

Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2005/2006

Amended 4th May 2006

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 17th May 2006 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 another successful year of 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 and can be proud of its achievements:-

Development Control Committee

The Development Control Committee has had another busy year, considering some 75 planning applications and on occasions making representations in person at the District Council's Development Control Committee. Members of the public have regularly attended the committee meetings to put forward their views to the committee. A number of 3G telephone mast applications have been received, all of which have been opposed, and in three cases the applications have been declined by the District Council albeit one has gone to appeal. 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 2006/7 which is the third year in which a level precept has been possible. I am most grateful to the Committee Chairman, Matthew Copeland, and other members of the committee for managing the budget and finances so effectively.

Footpaths

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 contribution which ensures the footpaths are kept in good order.

General Purposes Committee

This committee has a very wide brief and has been working towards the acquisition of land for allotments, the provision of funding for the Larksfield Skate Park together with consideration of wide spectrum of transport related issues including Comet Corner. I would like to thank the Chairman, Nicky Mills, and all its members, including co-optees Mary Bourne (St Nicholas's Church) and Jenny Brown (Comet Corner Action Group) for their involvement.

Infrastructure

Two additional picnic benches have been installed recently on Shrubbs Field for the benefit of the community.

Middleton News

The Middleton News Co-ordinator, Angela Waller, resigned in June 2005 for personal reasons and I would like to thank her for the magnificent contribution she made to the newsletter since its inception. I would also like to thank the Clerk for taking up the baton and keeping Middleton News running successfully until a new Co-ordinator could be appointed. Suzanne Rees has now taken over the role of Co-ordinator and produced a first-rate edition in March and I wish her well with future editions. Pauline Allsopp has now been recording and distributing Talking Middleton News for over three years and I would like to thank her for this significant contribution to our visually impaired parishioners. Thanks also go to all the advertisers, article writers and distributors who all contribute to Middleton News' success.

Parish Council Playing Fields

The Shrubbs Playing Field continues to be the focal point for many parish activities and with this in mind, the Parish Council has been pressing the District Council for some 16 months to release £5,560 of Section 106 monies from the Willowbrook Development so that additional equipment can be installed. Assuming all goes to plan, it is hoped that new equipment, compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act, can be installed, which will include two swings and some tactile equipment, during 2006. Improvements and repairs to the Pavilion continue with the gutters, soffits and fascia boards recently replaced. My thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Tony Edey, and the members of the committee for their involvement. Special thanks must also go to Celia Horne for all the work she does quietly behind the scenes to ensure the cleanliness and tidiness of both Shrubbs Field and the Pavilion.

Police

Thankfully vandalism appears to be declining, albeit there are still occasional incidents including the fingerpost sign being vandalised on two separate occasions and beach huts on the Greensward being broken into. That said, the overall decline is in no small measure due to the work of both the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the contribution made by Middleton LAT. I would like to thank its members for their hard work and commitment in monitoring anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the village and for acting as a liaison point with both the Police and the PCSOs. It is a pity to note that Middleton LAT will no longer be supported by Arun Safer Communities although I understand they have decided to continue to operate as a stand alone unit. Thanks also go to the Vice Chairman 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

During last summer there was a terrible stench from seaweed deposited on the beaches and representations were made to Arun District Council to clear it away. The District

Council's view was that it was an unpleasant, but not harmful, natural occurrence and that no action would be taken. The Parish Council has been involved with an Alliance of local Parish and Town Councils who objected strongly to the proposed Materials Recycling Facility at Ford. The first planning application was rejected by WSCC Planning Committee in February 2005. However, the applicant (Viridor) lodged a subsequent planning application which was approved. Whilst there will be no initial impact on the area, once the recycling facility has been constructed, many HGVs loaded with recyclables will be travelling along the A259, through Bognor Regis, towards Southampton Docks for onward shipment to faraway places such as India and China.

Roads & Transport

The Parish Council has been active on a wide range of transport related issues and Nicky Mills has represented the Parish Council at both the Western Arun Highways & Transport Partnership and latterly the Western Arun Area Transport Committee for which I thank her. Pressure has been maintained for improvements at Comet Corner, including a WSCC Highways meeting attended by Nicky Mills and John Wilkinson on 31st August 2005, albeit there now seems little likelihood of major junction improvements in the short term with funding being a substantial stumbling block. The idea of "Central Government" funding appears to be receding with "Developer Contributions" funding coming to the fore. Proposals to further reduce the speed limit across Comet Corner from 50 mph to 40 mph have foundered owing to lack of funding, police support and unanimity amongst local Parish Councils. Councillors have been very keen to get at least two pedestrian crossings (in Flansham Park and in Elmer Road adjacent to One Stop) and to this end Tony Edey and Mary Ross met the WSCC Road Safety Community Safety Liaison Officer in November 2005 to press the Parish Council's case. This has subsequently been progressed through the Western Arun Area Transport Committee.

Progress to establish a Speedwatch Scheme in the parish, for which a budget of £200 has been allocated, is now deferred until such time as a working party made up of the Police, Home Office & OFCOM, have established national guidelines.

A new Disabled Parking Bay has been recently established in Middleton Road opposite the Obelisk following requests for additional disabled parking.

Sea Defence

The Parish Council has provided the Middleton-on-Sea Association with a further £250 grant (£500 in total) 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.

Support in the Community

Community Support Grants totalling £435 have been made to 5 organisations (4Sight £100, Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Watch £100, Citizens Advice Bureau £100, Sammy Community Transport £125 and Sussex Playing Fields Association £10). A further £150 was given to Bognor Regis Town Council to support the Proms at the Park concert.

Tree Warden

I would like to thank the Parish Tree Warden, Colin Mansfield, for his work tending the millennium oak and for providing his advice to the Development Control Committee on tree related issues. This was particularly relevant this year as a Tree Preservation Order covering 2 groups of trees together with 9 individual trees was obtained which will now protect 22 trees within the grounds of the Manor House, Sea Lane.

Village Pond

Ros Willis has continued to act as Village Green Warden (including pond) throughout the year and has liaised with WSCC’s Countryside Ranger who has installed a number of bird nesting boxes in the trees. The annual clear-up took place on 10th December and was particularly successful with 30 local volunteers turning out to tidy the Pond and Green. Many thanks to Ros Willis for all her efforts. Additionally, a new 10 year Pond Management Agreement with WSCC was signed on 19th August 2005. Thanks to the Clerk for undertaking the negotiations with WSCC.

Young People

The Parish Council has been proactive in promoting youth issues. This has included injecting £5,000 (including a £2,500 CDRP grant) into a new skate park at Larksfield which was opened in late February 2006. The joint venture, total cost £34,500, included contributions from the MOS Jubilee Hall Fete Committee, Arun District Council Felpham Parish Council and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Grants were also offered to the Flying Fortress to operate an evening mini bus service from Middleton to the venue although the grant was not taken up. Finally, Richard Jeffrey has agreed to be the Parish Council’s 39 Club representative. Many thanks for taking on this new role.

Councillors

Finally, I would like to thank all Parish Councillors for their continuing support and to Ted Chandler for his wise counsel. Thanks also go to Ann Farley and John Wilkinson who both had to tender their resignations during the year. Finally, I believe it is appropriate to record posthumous thanks to the late Gerry Aldridge, who died on 17th September 2005. Gerry had served as a Parish Councillor for 24 years holding many key positions, including Chairman of the Parish Land & Property Committee.

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 2005/2006