

Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

Chairman's Report for the Parish Council Year 2006/2007

To be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 16th May 2007 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.

In this last year of the 4 year electoral term, I am pleased to note that the Parish Council has continued to maintain its momentum for the benefit of parishioners. 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 gratify 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 increased during the year with over 80 planning applications being reviewed together with a number of licensing applications. Applications to the local NHS Primary Care Trust to relocate the village pharmacy were also considered with objections being lodged, where appropriate. Subsequently the Clerk, together with District Councillor Barbara Oakley, represented the committee at an Oral Appeal Hearing, the outcome of which is awaited. My thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Ros Willis, 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 £34,000 for 2007/8. This £1,000 increase is well below the rate of inflation and follows a period of 3 years when the precept remained static. The council's policy remains 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 been involved in both (a) the consultation process and (b) part funding of the very popular Larksfield Skate Park which was opened during 2006. An application has also been made for a £50,000 grant from the Big Play in Arun fund, which, if granted will enable very substantial improvements to be made to the Skate Park. Much time was also spent considering the various options for allotments in the parish, however, these foundered due to the very high costs relative to the potential benefits.

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.

Ros Willis has been actively involved with sea defence issues and has maintained regular contact with both the Middleton-on-Sea Association and Elmer Sands Ltd. Further, a meeting was organised last summer between Ros Willis, District Councillor Barbara Oakley, representatives of the Environment Agency, Arun District Council and the two residents associations to explore ways forward to improve the coastal defences, particularly along the Greensward. Subsequently, Arun District Council undertook some remedial works and promised more later this year, funding permitting.

Ros Willis has also been enthusiastically managing the village pond and green. On 13th January 2007, she, together with a large number of volunteers held the annual clear-up to make the area look neat and tidy. My thanks go to Ros and all the volunteers for their excellent work.

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

Middleton News continues to be very well received by parishioners and is also very popular in Felpham, with regular requests received from Felpham residents who would like a copy of Middleton News. In an attempt to address this, some copies are placed in a few Middleton shops for people who live outside the area to collect. Middleton News just does not happen; there is a lot of work which goes on behind the scenes to get the newsletter produced and delivered to all the houses in the parish; so I would like to say a special thank you to Andrew Holden (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 both the pavilion, benches and playground equipment, despite the best efforts of the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). This vandalism costs significant sums of money to repair. For example, during the year it has been necessary to replace all the pavilion wire window grills due to damage caused by footballs being kicked against the windows. It is hoped that a kick wall can be built shortly in an attempt to prevent this being repeated, although finding the best location for the kick wall is proving difficult.

The children's playground was improved last summer with two new swings and some tactile panels. Repairs to the remainder of the playground equipment was also completed at the beginning of this year to ensure it remains safe to use and two additional picnic benches have been installed. My thanks go to the Committee Chairman, Tony Edey, and members of the committee for their involvement. 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.

Police

The parish has suffered in recent years from the continual change of PCSOs such that there was no continuity maintained. Hopefully that situation has now been overcome with the arrival of PCSO Clive Morge, who is keen to stay in the village for at least two years. Clive has got off to a promising start and is working with the Parish Council on a local initiative to ensure that the parking bays in Middleton Village are not abused in order that shoppers can have easy access to parking bays. Thanks also go to Norman Morrison, Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Watch, for his 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 in the near future, and certainly by 2011, when the Site 6 Development and Bognor Regis Relief Road are both completed. The reason for this urgency is that recently provided projections show that a 34% increase in peak traffic across Comet Corner is anticipated which will then make it extremely difficult to join, or cross, the A259. The Parish Council was clearly disappointed by the recent announcement made by County Councillor Tex Pemberton that the County Council has stopped any development planning until funding for the junction improvements is identified, however, this announcement has only given the Parish Council an additional impetus to search out funding. Being mindful of this, Nicky Mills, Richard Jeffrey and the Clerk met with a County Council official to examine how to gain funding for the scheme. Further, close liaison continues to be maintained with Yapton Parish Council and it is hoped that a more constructive dialogue with Felpham Parish Council will start soon. Parish Council representatives at the Joint Western Arun Area Committee (JWAAC) also continue to press the case for Comet Corner funding at every opportunity.

Working in liaison with WSCC Highways & Transport, other works completed during the year include the erection of bollards opposite One Stop to prevent vehicles parking on the grass verge, the installation of dropped kerb stones at Sundale Lane and the replacement of parking bay restriction signs adjacent to Bankside.

Support in the Community

Community Support Grants totalling £500 have been made to 7 organisations (4Sight £50, Arun Co-ordinated Community Transport £90, Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Watch £100, Citizens Advice Bureau £100, Sammy Community Transport £100, Sussex Playing

Fields Association £10 and WRVS £50). A further £200 youth grant was made to Middleton Girlguiding.

Young People

The Parish Council has been proactive in promoting youth issues. Examples include funding for Larksfield Skate Park, £50,000 grant application for further equipment and an additional £2,000 set aside for further Larksfield Skate Park improvements. Investigations are also being undertaken to consider the feasibility of a kick wall on Shrubbs Field.

Councillors

Finally, I would like to thank Matthew Copeland (Vice Chairman), Ted Chandler for his wise counsel, Colin Mansfield (Parish Tree Warden) 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.

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Paul M Wotherspoon, Chairman, Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council 2006/2007