

Balcombe Parish Council

www.balcombeparishcouncil.com

Chairman:

Alison Stevenson

Email: alison.stevenson@balcombeparishcouncil.com

Clerk:

Charlotte Jim

Telephone: 01444 811833

Email: parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com

Members as at 30th March 2023:

Lloyd Thompson (Vice)	Manouchehr Navi
Nicky Gould	Nick Major
Helen Caudrey	Paul Williams
Massi Smith	Nick Beecroft
Vacancy	Jo Blundell

Mid Sussex District Councillors:

Gary Marsh and Jenny Edwards

West Sussex County Councillor: Bruce Forbes

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PARISH CLERK

- Planning Applications: Advising Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) or West Sussex County Council (WSCC) of the Parish Council's comments.
- Publishing Parish Council news in the Parish Magazine, the Parish Council notice board and the Parish Council website.
- Acting as Executive Officer of the Parish Council and maintaining links with MSDC, WSCC and Sussex Police.
- Managing bookings for pitch hire and use of the recreation ground and maintenance of the pavilion.
- Managing bookings and facilities of Bramble Hall.
- Managing the contract for the provision of street and footpath lighting.

Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 17th May 2023
7.30 pm in Bramble Hall, Bramble Hill.

Balcombe Parish Council



Annual Report

2022- 2023

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Wednesday 17th May 2023
7.30 pm in Bramble Hall, Bramble Hill.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Parish Council is formed of 11 Councillors and a Parish Clerk. The Council maintains the public spaces of the village, the street lighting, the Recreation Ground Pavilion and Bramble Hall and promotes other projects via Working Groups. The village is however enlivened by many other residents who also give their time to clubs, activities and the service of others. To them we extend our thanks.

We have recently welcomed 4 new Councillors: Jo Blundell, Paul Williams, Nick Major and Nick Beecroft, and said goodbye to Jon Millbanks, Lyndon Hoare, Sue Taylor, Joel Whybrow and sadly to long standing Councillor Simon Greenwood.

This year has seen the setting up of a new Speed Watch Group and installation of a village gateway feature on the Haywards Heath Road. New members for Speed Watch are needed and details of how you can join up are below in the Traffic section. We have also enclosed a questionnaire for a proposed 20mph zone in the village, please respond.

Please visit the Parish Council's website for more www.balcombeparishcouncil.com

Alison Stevenson - Chairman

BRAMBLE HALL, FACILITIES & AMENITIES

Pavilion on the Recreation ground - The pavilion is managed by the Parish Council and is the home of Balcombe FC, with a club room, showers, changing rooms and a small kitchen. It has level access through the side lobby and a disabled toilet. Over the past year it has also been used for: The Fete, The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Picnic, and a Mid Sussex District Council Play Day.

Bramble Hall - Bramble Hall is also managed by the Parish Council. A light and airy hall suited to clubs, exercise classes, craft workshops and private parties. There is seating for up to 60 people (rows) or 50 (with tables). There is a well-equipped kitchen with cooker and instant hot water, and a further room suited to smaller groups or for laying out buffet food etc. The hall also benefits from level access and a disabled toilet. Free Wi-Fi is available.

For Bookings Contact: Charlotte Jim 01444 811833

PLAYGROUND

Following last year's playground survey work, BPC has continued to work in the background to ensure our playground gets the update it desperately needs. However, despite money being allocated to this project (see S106 funds) and despite our best efforts, it is unlikely that any renovation work will start this year. BPC had made Mid-Sussex District Council (MSDC) aware that our playground desperately needs work and that we do have funds allocated to it, but unfortunately it is up to MSDC to carry out the work and there are other playgrounds in the area that have taken priority this year. BPC will continue to liaise with MSDC to make sure that we get the best possible playground and youth kick-about. We hope to be able to provide you with a more positive update (and hopefully a start date for the work!) next year.

