

CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Queen's Hall, High Street, Cuckfield, RH17 8EL



Chairman's Annual Report 2016/17



Nigel Page
Chairman

Tel: 01444 451610

Email: clerk@cuckfield.gov.uk

www.cuckfield.gov.uk

27th April 2017

Introduction

I am pleased to submit my Chairman's report for this year as we complete our 2nd year of a 4-year term. As you would expect being half way through this term, we have completed some projects and started new ones as part of our business plan.

The Parish Council is formed of 10 locally elected residents (non-political) who give their time voluntarily to ensure we can run a Parish Council and the Committees which enact our statutory responsibilities, as the first tier of local government. I mention this for clarity and understanding of responsibility, as sometimes this leads to confusion with the community for responsibility to make changes or how decisions have been made. It has been particularly relevant for some of our Planning and Highways issues for this year.

Central Government define National Policies and statutory law, which are cascaded down to the County Council, District Council and lastly the Parish Council.



West Sussex Council are responsible for services such as Education, Highways, Social and Healthcare services. Your current elected representative is Peter Bradbury, at time of writing West Sussex Elections will be held on 4th May 2017.



The 2nd tier of government is Mid Sussex District Council with whom we work closely, along with the 3 Town Councils and other Parishes which form the District. They are responsible for planning decisions, housing provision and local amenities such as parks and recreation. Robert Salisbury and Pete Bradbury are the elected Ward councillors representing Cuckfield in Mid Sussex.



This report will be shared at the Annual Parish meeting on Thursday 27th April and in our regular newsletter which is published in Cuckfield Life.

This Annual Report and the Annual Parish Meeting are our annual opportunity to share the work for the previous year and to look forward to the following year. We have worked to make the Annual Parish Meeting, bigger and better this year with guest speakers who reflect the interest and feedback we have received during the year.

I will summarise each committee shortly, but the focus has been on Highways safety improvements, running both the Queen's and Village Halls and ensuring we provide services for burials in the Churchyard and weddings including civil ceremonies in the Queen's Hall.

I would like to welcome Frances Laing and Jo Notaras, who are our newest Parish Councillors. You can find a list and contact details of Councillors on the Parish Web Site www.cuckfield.gov.uk and in the regular newsletter.

Please do get in touch with any comments or thoughts you may have. Our committee meetings are also published on www.cuckfield.gov.uk and are open to the public.

Summary of Committee

I am pleased to summarise the activities of our committees for 2016-2017.

Planning Committee

The Planning stand has outcomes for year 16/17 highlighted so please visit the stand to take a look. In general, we are doing well against the targets, with 20 new dwellings completed in the year.

Policy

A decade on now and Mid Sussex District Council continues to struggle on its District Plan delivery, and further delays mean that the area still cannot demonstrate the all-important 5-year housing supply, against figures which are still to be examined.

The Plan is currently at Examination, but the examiner has determined that Mid Sussex should take Crawley's 'unmet need' and therefore the housing target needs to rise another 30% from 800 additional dwellings per year to around 1,050. Considering that Mid Sussex started this process several years ago at around 500 per year, recent numbers are now double this. MSDC are now being forced to look again at Neighbourhood Plan contributions – even those that have been examined and 'made', and we await to see the outcome of that.

New Developments

The Parish Council regrets the new development along Broad Street – the first 4 currently in construction with an additional 3 in the grounds of Riseholme at the end of the bypass with approval. This area was the last gap in the parish along the road between the village and Haywards Heath. Unfortunately, our comments, and our Neighbourhood Plan policies carried no weight at the Appeal compared to the Mid Sussex's continued lack of 5-year housing supply.

The public open spaces accompanying the two developments at Horsefield Green and Buttinghill have taken considerable efforts to progress towards completion this year.

At Horsefield Green, we are awaiting the freehold transfer to the parish council ownership. This is taking some time. We will then be undertaking some landscape works to complement that undertaken by the developer.

At Buttinghill Drive, a number of discussions between the developer, Mid Sussex and residents over the drainage pond that has been in a failed state for 3 years, has started to gain some traction. We are hopeful that MSDC will finally (and after numerous false starts) issue the planning Enforcement Notice. Taylor Wimpey assures us that they wish to now see the issue resolved. The date for the land transfer of this open space is 3 years after final occupation, which means Summer 2018.

We are now seeing the commencement of the Penland Farm development at the end of Hanyle Lane. We await to see the traffic and lorry movement impact on Cuckfield from this major extension to Haywards Heath. There is no mitigation required by the planners.

Extensions

The number of applications for conversions and extensions has dropped off a little this year, to 41 (last year was 44) as highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan monitoring.

