

LOXWOOD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

REPORT FOR 2017-18 YEAR

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 2017-18 Loxwood Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting. I am Chris Agar and am the current Chairman of the Parish Council. As in previous years we will have a couple of presentations by external presenters and then a report by me on the goings on in the parish over the last 12 months. This is a required formal meeting by law but we will try to make it as interesting as possible and there is the added advantage of some refreshments at the end.

The presentations this year will be by Polly Kitson, Head Teacher at the Loxwood Primary School who will give us an update on the Early Learning outdoor play area that the Parish Council is helping to fund.

We also have Rachel Carruthers from West Sussex County Council Recycling team who will give us all an insight into the nitty gritty of recycling and the challenges that face us all in this modern age with the disposal of our everyday waste.

Presentation from Polly Kitson
Presentation form Rachel Carruthers

Now to the nitty gritty of the meeting, my report on the parish council's activities over the last year and I will try to be as brief as possible.

In terms of our finances, we received our precept for the year which amounted to £41,105. This forms the main part of our income. We also received an annual rent for the Loxwood Sports Association car park which we own but rent to the sports association.

Outgoings for the year took the form of:-

Administration - £12,073 which includes the Clerk's salary, office expenses insurance, audits, subscriptions, Hall hire and the like.

Donations made and committed - £10,740 of which £4,000 is yet to be paid. These include local clubs and magazines, the Church, the village fete, Doctors and School Grants.

Other expenses - £10,912 comprising playground maintenance, re- payment of building loan for North hall, dog bin emptying and the purchase of a radar speed device for the Community Speedwatch group more of that later. The remaining residual precept and car park rental of around £7900 is transferred to our reserves which now stand at £33,341.

This means that our reserves currently stand at £74,600 which is a very healthy situation to commence a new financial year. However, of this amount, a significant sum £41,300 is reserved for future expenditure on for example Flood prevention measures, more of this later, traffic calming, School grant etc.

We have also now received the first tranche of CIL money from CDC for the Nursery Site development. CIL stands for Community Infrastructure Levy and replaces the old S106 payments that developers made to local PCs. We have currently almost £111k on deposit for use on future projects which will benefit the parish and you, the residents.

During the course of the year we have been supporting the efforts of our neighbouring parishes in their fight against the Crouchlands Biogas generation plant and the Dunsfold Park New Town development. We have donated a total of £6,500 to their causes as the effect from both activities adversely impact Loxwood residents. Happily the Crouchlands campaign was a success and the company went into liquidation rather than pay out for the restitution of the land affected when they lost their battle against their illegal operations.

The Dunsfold Park issue is far from settled, however, and the outcome is less likely to be as successful as we would hope. Waverly Borough Council have at last got their Local Plan approved, but within that is a housing

commitment for 2600 homes on the Dunsfold Park site along with industrial units and other infrastructure buildings. The recent Inspector's report on public enquiry into the Dunsfold Park application, which is due to be finally decided upon by the Secretary of State at the end of March, was fully supportive of the Dunsfold Park development and considered it a sustainable development despite two previous decisions which considered it unsustainable on transport grounds. As Waverley Borough Council have included this in their local plan, it is highly likely that the Secretary of State will align with the Inspectors view. The group of 13 local parishes, of which we are one, that have been fighting this development led by Alfold and Hascombe PCs have only one more step left to them in the form of a Judicial Review of the application. However this must be based on purely legal considerations and there is no guarantee that this would be successful. It would also be extremely expensive. We will continue to support our neighbouring parishes in trying to prevent this development, but we should realise that as time goes on, it is seemingly more unlikely to succeed.

Continuing on Development issues, you will all have seen the progress being made on the Nursery Site and I hope you will agree that the quality of the development is to a high standard. First Occupancy is expected to be in April and many of the Open Market houses have already been reserved. The progress with the Retail Outlet that is planned for has been somewhat slower due mainly to the unfortunate death of the owner of that part of the site and the necessary settlement of probate to enable his family and friends to continue with this development. Happily a new company has been formed and the directors are committed to continue the development of this retail unit site. We are imminently awaiting confirmation that they have signed a lease agreement with the COOP subject to the usual planning and design considerations. The Parish Council has been closely involved with the design of this site and we hope that it will reflect the vernacular of the village and the Nursery Site.

