

## **Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council**

### **Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2008/2009**

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at the Jubilee Hall (rear hall), Elmer Road, Middleton-on-Sea. It gives me great pleasure and privilege to present my Report on the Parish Council.

I am very proud of the success that the Parish Council has achieved during this year. Improvements have been made across the board to assist parishioners of all ages which include:

- The Middleton Green footpath being resurfaced.
- The Merry End bus shelter being refurbished.
- £8,000 being contributed towards major improvements at Larkfield Skate Park.
- A new hard standing being installed for the netball practice area on Shrubbs Field.
- Substantial funding being provided to the Trustees of Middleton-on-Sea Playing Field, which, coupled with a £10,000 Awards for All grant, has enabled a large piece of play equipment to be installed for the benefit the youngsters of the parish.

Some £21,000 was spent on these infrastructure projects and notwithstanding this, the Parish Council has agreed to maintain the precept for 2009/2010 at 2008/2009 levels.

I am very grateful to all the Councillors and the Clerk for their support and hard work to make these achievements possible and I thank them for their understanding of the impartial, but none the less both encouraging and facilitating, role which I have maintained during my Chairmanship. It continues to please me that the Council remains non-political. Looking back over the year in closer detail, it is clear to me that the Parish Council offers excellent value for money when you consider all the tasks, as shown below, it has undertaken.

#### **Development Control Committee**

A total of 48 planning applications were considered by the committee during the year. This represents a 44% fall when compared with the previous year. The probable causes are the marked slowdown in the property market coupled with the introduction of revised regulations for Permitted Developments.

Nevertheless, the committee remained busy owing to the complexity of the issues before them. The Clerk represented the committee at the Oral Hearing of two pharmacy applications on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008, together with District Councillor Barbara Oakley, to press the case for a new pharmacy in the parish. Whilst they were successful, the opening of a new pharmacy has been delayed, yet again. The new delay has been caused by the successful applicant seeking to change the location of the proposed premises from Elmer to Middleton which has now been challenged by other pharmacies. This will cause yet more unwelcome delays when all parishioners want is an operational pharmacy, now.

The committee made strong objections to the application for a Tesco Express situated in Felpham Way and Paul Gamester spoke in objection to this, and another application, at a recent meeting of Arun District Council's Development Control Committee. No decision has been taken, to date, as a further traffic/highway report has been commissioned.

Thanks go to Richard Jeffrey for attending the Development Control and Compliance Seminar and to Colin Mansfield for representing the council at Arun District Council's Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Showpeople confidential briefing. Finally, thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Paul Gamester, and other members of the committee for their hard work throughout the year.

### **Finance Committee**

The Parish Council, through careful budgeting and management of its finances, has been able to recommend an unchanged precept of £37,000 for 2009/2010. This reinforces the council's policy to maintain the precept as low as possible. I am most grateful to the Clerk, for formulating the budgets and managing the accounts, and to the Committee Chairman, Matthew Copeland, and other members of the committee for managing the budget and finances so effectively.

### **General Purposes Committee**

This committee has a very broad brief and was involved in both the Middleton Green footpath resurfacing and the Merry End bus shelter refurbishment projects.

Nicky Mills, in her role as Emergency Plan Co-ordinator, is working to update the current plan which has been in existence for several years. Using the medium of Middleton News she is seeking new volunteers to bolster the emergency action team.

Mary Ross continues in the role of monitoring the parish's public footpaths and has liaised with WSCC Public Rights of Way team to ensure they are kept in good condition. She also made a positive contribution when the first round of consultations were received regarding the Dog Control Orders. My thanks go to her for her very valuable and ongoing contribution which ensures the footpaths are kept in good order.

Anna Hall has represented the Parish Council at the Environment Agency's "River Arun to Pagham Flood and Erosion Strategy" workshop together with an Arun District Council seminar on Coastal Defence. My thanks go to her for taking on the responsibility of coastal defence issues.

Thanks also go to Ros Willis for acting as Middleton Green/Pond Warden during the year although I understand why she has now decided to step down from that role. The annual Middleton Green clear-up was held on 3 January 2009 and was very well supported with over 25 parishioners assisting in the clear-up. Thanks also go to John Knight (WSCC Ranger), Ian Gibbs and the volunteers for their excellent work.

Paul Gamester has now taken over the duties as tree warden and is proactively looking at schemes for planting additional trees in the Cootes Lane and Sunnymead Close areas.

Following on from their planting of bulbs and plants close to the obelisk last year, the local Guides and Brownies have undertaken further planting of daffodil bulbs at the top of Layne End Road in October. Thanks go to them and Jenny Brown for brightening up another area of the parish.

Matthew Copeland and Richard Jeffrey continue to be the Parish Council's representatives at JWAAC and the 39 Club respectively with Richard also standing in as JWAAC substitute representative, when required. Many thanks to both of you for all your efforts.