Councillors *Massi Smith & Helen Caudrey*

FINANCE

	Budget 2022-2023	Forecast 2022-2023	Budget 2023-2024	Notes
INCOME				
Precept	£75,000	£75,000	£76,998	Increase justified based on population increase from completed development 'Barnfield' and rising expenditures.
Rec ground Mgmt. fee	645	519	400	
Grants & Sundry inc		548	500	Sale of walking maps
Pavilion FC Usage	1,100	737	800	
Bramble Hall Income	7,500	8604	7500	
S106 money & other grants		5136		Including village gateways
Bank Interest	104	634	300	
VAT refunds		3348		
Total		<u>94,526</u>		
ROUTINE PAYMENTS				
General Admin & Comms	2,500	1,083	2,500	Telephone, internet, postage, stationery
Dog Waste Bins	1,250	1,474	1,500	
Public Lighting – All	17,300	5,585	13,000	Electricity, Repairs and maintenance
Snow Plan	1,200	1,200	1,750	
Maintenance	1,000	772	1,000	General repairs
Clerk Salary & Allowances	27,500	22,834	23,500	
Insurance	850	994	1,250	
Subscriptions	700	641	750	NALC & WSALC
Audit –(Internal & External)	1,000	700	1,000	
Members Expenses	300	45	500	Including new councillor training
Total		<u>35,328</u>		
GRANTS				
Victory Hall	5,000	10,590	4,000	Includes early payment of financial year 2023-24 grant + top up grant
Balcombe Primary School		4,185	4,000	
Other grants (Including event insurances)	9,000	1,840	5,000	Friends of St Mary's Church -Ukraine & Balcombe Scotts for fire work display.
Total		<u>16,615</u>		
PROJECTS				
Traffic Calming (All)		4,630	11,000	Including Speedwatch related expenses
Footpath Maps		1,521		Purchase of 500 copies
Other Projects	<u>20,500</u>	84	26,000	Including Neighbourhood plan
Total		<u>6,235</u>		
PREMISES				
Bramble Hall costs	<u>10,300</u>	12,272	13,500	
Pavilion Costs	<u>2,500</u>	3,747	3,000	Rent & repairs caused by vandalism
Total		<u>16,019</u>		
TOTAL INCOME		<u>94,526</u>		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>76,420</u>		Including VAT £2,224
SURPLUS		<u>18,106</u>		
RESERVES/EMR		<u>139,839</u>		EMR of £95,000 Traffic calming/ Village Centre enhancements

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Balcombe Neighbourhood Watch's twenty Co-ordinators cover various areas of the village and are a point of contact for anyone who is concerned about or is a victim of crime. Supported by PC Craig Harvey we have a strong relationship with the police and form a network of communications in the village helping to warn people of dangers and report incidents of concern.

There are a number of roads without a co-ordinator. Neighbourhood Watch members join for many different reasons, to improve safety in their area or to be part of a group and to meet new people. Being part of Neighbourhood Watch can:

- Reduce / prevent local crime and disorder
- Reduce fear of crime & reassure members of the public
- Address issues relating to antisocial behaviour
- Create safer neighbourhoods.
- Improve quality of life and the local environment
- Build community spirit and cohesion
- Enhance partnership collaborating with other community groups
- Assist in the detection and apprehension of criminals through members providing information to the police.

Another of the tasks of the co-ordinators is to deliver the Parish Council's "Welcome to Balcombe" packs. These contain a map of Balcombe and information about local organisations etc. Please get in touch to receive one.

If you are interested in becoming involved, then please contact me.

NW Coordinator: Julie Mitchell: 01444 819262 email: oldgillets@hotmail.co.uk

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

This year we reviewed 57 planning applications including: 23 extensions; 14 alterations to properties; 13 for tree work; 1 change of use; a development of 4x houses at Lower Ricks; 1 change of use; 1 Folly; 1 Way marker; 1 listed wall at the Half Moon Inn; 1 application to host weddings; 1 advertising board.

FINANCE

The table on page 7 opposite sets out the budgeted and forecasted actual financial performance of the Parish Council in the year ended 31 March 2023, and the budget for the year ending 31st March 2024. At the date of publication of this report, the figures are provisional and subject to final approval by the full Parish Council.

We have maintained our Precept (the part of the Council Tax allocated to the Parish Council) at £75,000.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP)

This year we have tried to ensure that developers contributions (S106) from the Barnfield site get to the designated projects and to influence development at the Rectory site.

Shanly Homes' application for the Rectory site was approved in Feb 2022, pending agreement of infrastructure contribution by May. The second of three sites allocated in our NP, the site will deliver 5 affordable 1 and 2 bed flats and 12 x 3-bedroom homes for sale. Importantly it will also provide a village car park with 10 spaces. We have consistently but unsuccessfully objected to the proposed car park access being through the development. We are reluctant to take on the management of the car park in its current format unless a separate access is created. We are presently considering our position.

We are waiting until MSDC have concluded the review of their District Plan to undertake our '5-year review' of the NP which was 'made' in 2016, as any policy changes made to the DP would override ours. Any significant changes to the NP could require consultation with residents and other stakeholders and possibly a new referendum. An example is the location for a new graveyard in the NP which may change, we are in discussion with Balcombe Estate regarding land next to the scout hut as an alternative location.

Where a development comprises 5 or more dwellings, the developer is required to pay a calculated sum to WSCC and MSDC for the benefit of the local community. Whilst most authorities have adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) MSDC have maintained a S106 system, both are calculated in a similar way but administered differently.

A S106 Agreement is between the developer, MSDC and the land owner. BPC is not a party to this Agreement and have no sight of the content until it is formally signed. The S106 is a public document and can be viewed through the MSDC website. MSDC hold the funds.

A S106 specifies what funds may be spent on which projects. Funds are allocated for things like village halls, recreation & play, roads, education and library services. Funds are paid by a developer at first occupation of the new homes. There is then 10 years to utilise the funds as remaining funds after this time revert to the developer. BPC have to submit proposals and quotations to MSDC to access our allocated funds. Once the funding is agreed BPC carry out the project and incur the cost which is then refunded by MSDC.

To date we have carried out the installation of the village gateways and are currently pursuing additional projects at a cost of £3,136 against an allocation of £12,757. Balcombe Primary School has successfully acquired funds for additional play equipment and for the new fencing and have further funding available. Warden Park also have funds allocated.