Those we see are generally of good quality, design and construction and aim to retain the character and distinctiveness of the village.

Planning Decisions and Appeals

Whilst the number of applications has reduced a little, the parish planning committee recommendations have differed from the final decision made by Mid Sussex planning authority by an increased amount (12, against 4 last year). We need to discuss this increased difference of opinion to see if there are any themes.

As mentioned, the outcomes of the Broad Street appeal were not as we hoped. Given the application went against a large number of the Neighbourhood Plan policies, this means that the policies no longer have the weight expected, and won't do until Mid Sussex finally get their District Plan adopted

The Courtmead Road development continues to be embroiled in legal issues, with Mid Sussex losing the Judicial Review but continuing to proceed with the development. Another High Court case is expected shortly.

Consultations

CPC has also responded with feedback on numerous occasions to the District Plan and several other Neighbourhood Plans in the District.

Roads and Traffic Committee

Highways is always a source of public concern and generates the majority of comments to the Parish Council and one we take very seriously. The majority of the issues are the responsibility of West Sussex Highways whom we work very closely with, but we do own and influence certain projects which we prioritise.

High Street Pavement

The pavement work in the High Street outside of Cuckfield House is now complete, the installation of the bollards has relieved the major problem we had with cars parking along it and causing damage to the pavement and making it dangerous for pedestrians. We have also installed a couple of planters which will be planted out for the summer. The overall effect of the work has been to provide a safe area for pedestrians and an improved look for the High Street.



Whitemans Green

The work to improve the layout of the Whitemans Green roundabout is now complete. The purpose of the realignment was to reduce the speed of traffic approaching the roundabout and to improve the safety of the crossing points for pedestrians. This involved enlarging



the size of the central refuges as the original ones were not large enough to accommodate a pedestrian with a pushchair.

The width of the carriageway has been reduced to funnel traffic into a single lane to encourage a reduction in traffic speed. A final safety audit is still to be carried out.

Motor Cycle Bay

Another addition for this year is the provision of a motor cycle bay in the Broad Street car park.

London Lane

A scheme for London Lane improvements was presented at last year's Annual Parish Meeting. As this was not supported by the community, we are working with West Sussex Highways to provide a new scheme and would value suggestions from residents.

Speed Indicator Device (SID)

We have purchased a portable Speed Indicator Device (SID) which records the number of vehicles, type and speed. The unit will be used on all the roads in and out of the village and will be moved around on a regular basis. We will use the data to plan future traffic improvement schemes. In particular, we want to determine if a 20mph speed limit throughout the village would be appropriate; again we would ask residents to give us their views on this proposal.

Street Lighting

The street lighting is now complete and we have managed to maintain the heritage style columns and brackets within the conservation area. This included heritage style lamps in the High Street to replace the original style lamps which were modern in design and not in keeping. This was funded as part of the Highways S106 monies from developments throughout the village. We now have a street lighting scheme which will last a generation and is consistent in style and design to reflect the character of the village.



Community Buildings Committee

Village Hall

The Village Hall is proving to be a very popular venue. The smart new kitchen, courtesy of a Heritage Lottery grant, and redecorated north hall are ideal for children's parties and other events. The Pre-School Playgroup continues to operate there and we hope to attract more regular hirers in the evenings.



Queen's Hall

An exciting refurbishment programme has just been completed at the Queen's Hall. The exterior has been cleaned and painted, rotten windows replaced, the moss etc. on the roof has been cleared and the hall floor has been completely replaced with new oak flooring, which we are assured will last for many years. Our hot water system has also been updated with new automatic water boilers replacing an antiquated hot water system, a relic of our Victorian heritage! All this work meant the closure of the hall for two weeks over Easter and we are grateful for the forbearance of our regular hirers during this time. The kitchen also had a facelift in January and we have plans to improve the garden over the coming year. We hope that the addition of a gazebo and colourful planting will make it even more attractive for weddings and parties.

We are investing in a new system for online bookings for both halls and we hope that this will make it easier for both the hirers and the office staff. Free public Wi-Fi is also now available.



Environment Committee

The Environment Committee is focused on the wellbeing of the Parish. It looks after key assets such as the churchyard, public toilets in Broad Street, allotments, skateboard park and organises events throughout the year.



The allotments are an important asset to our village and need constant upkeep, water supply, perimeter fences and main pathways to be cut. It has become apparent that a major exercise to clear unused and abandoned allotments is now necessary. Not all past tenants

have left their plots in good condition and we are currently obtaining quotes from contractors to go in and completely clear overgrown plots. The current terms and conditions of the allotment tenancy agreement are on the Cuckfield Parish Council website. Although there are 3 allotment sites in Cuckfield, the Parish Council only owns 2 of these. Cuckfield Parish Council has asked MSDC for permission to take over the management of the site in Glebe Road but so far they have declined our request.