Middleton News has now been published for almost 7 years and continues to be very well received by parishioners. A change of printer in Summer 2008 has reinvigorated the look of the magazine and it continues to be in much demand outside the parish boundaries. Whilst spare copies are distributed through some village shops for people who live outside the area to collect, demand always outstrips supply. It was therefore decided to place Middleton News on the Parish Council website so that it can be read, and downloaded, worldwide. The production and delivery of Middleton News to all houses in the parish is time consuming and it is always a challenge to find sufficient interesting articles to fill its 16 pages. Special thanks go to the Clerk, Jan Windsor and PCSO Clive Morge for their regular contributions to Middleton News and to Pauline Allsopp for continuing to tape, and distribute Talking Middleton News. Remarkably, March 2009 saw the 25<sup>th</sup> taped version of Middleton News being distributed to those who are elderly or have poor vision. I would like to say a special thank you to Andrew Houlden (Middleton News Co-ordinator), the Clerk (Editor) and all the article writers, distributors and advertisers who each contribute to Middleton News' continued success.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2008, the Parish held its first Midsummer Walk and given its great success, another Midsummer Walk is being organised for Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2009. I would like to thank Shirley Haywood for organising both events.

Finally, I would like to thank the Committee Chairman, Nicky Mills, and all its committee members, including co-optee Dr Colin Greaves (St Nicholas' Church) for their involvement.

### **Parish Council Playing Fields**

Shrubbs Playing Field remains the focal point for many parish council activities together with regular youth football organised by Felpham Colts.

The Trustees of Middleton-on-Sea Playing Fields, all of whom are parish councillors and members of this committee, are responsible for Shrubbs Field, and have been proactive in improving the facilities for its users. During the year a hard standing was installed beneath the netball practice net, following a request from some users. Whilst no budget was available, Richard Jeffrey found funding was available, and with the help of the users a grant was obtained through the Youth Opportunities Fund enabling the project to proceed.

The winning of a £10,000 Awards for All grant, coupled with substantial Parish Council funding, enabled a new playground combination unit to be installed in December 2008. This facility is now very well used, and appreciated, by local children. A £700 Community Initiative Grant was also obtained which enabled the purchase of 25 new chairs for the sports pavilion.

A significant amount of time was spent during the year considering the best options for the Merry End Bus Shelter. Initially replacement was considered but escalating costs coupled with a reduction in grants available forced this to be shelved. Instead, a refurbishment was commissioned, partially supported with a £673 Village Enhancement Grant.

Very special thanks must also go to the unsung heroes of Shrubbs Field - Celia & Tony Horne - for all the hard, and sometimes unpleasant, work which they undertake quietly in the background to maintain the playground, pavilion and field in excellent order so that they can all be enjoyed by everyone.

Finally, thanks to Committee Chairman, Richard Jeffrey, and the committee who really made a difference to the infrastructure this year.

### **Police**

Thanks go to PCSO Clive Morge who regularly attends Parish Council meetings to provide up-to-date reports of criminal activity in the parish. Clive is now a well known face in the village. This continuity has made a very positive contribution in the reduction of crime, anti social behaviour and parking problems. Thanks also go to both Norman Morrison, and Teri Claxton, of Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Watch, for their attendance at, and reports to, the Parish Council.

### **Roads & Transport**

It is very pleasing to report that work to install a new pedestrian crossing in Elmer Road, adjacent to One Stop and Shrubbs Car Park will commence in May. This zebra crossing has been wanted for many years. It has only become a reality because of the persistence of the Parish Council and local residents coupled with the valuable assistance of County Councillor Christina Freeman who managed to secure the required £25,000 of WSCC funding. I am sure all local residents will appreciate this improvement to local road safety.

Whilst road improvements at Comet Corner remain a priority, a realistic stance has to be taken in the present economic circumstances. It is pleasing to note that the WSCC Highway Works Forward Plan shows an initial spend of £75,000 during 2009/2010 with the major spend of £325,000 in 2010/2011, subject to developer funding. Given the state of the property market, work is not likely to start on Site 6 (Felpham) for some time so delays will undoubtedly occur before this work commences. The concern is, however, that traffic volumes continue to grow, exacerbated in part by the increased HGV traffic

from the Materials Recycling Facility, so the opportunities to pull out at Comet Corner road junction will be reduced and the risk of accidents could increase.

Particular thanks go to Richard Jeffrey and Nicky Mills for regularly attending Felpham Parish Council's Site 6 committee meetings and for keeping this council apprised regularly about ongoing developments.

Finally, I welcome the news that WSCC Highways will be improving the footpath on the north side of Middleton Road, between Merry End and The Byway, during 2010/2011 at an estimated cost of £60,000 – again something which has been long outstanding.

### **Support in the Community**

Community Support Grants applications were received from nine organisations and after careful consideration the £500 community support budget was disbursed between six organisations. The council has now reviewed its future community support strategy and after 2009/2010 grant funding will be withdrawn, enabling parishioners to decide how and where to spend their money.

### **Young People**

The Parish Council continues to support local youth. Recent examples include the £8,000 contribution to the Larksfield Skate Park together with the kickwall/net ball practice area. All these facilities are popular and well used.

### **Councillors**

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Matthew Copeland, and all Parish Councillors for their continuing support. I also wish to mention Ted Chandler, who now finds it very difficult to attend meetings, and I wish to record my best wishes to him.

### **The Clerk, Members of the Public and District and County Councillors**

We are very fortunate to have a Clerk with time and energy handling our day-to-day affairs in such a professional manner. This year has been particularly busy for him, both in terms of the time taken to arrange a number of successful grant applications, and also to oversee all the infrastructure projects. My sincere thanks go to him and also members of the Public who attend our meetings, as well as our District and County Councillors, Barbara Oakley and Christina Freeman for their regular and ongoing support

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Paul M Wotherspoon, Chairman, Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council 2008/2009