Funds for improvements to the play equipment at the park are allocated as S106 but as the park is managed by MSDC we are unable to progress the project until we appear on their schedule for works. BPC is in correspondence with MSDC to try to expedite this project.

Councillors - Alison Stevenson & Lloyd Thompsett

TRAFFIC

Centre of the Village Improvements

Over the last 2 years we have tried to progress our project for improving pedestrian and traffic safety in the village centre. Several amendments to the plans have been made.

Road Safety Audits are an independent review of a proposal at defined stages in the process. However, for a scheme like ours that can be a problem, the audit looks at the new layout without really considering the existing situation. So, anything new that we implement has to be safe to modern standards even if the existing situation is worse. This has meant some of our 'improvements' have been removed from the plans because they were not considered to be to current standards.

Concerns were raised by residents on the Haywards Heath Road regarding the priority give way feature slowing northbound traffic approaching the junction outside Threads. We have therefore agreed to progress that as an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. This means that if it is deemed unacceptable in operation, it can easily be reversed.

West Sussex County Council (WSSC) streetlighting from the Pub to the mini roundabout does not meet current standards, and for a while it looked as if BPC would have to pay to upgrade the lighting at considerable additional expense. This matter has now been resolved, but we are now waiting for the lighting upgrades to be carried out by WSSC.

On maintenance cost grounds WSSC will not currently support the proposed use of a coloured road surface to raise driver safety awareness at the junction. The same surfacing has been applied recently just north of the village and in fact all over the county and we see WSSC's stance as unreasonable. We hope to unlock this deadlock this summer.

Finally, we are also reliant on the receipt of S106 money from the two new housing developments at Barnfield & the Rectory to fund the work. As these will not come forward at the same time, we may have to split the project into two phases, we are discussing this with WSSC.

Community Speedwatch (CSW)

We are well aware of concerns regarding speeding within the village – pedestrians want to feel they can safely walk our pavements. We welcomed the initiative by our local PCSO, Craig Harvey, to carry out spot speed checks and traffic speed counts that provides an evidenced picture of driver speeds through the village.

During the year, we started a new Community Speedwatch Group. Speedwatch links to the DVLA databases to issue letters to drivers who are recorded as exceeding the speed limit. The scheme links together over 302 Speed Watch Groups across Surrey and Sussex. Whilst letters are educational warnings, repeat offenders can be prosecuted and we hope that our presence in the village will send a message to drivers to slow down in Balcombe. **We do need more volunteers**, so please contact the Parish Clerk on 811833 if you are willing to volunteer to become a Speedwatch member.

Councillor - Nicky Gould

20mph Speed Limit

Balcombe Parish Council (BPC) is proposing a 20mph speed limit zone within the village of Balcombe to: manage speeds, reduce the likelihood of serious accidents, and support a safer and more attractive environment for walking and cycling within the local residential streets. This scheme would replace the current 30mph area of the village with a 20mph zone in its place. This has been made possible by changes to speed policy at WSSC which came into force in January of this year.

Please take some time to complete our online survey on the 20mph proposal. Paper copies are available on request from the parish clerk on 811833

<https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/N9A2Y0C9K4N9R1H4T>



Councillors - Manouchehr Nahvi & Massi Smith

ENERGY

Lower Stumble Oil – Angus Energy's planning appeal regarding the flow test at Lower Stumble was allowed by the Planning Inspector overturning the refusal by WSSC.

Street Lights BPC are responsible for the village's 77 streetlights. We have an aim to reduce both our electricity usage and our longer-term costs. Our electricity cost is based on an unmetered supply. To reduce electricity use we need to reduce the wattage of individual lights and then change the power supplier's inventory to reflect this. 28 of the lampposts have already been converted from mercury lamps to low energy 10-watt LED bulbs which is 36% of the inventory. This leaves 49 lamp posts still to be converted. We have a further 14 new lanterns planned for London Road and hope to reduce electricity costs for street lighting from £5,000 a year to just £3000 in the coming year.

Mercury lamps use 16 times the electricity of the LED lamps. Current total wattage is 8,691 which we could reduce this to 700 watts with LEDs. LEDs also have a much longer life (15 years compared to 4 years for the mercury ones) and require less maintenance. We appointed new contractors at the end of November 2022 entering into an initial 12-month maintenance contract with a company called 'Street Lights'. Whilst some of our older lighting will incur capital costs to convert and update, BPC's lights are now in a much better maintained condition, and this gives us a platform to move forwards from. Our aim is to update all lights in the village.

Charlotte Jim – Parish Clerk

FLOODING

We recently held a site walkover with Engineers from WSSC's 'Operation Watershed' of surface water drainage in the Haywards Heath, Victoria, Deanland and Stockcroft Roads with regard to flooding in heavy rain. The Engineers from WSSC undertook to clear blocked gullies and to survey the downstream end of the drains at HH Road. New gullies may be needed or some repairs to pipework. We also looked at Newlands/ London Road and again WSSC undertook to clear blocked gullies in these areas.

Councillor – Helen Caudrey