Progress on the Farm Close site, which is also part of our Neighbourhood plan development policies, is not as far advanced as we would hope. A new company called Beech Homes Loxwood Ltd had bought out the site and have now submitted plans for a revised development based on the former approved application under Kitewood ownership. However, both we and Chichester District Council are less than happy about the design of the proposed development as it is not in keeping with the vernacular of the village or neighbouring developments in Farm Close and Willetts Way. No final decision has been made by Chichester District Council yet and they are in contact with the developer to encourage changes to the proposed design which will meet everyone's requirements. In addition it is likely that the number of houses will rise from 17 to 19 with the number of affordable houses reduced to 6 to allow the site to be a viable development for the developer. It would seem that the developer had not taken enough consideration of the cost of connecting to our already fragile sewer system. As a PC we are keen to see this site developed as it is part of our Neighbourhood Plan policies and fulfils our required number of new dwellings under the Chichester District Council local plan. The Chichester District Council Local Plan is currently being reviewed as part of a planned 5 year review programme. We were aware that they did not meet the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) requirement in their first proposals due to the lack of waste disposal infrastructure development at Tangmere. However any increase in required housing under this review will not affect parishes with Neighbourhood Plans in place so we should be grateful for our Neighbourhood Plan as it continues to protect the level of development within the parish.

Enough on planning.

Many of you continue to be concerned about the risk of flooding within the village, as is the PC. We set up a flood forum over 3 years ago with the responsible authorities and the public. Our new MP Gillian Kegan attended the last but one meeting and injected some welcome vigour into the discussion.

We had pinned our hopes on the Environmental Agency conducting a proper survey of the Loxwood stream and coming up with a mitigation plan which they would put forward for government funding. However, such is the way of things that their consultant's analysis came up with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of much less than 1. Apparently to qualify for any government funding a BCR of 1 or greater is required. It became apparent that we would never be able to achieve this and the necessary works recommended by their management consultants, Mott McDonald, were estimated to be in the order of £1.4m. Thus the Flood Forum decided to look at a schedule of mitigation actions that would have some impact at various points along the Loxwood Stream with a view to funding these ourselves as funds permit. We resolved to re-engage with our own consultants Water Environment and have a further analysis of some of these proposals to see which would benefit the most people for the best price.

To this end, the Environment agency in conjunction with Loxwood Parish Council have created a brief questionnaire to fully understand the issues that people had who are situated along the Loxwood Stream and who were flooded in the winter of 2013/14. This questionnaire has been delivered only to those households affected and we hope that everyone contacted will complete it and give us the necessary information to realise the best way forward for the future. The Parish Council has been putting money aside in its reserves for such activities and the recently received Community Infrastructure Levy money will also allow us to do more than otherwise previously possible.

On the perennial question of Speeding through the village, I am pleased to report that we now possess our own radar speed device and I have set up a Loxwood Community Speedwatch group with a small group of interested residents. We do need more members so if anyone is interested; please contact the Parish Clerk, Jane Bromley. We have yet to complete our proper on-site training so you will not see us at the roadside yet, besides it has been rather cold of late!

We are also slowly progressing with the introduction of a Speed Indicator Device at various locations around the village. Expenditure for this has been approved by the PC but as always we must await the proper approval of the locations and the installation of poles to allow the device to be safely mounted. Things move extraordinarily slowly when it comes to road and highways issues in West Sussex! Pity the traffic isn't as slow!

Finally I would like to report on the Children's Playground at North Hall. This is a very well used facility and as such incurs a fair degree of wear and tear. The Parish Council was requested to look into the resurfacing of the playground with a hi-tech surface of cold pour rubberised compound. This we did, but the cost would have been excessive at around £50k. We conducted a local survey of Parents with children using the playground and at the School. The general feeling was that in summer the grass surface was entirely satisfactory. In winter, parents said that they expected the surface to become muddy and dressed their children accordingly. Thus the majority view was that we should not waste our money on resurfacing the entire playground. However, we are going to address the entrance gate which is particularly muddy and also lift and relay some of the matting around the equipment to allow the grass to grow again. You will also have noticed that the Zip wire has been out of action for a while. We have resurfaced part of the runway and bank areas and are awaiting the grass to grow; also we need to replace some nylon bushing on the wire rope which will be done shortly. We have the playground and equipment audited for safety reasons annually and complete any necessary and urgent work as required.

Well that concludes my report of the year's activities. It remains only for me to thank our Clerk, Jane Bromley and my fellow Parish Councillors for supporting me during the course of the year and who give up their precious time voluntarily each month.

Are there any questions you would like to ask me on these topics or anything else before I conclude the meeting? Well, that now concludes the formal proceedings and I would like to invite you to top up your glasses and partake of the delicious nibbles provided by John Murray. Please mingle with the other parish councillors who are present and continue asking any questions you like.