

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

## **Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2004/2005**

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2004 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.

It has been a year of many achievements and I am very grateful to all Councillors and the Clerk for their support and understanding of the impartial but encouraging/facilitating role I have undertaken for a Council which pleases me to be non-political. Looking back on the year I see that the Parish Council has once again been very active in many areas which are shown below:-

### **Development Control Committee**

The Development Control Committee has been very busy during the year, considering some 80 planning applications and on occasions making representations in person at the District Council's Development Control Committee. Public attendance at the committee meetings has increased markedly during the year, with up to 33 parishioners attending meetings when issues of significant concern such as conversion of the former Manor Farm Hotel to a Call Centre or a planning application for conversion of a building into a large block of flats in Ancton Drive were considered. My thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Colin Mansfield, 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 level budget of £33,000 for 2005/6. I am most grateful to the Finance Committee for managing the budget and finances so effectively.

### **Footpaths**

My thanks go to Mary Ross who has continued to walk and monitor the parish's public footpaths and has liaised with WSCC Public Rights of Way team to ensure they are kept in good condition. The footpath at Grevatts Bridge remains closed, awaiting the construction of a new bridge when WSCC funding permits.

### **General Purposes Committee**

This committee has a very wide brief, originally across 4 advisory sub committees albeit this was recently increased to 5 with the inclusion of a Projects advisory sub committee. Its work includes progressing the acquisition of land for allotments, considering the most effective use of funding for a youth project and a broad range of transport related issues including Comet Corner. I would like to thank the Chairman, Nicky Mills, and all its members, including co-optee Mary Bourne for their commitment throughout the year.

### **Infrastructure**

The Parish Council continues with its efforts to improve and maintain the infrastructure within the parish. Two new notice boards have been erected; at Elmer following requests from the public, and in Middleton Village adjacent to the Sea Lane bus shelter to replace the old notice board formerly located on the north side of the Obelisk. Both notice boards have proved very popular and are well read. The fingerpost sign at the junction of Middleton/Elmer Road has been refurbished and the Sea Lane Bus Shelter was also redecorated with a new soakaway fitted to prevent future flooding.

### **Middleton News**

Middleton News, the quarterly parish newsletter, is a major success story for the parish, winning a coveted Commendation Award in the 2004 Local Council Review/Co-operative Bank Newsletter of the Year Awards. Over 100 local council's entered the competition and the standard of entries was said to be higher than ever before. Middleton News was singled out for really thinking about the whole community as it distributes a taped version (Talking Middleton News) to parishioners who would otherwise have problems reading the printed version. The newsletter continues to make a financial surplus and with effect from June 2005 it will be a full colour production. My thanks go to Angela Waller, for obtaining the advertising and co-ordinating its production, the Clerk for acting as editor, and to Pauline Allsopp for recording and distributing Talking Middleton News. Also to the advertisers, article writers and distributors who all contribute to its success.

### **Parish Action Plan**

My thanks go to Matthew Copeland, Nicky Mills, Ros Willis and the many volunteers for progressing the Parish Action Plan to fruition. It has now been distributed to every dwelling in the Parish and to the appropriate Authorities which have to take account of it. The information contained therein will also assist the Parish Council in deciding its future priorities.

### **Parish Council Playing Fields**

The Shrubbs Playing Fields continues to be the focal point for many parish activities and it is therefore essential not to upset the present balance of facilities and activities available. Being mindful of this, the Parish Council resolved in November 2004 that there should be no further development on Shrubbs Field. Prior to this, the old storage garage, which was regularly vandalised, was demolished and a large storage container was installed on the same site. The Pavilion has also suffered break-ins and vandalism during the year so steel doors and mesh meter cupboard guards have been fitted. It has also been internally redecorated for the benefit of its users. The Field Warden, Celia Horne, continues to do an excellent job in the thankless task of maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of the pavilion and field. My thanks go to her and to Gerry Aldridge for his excellent work in managing all the issues related to Shrubbs Field.

### **Plant-A-Bulb**

The Parish Council purchased more bulbs this year which have been planted around the village by a group of dedicated volunteers. My thanks go to them for their efforts which will help to make the village so beautiful each spring.

### **Police**

Vandalism continues unabated and whilst at times it appears to subside it always seems to reappear. Middleton LAT (Local Action Team) has just celebrated its first anniversary and I would like to thank its members for their hard work and dedication in monitoring anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the village and for acting as a liaison point with both the Police and the Police Community Support Officers. My thanks also go to the Vice Chairman for establishing the LAT and for maintaining a close interest in its activities. Thanks also go to Ros Willis for agreeing to be the Neighbourhood Management Team representative and to Norman Morrison for his attendance at, and reports to, the Parish Council.

