

CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL: Annual Report 2008 - 2009

We are very pleased to report that Quality Council status has once again been awarded to Cuckfield. The assessment of how the council conducts its business is re-examined every four years and it is a considerable achievement to be re-accredited; demonstrating effective management of the community's business by councillors and in particular by our clerk.

Council Involvement

Government has been looking to devolve responsibility for many matters to local councils and several pieces of legislation are coming forward which enhance the powers of parish councils. As a result of this we have become much more involved in both district and county consultations; particularly in the areas of building development, economic strategy and 'partnership' schemes. We have been working with both our Community Police Officer and Police Community Support Officer, Jayne Milne. Jayne has been holding regular surgeries in The Queen's Hall and keeps the council informed about Police work in the village.

Finance

The Parish Budget for 2009-10 was approved last January and the precept raised from your Council Tax for the forthcoming year will be £134,820.00. This represents an increase which is an additional 35p per week on a band D property, taking the new figure to £89.96 per annum. Our projected annual expenditure is much higher at £199,530.00 but the Council has other sources of income from renting Queen's Hall, burials, interest on investments, etc. We do face increased expenditure in the future, particularly in managing the increasing workload devolved to us. We have previously commented on the need to increase office cover, and this year we will have, in addition to our part-time clerk, a part-time assistant; who will start with us in May.

Main Business of the Year

Several projects have reached completion over the last year. Sadly, the Edith Payne Library has had to close but we have now established the Parish Office and Information Centre in this space. The small office upstairs is now a public study and internet access area and, with the collaboration of the Cuckfield Museum, a genealogical research centre. The skateboard bowl at Whitemans Green was completed in time for the summer of 2008 and has proven a great success. The rebuild of the north corridor to the Queen's Hall was completed and the main hall has been redecorated. Much work has been put into the Bellways planning application.

Planning matters continue to take up much time. The objectives of the Council in controlling gradual expansion whilst maintaining the medieval 'ambiance' of Cuckfield remains. The most contentious issue facing us this spring is the Bellways development off Chatfield Road. Apart from the poor design of the estate, there is no adequate traffic plan to provide sensible arrangements at what is the busiest pedestrian area in Cuckfield. We continue to work closely with both Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex Highways and the residents. Your councillors continue to lobby hard with the planning authorities. We will need the help and

support of all residents in finding solutions to ‘growing’ Cuckfield, so please do respond to our open mornings and consultations.

Roads: Getting change in traffic patterns to enable our children to walk or cycle to school is an ongoing project that is being pushed very hard, though sometimes physical constraints deflect our ambition. A cycleway from Cuckfield to Haywards Heath is thwarted by the width of Broad Street just to the south east of the Wheatsheaf; the road narrows dramatically just on the crown of the hill. An alternative plan to build a path from the end of the bypass into the back of Warden Park School has been proposed and we await the results of a safety audit for cyclists and pedestrians crossing the bypass at Tylers Green. Our objective is still to see the streets full of children travelling on foot or bicycle *with cars left at home!* Additional safety proposals for London Lane and the area outside Warden Park have now been approved and 20 mph zones will be introduced this summer. The new junction layout for London Road and London Lane has also been approved and will be built shortly. We still look for a solution to the parking problems. Discussions, with the objective of creating more parking in the ‘rec’ or on the verges along Broad Street continue. Cost is the issue but parking and traffic speed continue as concerns for your council.

The Queen’s Hall continues to be used very well and our caretakers take a real pride in ensuring it looks its best for all using it; so thank you Chris and Vicki. It is wonderful that it continues as the great community centre of Cuckfield. The new boiler is fully commissioned; following some early teething troubles. The rebuild of the north corridor has been completed to much acclaim – and the main hall has been redecorated. These works have transformed the ambience of the building and it is now a venue of choice for weddings. General maintenance of the building continues, with replacement of the ‘lantern’ skylight in the entrance corridor, treatment to lead roof areas etc. The outside of the building will have to be redecorated this year. Another major rebuild project looming is the southern ‘green room’.

Not forgetting our unsung heroes who manage our ‘**Environment**’. The baskets of flowers, the neat twittens, removal of graffiti and flyposting, a bench to sit on and of course our wonderful burial ground. Much hard work during the year by Dick assisted by Brian has ensured that it remains one of the most beautiful in the area. Refurbishment of the Memorial Garden has been completed and the whole area provides a place for calm reflection. You may have noticed that the clock on the High Street has been away for some time. The works for the clock are actually inside the loft of the building, but the dial work, exposed to the elements, had reached a dangerous condition. The council was struggling to know how we could afford to rebuild the dials when, as a lasting tribute to Phyl and Peter Bowering, the family came forward to sponsor the work. And last but by no means least we have continued to maintain the public toilets in Cuckfield!!

Your Parish Council has achieved much this past year and we are working hard with other parish councils to influence the District and County Councils on local issues. If you wish to raise any issues, public question time is available at the start of all out meetings. We look forward to seeing you!

Robert Salisbury, Chairman of Cuckfield Parish Council