

Balcombe Parish Council

www.balcombeparishcouncil.com

Chairman

Alison Stevenson
Highfield, Deanland Road
Balcombe, West Sussex RH17 6LX
Telephone: 01444 811676
Email: alison.m.stevenson@btinternet.com

Clerk

Rosemary Robertson
Gleddoch House, Stockcroft Road
Balcombe, West Sussex RH17 6LG
Telephone & Fax: 01444 811833
Email: parish.clerk@btconnect.com

Members as at May 2013

Kevin Bottomley – 01444 811755	Peter Huxley - 01444 819264
Katherine Daniel – 01444 811368	Carol Jarvest - 01444 811559
Alan Dearden - 01444 811989	Rodney Saunders - 01444 811598
Catherine Dennison - 01444 819168	Mike Talman - 01444 811230
Simon Greenwood - 020 7370 6830	Robin Williamson - 01444 811519

Mid Sussex District Councillor

Gary Marsh - 01444 811320

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PARISH CLERK

- Providing residents access to planning applications and advising Mid Sussex District Council of the Parish Council's and residents' comments and recommendations.
- Arranging subsidised rail cards and bus passes for the over 60's
- Publishing Parish Council news in the Parish Magazine, on the Parish Council notice board and via the Balcombe websites and Mid Sussex Times.
- Acting as Executive Officer for the Parish Council and maintaining links with Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex County Council and the Sussex Police.
- Taking bookings for pitch hire and use of the recreation ground, and making arrangements for the maintenance of the pavilion.
- Taking bookings for Bramble Hall
- Managing the contract for the provision of street and footpath lighting
- Supervising and coordinating the duties of the Parish Ranger

Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 29 May 2013

7:00 pm in Bramble Hall, Bramble Hill.

Following the meeting, all are welcome at a reception
in honour of our retiring Clerk, Richard Greig
in the Forest Room, Balcombe Club, from 8:00 pm

Balcombe Parish Council



Annual Report

2012-2013

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Half Way

This report marks the half-way point of the four year tenure of the present Parish Council and we are now well into our stride. April saw the retirement of Richard Greig our Parish Clerk who, after ten years of service, over three councils, deserves a rest. His efficiency, diligence, expertise and sheer dedication have been exemplary. We have much to thank him for as a Village. In his place we have welcomed Rosemary Robertson as our new clerk. Having thought her experience would mean she would 'hit the road running', it's actually been quite difficult to keep up with her!!! She is already proving a great asset. We have also sadly lost Robin Lindsay-Stewart, again after 10 years on the Council. An ardent villager he served the Parish with a glint in his eye and a determination in his heart...to the last. Following the election on 2nd May we welcome two new Councillors, Kevin Bottomley and Katherine Daniel.

Issues and Successes

The two major issues this year have been fairly daunting to be honest: oil exploration at Lower Stumble and the Neighbourhood Plan. Both requiring commitment and a volume of research and work far beyond our normal load. I bet not many Parish Councillors get woken at 6.55am by a call from Channel 5! It's been a challenge and no doubt will continue to be challenging for us all.

Successes with traffic matters have finally seen the implementation of a stepped speed limit south of the village (it only took 5 years) with the one to the north currently under development. We have also progressed a proposal for alleviating parking problems around the station. Disappointment has been the probable disbanding of the current Speedwatch Team. Despite years of data they feel there has been little action in enforcement. I know as a community we feel they do a great service and we must thank them all. Despite West Sussex County Council budget cuts the Youth Club is back up and running this year. Thanks almost entirely to more than a bit of ingenuity by Carol Jarvest and to Action In Rural Sussex's practical help we now have a group of about 20 "yoofffs" meeting on a Monday evening for a variety of activities. The snow plan went into action again this year. In fact even more than last year with snow falling more frequently, if not as deeply as last winter.

Web Site

We now have a Parish council website **balcombeparishcouncil.com** Please visit it for news on Village issues and information on our activities.

Working Groups

The Council is organised into working groups: Traffic Matters, Housing & Environment, Facilities & Amenities, Young People, Safety & Security, Fracking. Each group consists of three or four Councillors headed by a team leader. Their reports below tell the fuller story of the year and set out some of our future goals.

Alison Stevenson

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

The major push this year and next is the Production of a Neighbourhood Plan. Many of you have attended our Information, Issues and Aims sessions over the last 12 months. We are now ready to get stuck into the meat of the plan. Identifying sites for Development, ensuring that development meets our needs whilst fulfilling our aspirations to keep a rural feel to our Village, and in pulling together a detailed Infrastructure Plan to take us forward into the next two decades. Please take the time to get involved. We see few under 40's at our events and the changes we plan will affect us all.

