

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

### **Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2009/2010**

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010 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 two major capital projects:

- Installation of a Zebra Crossing in Elmer Road. This follows years of lobbying by the parish council. The installation, at a cost of some £25,000, was very timely with the arrival of the new pharmacy on the opposite side of the road from the Avisford Medical Centre.
- Installation of a comprehensive CCTV system to protect the buildings and playground on Shrubbs Field together with the adjacent car park. The £6,900 project cost was financed by £3000 of grants, a similar contribution from the parish council, together with contributions from three local charities.

I would also like to welcome three new co-opted councillors (Terry Claxton, Joan Phillips and Calvin Watson) to the parish council.

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 work undertaken and that the precept has remained the same as the previous year.

#### **Development Control Committee**

A total of 45 planning applications were considered by the committee during the year, just slightly less than the 48 considered in the previous year. This probably reflects the increased number of applications which can now be dealt with by the revised regulations for Permitted Developments.

Nevertheless, the committee remained busy owing to the complexity and impact of some of the schemes. On the positive side, the Lloyds Pharmacy application was approved and the pharmacy is now open. The committee also objected successfully to an application to open an Indian Takeaway on Bankside. Conversely, despite strong objections, the application for a Tesco Express in Felpham Way was approved after a further transport report was commissioned by Arun District Council. Paul Gamester spoke in objection to the application at Arun District Council's Development Control Committee on the first occasion and Colin Mansfield represented the committee at the second hearing in July 2009.

Other issues dealt with included making representations to WSCC about excessive noise allegedly coming from some evening events at Guernsey Farm. Subsequently, this matter was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The committee was also represented at a meeting, held at Middleton Sports Club (MSC), organised by Arun District Council's Environmental Health Department following complaints from some parishioners about loud noise coming from a marquee which is used at MSC for certain events. The meeting was also attended by District Councillors Paul English (Felpham East) and Mrs Oakley (Middleton-on-Sea).

Finally, thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Paul Gamester, new committee member Terry Claxton, and all the 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 2010/2011. This will be the third year that the precept has been unchanged and 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 has worked diligently throughout the past year to meet their responsibilities.

Nicky Mills, in her role as Emergency Plan Co-ordinator, has completely updated the Emergency Plan ten years after it was originally prepared. The plan has now been lodged with Arun District Council's Emergency Co-ordinator who will decide when it is appropriate to bring the plan into action. Thanks go to all those who have volunteered to assist if an emergency is called.

Following Mary Ross' resignation in May 2009, Shirley Haywood took over 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 organised the second Midsummer Walk on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2009 and is currently preparing the third Midsummer Walk which will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010. My thanks go to Shirley for her hard work and also to Paul Gamester for providing refreshments during the 2009 Midsummer Walk.

Middleton Green and Pond has been the centre of debate this year both in terms of (a) whether to top-up the pond when it runs dry and (b) when is the best time to undertake the annual clear-up. The council has now resolved that the pond will not be filled when it runs dry, which is in line with Portsmouth Water's ruling. For a second year the annual clear-up was held in early January and was very well supported with over 30 people assisting in the clear-up. Thanks also go to John Knight (WSCC Ranger), Ian Gibbs and

the volunteers for their excellent work. Given the positive feedback it will be held again in January 2011 when schools and Girl Guides/Scouts will also be invited to assist.

My thanks go to Colin Mansfield for acting as Middleton Green/Pond Warden during the year and for ensuring the area is kept in excellent condition.

Paul Gamester continues to act as tree warden and has been seeking approval from both WSCC and Arun District Council for planting additional trees in the Cootes Lane and Sunnymead Close areas.

Our JWAAC representative, Richard Jeffrey, has continued to represent the council at the main meetings and has now also become a member of its Highways and Transport Sub Committee. Further, Richard and Nicky Mills represent the council on Felpham's Site 6 committee which is essential to ensure that s106 monies coming from the Site 6 development are distributed equitably for road improvements across both parishes. Another of Richard's duties has been the 39 Club representative for some years, a role which he has recently passed to Anna Hall. Many thanks to all of you for all your efforts.

Middleton News has now been published for almost 8 years and continues to be very well received by parishioners. The change of printer in Summer 2008 revitalised the look of the magazine and it continues to be in much demand outside the parish boundaries. Whilst spare copies are distributed through a couple of shops for people who live outside the area to collect, demand always outstrips supply so it is now available in PDF format on the parish council website ([www.middleton-on-sea.co.uk](http://www.middleton-on-sea.co.uk)). Last year it was anticipated that advertising income would fall, however, the opposite has happened and this has enabled the Winter 2009 and Spring 2010 editions to be expanded from 16 to 20 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. 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.

