Council organised a hog-roast barbeque, here at Wayfield Park Farm Shop, to mark the year of 70th Anniversary of VE Day, inviting all village residents. My grateful thanks to my fellow Councillors, and indeed, to all those that helped to make the event successful, and one that was enjoyed by all.

During another reasonably mild winter when our grit supplies became surplus to requirement, excessive rain downpours resulted in yet more flooding in the village and a site meeting took place in November with the Highways Officer. Despite re-assurances from Richard Speller, West Sussex Highway Area Manager, that he hoped that he could obtain additional funding to address the problem of continuing flooding at the bottom of Pyecombe Street, this proved to be a fruitless exercise, however, the very recent re-introduction of 'Operation Watershed' has given the Parish Council an opportunity to address the matter once again, and we are currently gathering quotations for the necessary works in order to submit our grant request. Hopefully we may be successful and in the year ahead be able to eradicate the problem altogether.

Planning Applications have been the subject that many residents have been in attendance at our meetings in the past year and Mid Sussex District Council are the relevant local authority that is delegated by the South Downs National Park to deal with any planning application in our parish, although the National Park retains the option of calling in any application should they feel necessary. In the past year there were eleven planning applications, nine of which were duly approved, one was refused, and one is still currently being amended. One appeal for refusal was also turned down.

In June last year the Parish Council was shown the proposed planning application for seven detached houses by the owner of land off Church Lane, Britecroft Ltd., together with his architect and consultant (Peter Rainier), which they indicated was going to be submitted by September. Once this was duly submitted, a separate meeting was called to allow members of the public to express their views, when it was made clear that the immediate neighbours to the land were not happy with this amount of housing. Despite objecting, after subsequent meetings between the developer and the District Council, a

revised application was received in December for eight dwellings, which included two shared ownership houses. This was then duly given approval early this year. And so, after nearly four decades of uncertainty for development on this piece of land, which has been part of the current District Plan, we are finally going to see this development take place, and I would now encourage us all to embrace this additional housing to our village.
One of the issues that did concern the council regarding this development was the dangerous junction at the bottom of Church Lane, which although it did not form part of the application, the Parish Council still feel that the expected additional vehicles will make the junction even more hazardous. This will now be monitored closely and need to be addressed in the future, as we are also currently still trying to tackle the on-going problem of large vehicles stopping directly opposite this junction, making it ever more dangerous.

Whilst the District Plan by Mid Sussex District Council was finalised earlier this year and is currently awaiting the outcome of the inspector, the South Downs National Park Plan has been delayed and not expected to be implemented until 2018. The Parish Council has continued to be supported throughout the past year by all three of our District Councillors, and I take this opportunity to thank Colin Trumble, John Wilkinson, and Anthony Watt-Williams for their contribution.
Although the overhaul to the Children's Play Area in The Wyshe was carried out by Mid Sussex District Council in the summer last year, the Parish Councillors have since had several meetings with Mid Sussex District Council with a view to draw up a twenty year plan to re-design and include new equipment, and currently we are asking all residents for their views with a questionnaire consultation. Once we have analysed the feedback, the Parish Council will decide on the next steps.

Peter Griffiths is our local County Councillor and I take this opportunity to thank Peter for his continuing support towards the Parish Council. Working together with the County Council has produced many rewarding projects for the village in the past, and one such project has just recently been rewarded with a grant to greatly improve the embankment area at the top of Church Lane, when it is hoped that we can encourage the community to become involved.

Neighbourhood Watch is fully supported and encouraged by the Parish Council, and I take this opportunity to thank our current Village Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator over the past year, David Hunt, for his

valuable contribution. It does, of course, remain the responsibility of us all to be vigilant and alert against any sort of unwelcome criminal activity in our village, no matter how small.

In January this year I was saddened to learn of the sudden death of Rita Hemsley, who lived in Ditchling. Rita had been typing and printing the village newsletter, which is sponsored by the Parish Council, ever since its launch in 1980. Dawn, our clerk, has kindly stepped in to continue this role and I take this opportunity to thank the editor, Vicky Clapperton, for her contribution during the past year, as I am sure she should continue to be encouraged by us all, with this excellent service.

Several meetings have taken place to discuss forming a new website for not just the Parish Council but for all village activities, and it is hoped that this will soon be finalised, and once agreed by the Parish Council, will replace the existing website. Like all new ventures, however, we would very much welcome feedback from residents to ensure the new website is informative to us all.

Both the newsletter and the website meet with the demands of an open form of local government, making information openly available and transparent, and together with fifteen minutes set aside at the start of each Parish Council meeting for any member of the public to address councillors on issues of a village nature.

Dawn Langston has been our Parish Clerk throughout the year, and her diligence and attitude in this role has shone through, and I would like take this opportunity, on behalf of all the council, to thank Dawn, for her conscientious work and total dedication shown towards us all over the past year.

My thanks also, to my fellow councillors for their contribution and assistance in the past year, as we welcome all new residents to Pyecombe, and if they or any other residents wish to raise any issue of village nature, please feel free to contact myself or any other councillor to discuss further. Your Parish Council meets on a regular basis, every other month, where the meetings are held alternately both here, and in Pyecombe Church, as a public meeting that remains open to you all.

David Wilson

Chairman, Pyecombe Parish Council