

Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2007/2008

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 21st May 2008 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.

This is the first year of four in the new electoral term and I am particularly pleased to welcome four new councillors - Paul Gamester, Anna Hall, Shirley Haywood and Matthew Redman to the Parish Council. I am very grateful to all the Councillors and the Clerk for their support and understanding of the impartial, but none the less both encouraging and facilitating, role which I have maintained during my Chairmanship and it continues to please me that the Council remains non-political. Looking back over the year, I see that the Parish Council has once again been very active in many areas and can be proud of its achievements:-

Development Control Committee

The Development Control Committee's activity has slightly increased during the year with 85 planning applications being reviewed together with some licensing applications. Administration of the committee also changed in December 2007, with the Clerk only attending one meeting per month and committee members managing the other meeting themselves. This has proved to be very successful.

Following the relocation of the village pharmacy to Flansham Park Health Centre, against the wishes of most parishioners and the Parish Council, two applications have been submitted to the local NHS Primary Care Trust by other pharmacies seeking to establish outlets in Middleton and Elmer. The committee have been supportive of both applications, however, the NHS Primary Care Trust have refused the applications and both have now gone to appeal. The committee also examined two planning applications outside the parish boundaries in view of their potential impact on parishioners. Objections were lodged for both applications – a crematorium in Bilsham and a 59 dwelling development on Yapton Industrial Estate. The former application was subsequently withdrawn and the latter has gone to appeal. Thanks go to Richard Jeffrey for taking a day out to attend a CPRE Seminar titled "How the Planning System Works". Finally thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Tony Edey, and the other members of the committee for their hard work during the year.

Finance Committee

The Parish Council, through careful budgeting and management of its finances, has been able to recommend a budget of £37,000 for 2008/9. Whilst this is a £3,000 increase on the previous year, it will permit the council to earmark £4,500 per annum into a playground equipment sinking fund. Savings of some £1,300 have been made by withdrawing from the Sussex Associations of Local Councils and sourcing local council information elsewhere. 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. Successes during the year include the recent refurbishment of the footpath across Middleton Green and the Parish Council's agreement to provide an additional £10,000 to enhance the equipment at Larksfield skate park. These funds, when added to the £16,000 being provided by Felpham Parish Council, will enable Arun District Council to provide more equipment at this ever popular youth venue.

Mary Ross has continued her 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. My thanks go to her for her very valuable and ongoing contribution which ensures the footpaths are kept in good order.

The sea defences, particularly along the Greensward, remain a real and ongoing issue. This particularly following the winter storms when a large section of breastwork was washed away. Regular contact is maintained with the Middleton-on-Sea Association, District Councillor Barbara Oakley and Arun District Council in an attempt to at least stabilise the situation until Defra can supply the much needed funding so that a lasting repair can be undertaken.

Thanks go to Ros Willis in her dual role as Middleton Green/Pond Warden and Parish Tree Warden. The annual Middleton Green clear-up was held on 8th December in torrential rain and high winds. Despite this some 20 volunteers helped with the clear up. Special thanks go to Mary Ross, John Knight (WSCC Ranger) and the volunteers for their excellent work.

I also appreciate Jenny Brown's help in arranging for the local Guides and Brownies to plant some bulbs and shrubs close to the obelisk recently which brightens up this particular corner of the village.

Richard Jeffrey continues to be the Parish Council's 39 Club representative and regularly promotes the various youth facilities through the medium of Middleton News. Many thanks for all your efforts.

Middleton News, after nearly 6 years of publication, continues to be very well received by parishioners and it remains in much demand outside the parish boundaries. Spare copies are therefore placed in some village shops for people who live outside the area to collect. The production and delivery of Middleton News to all houses in the parish is time consuming and there is an ongoing challenge to find sufficient interesting articles to fill its 16 pages. Talking Middleton News, the taped version of Middleton News, celebrated its 21st edition in March 2008. It is sometimes forgotten because it works quietly in the background but it provides a valuable service to those who are elderly or have poor vision. It is also pleasing to note that Middleton News is now 'in the black'

after a period of deficits. I would like to say a special thank you to Andrew Houlden (Middleton News Co-ordinator), the Clerk (Editor), Pauline Allsopp (Distributor and Talking Middleton News reader/distributor) and all the article writers, distributors and advertisers who each contribute to Middleton News' continued success.