### **Public Health and Keep Arun Tidy**

Following a series of representations being made to Arun District Council about the untidiness of the Shrubbs Drive recycling centre, a new compound has been created which improves the overall look and tidiness of the area. The Parish Council objected strongly to WSCC about the proposed Materials Recycling Facility at Ford and joined a group of other local Parish & Town Councils opposed to the scheme. After a concerted effort, the planning application was finally rejected by WSCC Planning Committee in February 2005, although the applicant can still appeal the decision. I would like to thank the Clerk for his efforts and Mr Wilkinson for speaking against the planning application both at Arun District Council and WSCC Planning Committee meetings. Finally, the new waste/recycling scheme, established by Arun District Council, is being closely monitored at each Parish Council meeting.

### **Roads & Transport**

The Parish Council has been active on a broad range of issues and Mrs Mills has represented the Parish Council at the Western Arun Highways & Transport Partnership for which I thank her. Pressure has been maintained on WSCC, both directly and through County Councillor Freeman, for junction improvements at Comet Corner. The signs are encouraging, with a major Scheme included in the WSCC Highways programmes of both 2005/6 and 2006/7 albeit with the caveat that the programmes are funding reliant. Some works have been undertaken recently however this relates to the more wide ranging WSCC Highways A259 route speed management scheme.

The Parish Council has also been a member of the Unity group of local councils (which is trying to progress the much needed Bognor Regis relief road) for most of the year although it withdrew from Unity, in April 2005, when it became apparent that some individuals within other councils were seeking to use the group to promote their own political aspirations. Thanks go to Mr Wilkinson and Mrs Mills who accompanied me to the various meetings.

The Parish Council has also been supportive of requests to WSCC Highways for a pedestrian crossing in Elmer Road, double yellow lines in Yapton Road and a pedestrian crossing in Flansham Park. To date little progress has been made although they all remain live issues. Efforts have also been made to establish a Speedwatch Scheme in the parish, through Middleton LAT, and the Parish Council has earmarked £600 towards the project albeit this is on hold until full details are known and sufficient volunteers have come forward.

### **Sea Defence**

The Coastal Defence Strategy has finally been published and the Draft Shoreline Management Plan issued which shows the preferred option within the parish as “Hold the Line”. There are, however, concerns that the priority score for Middleton is so low that any coastal defence improvements are some years away. The Parish Council has therefore supported the Middleton-on-Sea Association with a £250 grant to assist towards the cost of a survey of the Greensward, the results of which will be used to press the case for prompt coastal defence improvements. Mrs Willis has represented the Parish Council at a number of coastal defence meetings and I thank her for attending and providing reports to the Council.

### **Tree Planting**

During the year a number of trees have been planted, both to replace dead saplings which failed to get established the previous year, and to enhance the overall stock of trees. An annual tree audit has been established for Middleton Green so that the General Purposes Committee can consider whether any tree surgery is required. This year work was primarily limited to the crown reduction of an oak. Further, a tree was found to be leaning on the Sea Lane bus shelter and had to be felled however a red leafed norway maple has been planted close by to replace it. I would like to thank the Parish Tree Warden, Colin Mansfield, for supervising these works and for providing his advice to the Development Control Committee on tree related issues.

### **Village Pond**

Mrs Willis has actively pursued her role of Village Green Warden (including pond) during the year. She has worked in partnership with WSCC’s Countryside Ranger and local volunteers to make the Pond and Green look very attractive. The annual clear-up took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December when 14 local volunteers assisted to tidy the Green. A protocol has also been established with Portsmouth Water regarding future requests for topping-up of the pond and a warning sign has been installed beside the pond at the insistence of the Parish Council’s insurers. Many thanks to Ros Willis for all her efforts.

### **Young People**

Following the recommendation of the Projects advisory sub committee, the Parish Council agreed in April 2005 to match the Arun CDRP grant of £2,500 with a similar sum to enable the Council to commit £5,000 to the Larksfield Skate Park project which is also being financially supported by a number of organisations including Arun District Council, Felpham Parish Council and the Jubilee Village Hall committee. I would like to thank the Vice Chairman and the committee members in this regard.

**Councillors**

Finally, I would like to thank all Parish Councillors and also welcome Richard Jeffery who was co-opted to the Parish Council in December 2004.

I am also very grateful and would like to thank Ted Chandler, Tony Edey, and Ann Farley for their time and effort in Parish Council matters.

**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 a most effective 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.

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Paul M Wotherspoon, Chairman, Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council 2004/2005