Alison Stevenson

SAFETY AND SECURITY

We have regularly represented Balcombe residents on the police authority Neighbourhood Watch Panel. We continue to provide modest financial support to the Balcombe NHW coordinators, as well as moral support, both of which will continue during the coming year. Police statistics for 2012 show that the crime rate in Balcome parish, compared with adjacent parishes, is the lowest.

Our Speedwatch Team has made a valuable contribution to road safety in Balcombe, and we record our thanks to the unsung heroes who have braved all weathers on the main thoroughfares in Balcombe. We are sorry to lose the Team from last year, but look forward to new members forming a Team this year..

Alan Dearden

"FRACKING"

In May 2012 the Parish Council's Fracking Working Group published its report on the risks and benefits associated with the exploration for hydrocarbons (oil and gas) at Lower Stumble, Balcombe. A copy of this report was delivered to every residence within the parish. During August and September a poll to establish residents' views on fracking was carried out. More than 82% of those who responded felt that the Parish Council should oppose any fracking within the parish. Having noted the results of the poll, at its meeting in October the Parish Council resolved to oppose any further applications for permission to carry out exploration for, or the extraction of, hydrocarbons within the parish of Balcombe that involve the use of the fracking process.

On 3 May 2013 Cuadrilla met representatives of the Parish Council to inform them that they intend to drill, but not to hydraulically fracture (Frack), an exploratory well on the site. Work will start in June and last about 8 weeks. The results will be analysed, with three possible outcomes: (1) if there was negligible oil flow the well will be capped and abandoned; (2) if there was sufficient natural flow further exploration wells may be drilled at other locations to assess how much oil might be commercially extracted without Fracking; (3) if there was insufficient natural flow consideration would be given to applying for permission to Frack the well at a separate future date. Options 2 and 3 would require a complete new application process including, for option 3, an Environmental Impact Assessment and would take a substantial amount of time. We re-iterated our position that we are mandated by our residents to oppose Fracking at the site. A full report of this meeting is on our web site.

Rodney Saunders – Fracking Working Group Chairman

YOUNG PEOPLE

Playground: Since last year, the playground has been updated with a new see-saw and MSDC have agreed to add some additional trees within the area to provide some much needed shading. Within the toddler marking area, a new table tennis table has been installed by MSDC, unfortunately on top of one of the markings! Regardless, this is a welcome addition to the recreation ground facilities and we have also been allocated some table tennis bats and ping ping balls for public use. We are always looking at ways to improve the facilities in Balcombe for young people, so please do always let us know if you have any ideas or queries with regard to the playground.

Bike/Skate Facility: Last year we asked for feedback on the possible siting of a quarterpipe on the recreation ground which produced both positive and negative responses. Following this, we had hoped to install a piece of equipment over the summer holidays to test the waters, but were unable to secure this on a temporary basis. However, we do acknowledge that there is a growing number of young people who want some form of bike/skate facility and a group has been formed as part of the Youth Club with adult volunteers to progress this. This will involve reviewing potential sites and fundraising, so if you have any interest in this area, and would like to help, please do get in touch.

Youth Club: The Youth Club has been running successfully since September 2012 and there are a variety of activities undertaken each week, which have included trips to the theatre and ice skating. The Youth Worker Julia Beckett is very popular with young people and has built a good rapport and strong relationships with them and the Management Committee. The Youth Club continues to be funded by the Parish Council precept.

The Youth Club is open Monday nights 7pm-9pm and is currently held at the Pavilion but will be moving to Bramble Hall (formerly the URC) in Bramble Hill.

Carol Jarvest

BRAMBLE HALL

In August 2012 the United Reformed Church in Bramble Hill held its last service after providing a place for non-conformist worship in the village for well over a hundred years.

The Parish Council was well aware that to offer another facility for community use could have a seriously detrimental effect on the finances of both the Victory Hall and the Parish Room. Nevertheless it concluded that the unexpected availability of this comparatively new building offered a rare opportunity that it could not ignore.

With effect from 1st April 2013 the Parish Council has leased the building, renamed Bramble Hall, for a period of the three years, and is offering it for hire by organisations and individuals. If its use does not prove to be a success, as seen from various points of view, the Parish Council can exercise the option to terminate the lease after 18 months. However if it is a success, the intention is to negotiate a long term lease to follow the initial three years.

Rodney Saunders

FACILITIES & AMENITIES

We are pleased to say that over the last year we have undertaken a significant programme of enhancing village amenities. For example, new notice boards have been constructed and installed, we have assisted with installation of three remaining finger posts, and overseen improvements to the path from Newlands to the Station. Regular maintenance of buildings and street furniture has continued. Our snow plan was put in to operation on five occasions over the winter, we hope with success, but we will start soon to review the plan in preparation for next winter.

Mike Talman & Catherine Dennison.