Finally, I would like to thank the Committee Chairman, Nicky Mills, and all its committee members, including co-optees Dr Colin Greaves (St Nicholas' Church) and Jenny Brown (Comet Corner Action Group), 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. Whilst most people treat the area with respect, it is sad to have to report that vandalism continues to occur to the Jubilee Hall, benches and playground equipment, despite the best efforts of the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). In an effort to deter such problems, signs detailing the Trustees Rules are now attached to most field entrances. This will also assist the PCSO when dealing with problems on the field.

The committee recognised the need for formal terms of use for organisations who use Shrubbs Field following concerns expressed by an individual last year. New terms of use have now been agreed and these have been circulated to regular users.

Following a successful SITA grant application, a new kickwall is being installed on Shrubbs Field. This follows consultations with local young people and it is hoped that its installation will prevent the sports pavilion and Jubilee Hall from been used as targets for kicking footballs.

I would like to express my appreciation to Paul Gamester and David Eastlake for undertaking a tree audit of Shrubbs Field and for planting a number of small leafed limes on the western side of the field together with some other trees at various locations around the field's edge.

Very special thanks must also go to 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, the Parish Council has agreed to replace the bus shelter in Middleton Road, adjacent to Merry End, subject to obtaining sufficient grant funding. Assuming this proceeds, it will provide a much improved shelter for bus users at the western end of the parish.

Police

Particular thanks go to PCSO Clive Morge who regularly attends Parish Council meetings to provide up-to-date reports of criminal activity in the parish. He has also been instrumental in reducing the parking problems previously experienced at the village

shops and his regular presence in the village enables parishioners to raise their concerns with him. Whilst there is still anti-social behaviour and low level crime, within the parish, I do feel more confident knowing that Clive Morge is working on this patch. 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

A primary objective of the Parish Council, to which it is absolutely committed, is to achieve major junction improvements at Comet Corner, whether by traffic signals or a roundabout. It had always been hoped that this would be achieved before 2011 when a major increase in traffic levels is expected with the completion of the Site 6 Development and Relief Road. Clearly that is not going to happen, given the lack of funding, although improvements on the south side of the junction are most likely to proceed before 2011. This will only be a partial solution and the Parish Council therefore remains fully committed to major junction improvements, when funding permits. It will remain vigilant and will be monitoring the impact of the Site 6 Development very closely. Particular thanks go to Richard Jeffrey and Nicky Mills for regularly attending Felpham Parish Council's Site 6 committee meetings and for providing reports to this council.

Throughout the year the council has been pressing for pedestrian crossings both in Elmer Road (adjacent to One Stop) and at Flansham Park. Despite various assurances last year, neither crossing has been installed, however, the council was successful in arranging a site meeting in Elmer Road with WSCC Highways Officers and County Councillor Christina Freeman. Councillors Tony Edey and Mary Ross and the Clerk represented the council at the meeting and some progress was made in that it was agreed that a zebra crossing was feasible at an estimated cost of £25,000/£30,000. It was also agreed that a crossing can be installed within 12 months, once funding has been agreed. This is the key issue which can only be unlocked by West Sussex County Council. County Councillor Christina Freeman has committed herself to trying to find the funding and I sincerely hope she can achieve this in the very near future.

Support in the Community

Community Support Grants totalling £500 have been made to 7 organisations (4Sight £50, Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Watch £100, Bognor Regis Stroke Support Group £40, Citizens Advice Bureau £100, Samaritans £100, Sammy Community Transport £100 and Sussex Playing Fields Association £10). A grant of £1,000 was also made to Bishop Tufnell Infants School, in July 2007, to assist the school in enhancing its outdoor facilities.

Young People

The Parish Council continues to be proactive in promoting youth issues. Examples include the allocation of a further £10,000 for Larksfield Skate Park and obtaining funding for the kickwall.

Councillors

Finally, I would like to thank Matthew Copeland (Vice Chairman), Ted Chandler for his wise counsel, Colin Mansfield and all Parish Councillors for their continuing support.

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. My thanks 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.

Paul M Wotherspoon, Chairman, Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council 2007/2008