The committee has also maintained a watching brief in respect of the foul water surcharge problems at Elmer.

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 Stuart Hammond (Jubilee Hall Management Committee) 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 further costly repairs were necessary to the playground and a contract has been recently awarded for fitting a self-closing gate to its entrance.

Recently Shrubbs Field was used for an unapproved football match when the pitches were badly waterlogged and this caused substantial damage to the ground. The Clerk has written to the alleged organiser setting out the terms on which further matches can be played.

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 for their involvement.

### **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 and contributes regular articles to Middleton News. Clive has also established a Neighbourhood Management Forum to get the views of local residents and publishes a regular blog to keep parishioners informed.

Against this positive background, it was disappointing to note that the Inspector responsible for Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Policing Team was unwilling to support the CCTV installation project when grants were being sought, despite the positive evidence being put forward by councillors and parishioners alike. Needless to say this only stiffened councillors resolve to ensure the CCTV project was completed promptly.

### **Projects**

The key project success of this year has been the CCTV installation to cover the Shrubbs Field buildings and car park. The search for grants started in June 2009 with petitions organised to support a grant application to the Criminal Justice Board. This was rejected but eventually, after considerable effort, two grants totalling £3,000 (JWAAC £2,000 & ADC £1,000) were given. The parish council agreed to match the grants and £300 was given by each of three organisations (Jubilee Hall Management Committee, Middleton-on-Sea Scouts and the Trustees of Middleton-on-Sea Playing Fields). An agreement was made that the parish council will cover the annual maintenance charges and the Jubilee Hall will cover the running costs. A contract for the installation was quickly awarded and the system became fully operational in mid March. Particular thanks go to Paul Gamester for overseeing the installation and to the Clerk for obtaining the finance and managing the project.

Assistance was also given, together with others, to enable the pupils of Bishop Tufnell CE Junior School to take over the management of the Elmer Road planter. The Parish

Council agreed to fund and assist in the design and installation of a sign showing the school's contribution to the planter. Joan Phillips undertook the design work, liaised with the school and arranged for the sign's installation. Thanks go to her for the time she spent on the project.

### **Roads & Transport**

The period of adverse weather in January caused many problems, one of which was the inability of most people to use the footpaths where hard packed snow had turned into ice. WSCC tried to prioritise its resources, mostly in an effort to keep essential roads open, with village footways generally disregarded. WSCC decided to hold a 'Snow Summit' on 11<sup>th</sup> March which was attended by 90 people representing key organisations, and only two parish councils, to decide what went well and where there was room for improvement. Calvin Watson represented this parish council and spoke three times during the debate. I would like to thank him for attending and pressing the council's views to the meeting.

In last year's report I welcomed the news that WSCC Highways would 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. However, that will not now happen as WSCC has withdrawn the project from both the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 works programmes. Strong representations have been made to the county council and County Councillor Christina Coleman has been asked to intervene at the highest level. It is hoped that sustained pressure will eventually lead to the project's reinstatement.

Thankfully, the proposed Comet Corner improvements remain in the WSCC Highways Programme, however, nothing is likely to be done until funding from the Site 6 development comes through. Given present progress, it will still be some years before improvements become a reality.

Finally, I would like to thank both WSCC and Arun District Councils for installing two new sets of steps and handrails leading from Shrubbs Car Park down to Elmer Road which make it much safer for the elderly and infirmed.

### **Support in the Community**

Community Support Grants applications were received from seven organisations and after careful consideration the £500 community support budget was disbursed between five organisations which each received £100. Following an earlier parish council decision, no further Community Support Grants will be given.

### **The late Edward (Ted) Chandler MBE**

Ted Chandler was elected onto the parish council on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1971 and resigned on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2009. During those 38 years of service to the community he was Chairman of the Parish Council for 25 years and was involved with many charitable organisations. He was also a District Councillor for 25 years and then received the rare honour of being appointed an Alderman. To mark Ted's retirement from the parish council, a reception had been arranged for 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009 with 45 guests invited. Sadly the reception

had to be cancelled at short notice due to Ted's poor health. He died on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2009 aged 88.

Ted was very much "Mr Middleton" and I would like to place on record my thanks to him for all his very hard work for the local community over those 38 years.

**Councillors**

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Matthew Copeland, 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. This has been another busy year for him, both in terms of the time taken to obtain grant finance and overseeing 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 Coleman for their regular and ongoing support

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Paul M Wotherspoon, Chairman, Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council 2009/2010