FUNDING AND SOCIETIES

We continue to explore possibilities of obtaining funding in the form of grants, to assist in the development of appropriate local community organisations. It is the policy of the Parish Council to make newcomers to Balcombe feel as welcome as possible. To this end Balcombe Welcome Packs are delivered to newly arrived residents by a Parish Councillor.

Alan Dearden

TRAFFIC MATTERS

The speed of vehicles travelling through the village continues to be the matter of primary concern and, during the last year, a 40 mph speed limit has been introduced on the section of the Haywards Heath Road approaching the 30 mph speed limit.

As reported in last year's Annual Report, in May 2011 the WSCC's Central Mid Sussex County Local Committee adopted the Parish Council's request for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to impose speed limits on the B 2036 north of the village, and to include the High Street. The TRO was endorsed by the Executive Committee of WSCC and passed to the Highways Department for implementation. Currently the Highways Department is conducting the statutory consultation on a proposal to introduce a 50 mph speed limit on the London Road (B2036) only from north of the Paddockhurst Road (B2110) junction to the 30 mph speed limit, with a view to implementation in the near future. This is not exactly what we had requested but it should help.

The other major issue is parking within the village. There are several locations where this is a problem, but none more so than on Newlands. Last October the Parish Council formed a Newlands Working Group, comprising both Parish Councillors and Newlands residents, to address the issue. In consultation with WSCC, which "owns" the road, the Group has considered what measures could be introduced to mitigate the problems. Its proposals are set out on the single page insert that is attached to this Report.

Rodney Saunders

FINANCE

The table opposite sets out the budgeted and actual performance of the Council in the year ended 31 March 2013, and the approved budget for the year ending 31 March 2014.

In the table, 'Facilities' refer to expenditure in connection with the recreation ground, the pavilion and general maintenance; and 'Salaries' refer to pay and allowances for the Clerk and Ranger.

We maintain our Precept (that part of the community charge allocated to the Parish Council) at £60,000.

We spent less than budget in 2012/13 on village organisations and grants for other expenditure. The unspent portion of our 2012/13 grant to the Victory hall is carried over to 2013/14. Our budget for 2013/14 includes provision of £18,700 for undertaking our Neighbourhood Plan. Grants from Central Government may be available towards this.

The costs for Bramble hall include annual lease of £7,000 and the additional capital costs for setting the Hall up and for annual maintenance.

Explanatory notes on the figures are below.

Robin Williamson, Responsible Financial Officer

NOTES

- 1 Precept unchanged
- 2 Estimated Bramble Hall rental income
- 3 Includes Clerk and Ranger
- 4 Includes Election Expenses in 2013/14
- 5 Unspent grant to Victory Hall included in 2013/14
- 6 2012/13 includes Finger Posts
- 7 Estimate of Bramble Hall start up and running costs
- 8 Note that 2013/14 is final repayment year
- 9 2012/13 surplus includes underspend on Neighbourhood Plan

BALCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

	Budget 2012/13	Actual 2012/13	Budget 2013/14	Notes
INCOME				
Precept	60000	60000	60000	1
Recreation Ground	3100	2134	2200	
Grants and Sundry Income	0	315	100	
Pavilion FC Usage	500	1376	1200	
Bramble Hall			7800	2
Bank interest	300	811	700	
Total Income	63900	64636	72000	
ROUTINE PAYMENTS				
Salaries	17400	18439	14100	3
General Administration	8550	7595	12000	4
Public Lighting Usage and Maintenance	5300	7531	8000	
Facilities	2000	2082	2000	
Snow Plan	1500	3353	2500	
Concessionary Fares	600	533	600	
TOTAL ROUTINE PAYMENTS	35350	39533	39200	
GRANTS				
Youth Club	4175	4175	2500	
Victory Hall	4500	1220	7780	5
Other	2500	814	1500	
TOTAL GRANTS	11175	6209	11780	
PROJECTS				
Other Projects	3250	2142	2000	6
Bramble Hall	0	295	15000	7
Neighbourhood Plan	20000	1297	18700	
TOTAL PROJECTS	23250	3734	35700	
TRAFFIC CALMING				
Traffic Loan Repayment	5833	5832	5832	8
Traffic Calming	800	75	1000	
Speedwatch	500	187	500	
TOTAL TRAFFIC CALMING	7133	6094	7332	
TOTAL INCOME (EXCL VAT)	62200	64636	72000	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (EXCL VAT)	75208	55570	94012	
SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) EXCL VAT	-13008	9066	-22012	
VAT NET	0	216	0	
SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) INCL VAT	-13008	9282	-22012	9
RESERVES				
At start of year	23045	23045	32327	
Total deficit/surplus	-13008	9282	-22012	
At end of year	10037	32327	10315	