The Christmas Street Festival took 3 months of organising and was a great success. Keeping us safe on the night were the Burgess Hill Bonfire Society along with Shaun Simmons. The snow machine and lighting throughout the village gave it a magical feel along with Father Christmas.

We have recently appointed a new Lead Grounds Person who will work alongside our existing part time Grounds Person, maintaining the grass and other general duties within the cemetery. In addition to this, they will work to organise and maintain our floral displays throughout the village, including the new planters outside Cuckfield House.

This winter the Skate Park bowl had large cracks and required major work to repair the surface to ensure it was safe for to use. This did put the skate park out of action for a few weeks but it was necessary to have the right contractors for the job, and the weather also had an impact on when the work could be completed.

Going forwards, the Environment Committee will continue to support our green spaces within the village and maintain the look of the village so that it is in keeping with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Estates Committee

The Estates committee will oversee the transfer into Parish Council ownership of two large pieces of land at Ardingly Road and Buttinghill Drive (at the end of Bylanes Close). Both will be transferred to the Parish as part of the agreement arising from the Developer S106 agreement as part of 2 new developments adjacent to these pieces of



land. Both will be designated as Public Open Spaces once transferred and become assets for the community.

Ardingly Road will be transferred in the next few weeks and Buttinghill towards the end of the year, once the developer has undertaken some additional drainage works on the land.

The developer of the Buttinghill estate has struggled to deliver a surface water

drainage scheme that complies with the terms of their planning permission. There have been difficulties with land slippage on the perimeter of the receiving pond, which sits in the land which due for transfer.

The Parish Council has been the primary player in the resolution of this problem, working with Mid Sussex District Council, the developer Taylor Wimpey and the residents of Buttinghill. We have been able to secure an undertaking from the developer that they will resolve the difficulties prior to the Parish being offered the land. The remedial works will be costly and the situation must be satisfactorily completed for the Parish Council to be able to accept the land.



The Parish have developed land management plans for each land parcel which will involve local ecology and interest groups

Finance and General Purpose Committee

The provisional result for the year shows a surplus of £6,000, with revenue of £267,000 and expenses of £261,000. This is despite several unbudgeted projects such as our new Website at £6,000, the Speed Indicator Device at £3,000 and Street Furniture at £3,000.

Wedding Bookings in the year were also down by £5,000.

We have reserves of £110,000 of which £32,000 is allocated against specific projects, the Queens Hall floor and £78,000 as a General Reserve.

Getting Involved

We are always grateful for involvement in our projects and it is a great way to be more involved in your community. We are always looking for people to get involved, everyone has a skill we can use and we would love to hear from you. For example, the Christmas

Street Festival was only possible due to volunteers coming forward to run the event.
Please do get in touch if you would like to see what you can get involved in.

I hope this report is helpful to you to summarise the work of the Parish Council and wish you all a good summer and remainder of this year.

Nigel Page
Chairman
Cuckfield Parish Council

Appendix: -Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Target

	No Objection/Approved	Object/Refused	CPC Object/Approved	CPC No Objection/Refused
1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017				
Residential Extensions	17		9	2
Detached Outbuildings/Garages	13		1	0
New House on Existing Plot	1	1 CPC Object-withdrawn		0
Totals	31	1	10	2
Total Applications with Same Recommendation	31			
Total Applications with Different Recommendation	12			
1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016				
Residential Extensions	26	2	1	1
Detached Outbuildings/Garages	8	0	2	0
New House on Existing Plot	2	2	1	0
Totals	36	4	4	1
Total Applications with Same Recommendation		40		
Total Applications with Different Recommendation		4		
1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015				
Residential Extensions	39	1	9	1
Detached Outbuildings/Garages	10	0	0	0
New House on Existing Plot	3	3	2	0
Totals	52	4	11	1
Total Applications with Same Recommendation		56		
Total Applications with Different Recommendation		12		

Cuckfield Housing Trajectory (Neighbourhood Plan)								
Housing Supply	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2021	2022/2031	Total
Private Market	20	16	23	24	4	13	17	117
Affordable	7	6	10	7	0	5	3	38
Total	27	22	33	31	4	18	20	155
Cuckfield Housing Data (Updated November 2015)								
Housing Supply	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2021	2022/2031	Total
Private Market	20	23	3	12	28	24	24	134
Affordable	13	0	0	17	0	10	4	44
Total	33	23	3	29	28	34	28	178