

# Shillington Parish Council

## Annual Report 2008/2009

### Chairman's report

This is our first published annual report and gives me the opportunity to take stock of parish activities over the last twelve months.

Probably one of the main activities for me this past year has been working with the Parish Plan Steering Group as its Chair. During 2008 we hosted an Open Day and asked a lot of questions to gather your responses on the various aspects affecting your community and life in the parish of Shillington (also covering Higham Gobion and Pegsdon). The 54% response from the completed questionnaires was quite amazing and we thank you for taking the time to complete and return this useful record of information.

The completed version of the plan, once formally adopted by Parish Council, will be published this year and copied to all the relevant authorities and bodies that influence our community - i.e. Police, Central Bedfordshire Councillors, Planning Authority, Highways, Footpath Officers, Horse Society, Neighbourhood Watch, Environmental Officers, etc. Hopefully a lot of the identified areas needing attention will be addressed. The Plan will also be copied to you for interest and to see how much can be achieved.

We are very fortunate to have a wealth of village organisations, but are very aware of a shortfall of activities for the younger generation. Indeed a number of anti-social behaviour and vandalism problems have arisen in 'pockets' of the community by bored youngsters, which we are striving to address.

Several young folk have been chasing for a skatepark for a while and indeed some have been 'digging their own' on Hornes Pastures due to apparent lack of action on our part. However, we have been working in the background to secure community funding to be able to purchase the 'mobile skate ramps' that the police used to loan out during the summer months around Bedfordshire villages. We were successful in this endeavour in Autumn last year, however, having agreed the purchase, we need to obtain planning permission for siting on Hornes Pastures, which has to be accompanied by a 'noise assessment' certification. We are hopeful of having all of this in place for the summer.

There has been some debate regarding "The Barrier" erected across the entrance to the Playing Field Car Park.

This was provided with funding from the Beds County Council Community Fund (administered by Parish Council), the Community Safety Group, and Aragon Housing.

The purpose of the barrier was to make the car park secure at night to prevent anti-social behaviour (cars squealing tyres, groups of youths hanging around the cars with noisy radios and reports of drug dealing into the early hours disturbing nearby residents).

Residents and regular car park user groups (School, Football Club, footballers and netball clubs) are most welcome to park inside the car park and a combination for the lock is available. There is not, however, a designated 'barrier keeper' and users need to raise and lower when accessing/exiting.

We increased the precept for the coming year to cover some of the costs of maintenance of Playing Field and Hornes Pastures and also recently supported the Village Hall in the updating of its heating system, as we felt it important to ensure these village facilities meet the requirements of the various user groups.

Our main 'event' during 2008 was the Remembrance Day Service on the 9th November held at the Congregational Church. This was extremely well supported with over 140 people in attendance. Thanks to all those involved in its success. This building together with All Saints' Church can now offer excellent community facilities as well as religious ceremonies and both are being put to good use for both social activities and organisational events.

We see an interesting year ahead with the implementation of the Parish Plan, and many of the actions arising sitting within our area of implementation/influence. We look forward to your continued support as we strive to fulfil some of the more immediately achievable objectives and some patience as we push for the longer term and more challenging.

It remains for me to thank the Clerk to Council - Mrs. Karen Cousins - for her hard work on behalf of the Council this year. Grateful thanks also to fellow Councillors, whose support and efforts on behalf of the Parish, continue to enhance Shillington's reputation as a progressive and dynamic parish.



**Chair Person**

## **Introduction**

This Report describes the main achievements of Shillington Parish Council during 2008/09. It also gives details about the services provided by the Council.

## **About the Parish**

The parish of Shillington includes the communities of Shillington, Pegsdon and Higham Gobion. Located at the north east end of the Chiltern Hills part of the parish lies within an area of outstanding natural beauty. The parish is located in Bedfordshire although it has a Stevenage postcode and uses a Hertfordshire postal address. It is a parish with a history. People have lived at Shillington for over 1000 years and during that time it has been sustained by farming, sheep, straw and fertiliser. As in all parishes, change has always, and still is occurring. Farming has diversified within the parish, horses having become a leisure feature and new small home based businesses and enterprises have started up. The parish is still very much alive and has maintained a character of its own.

The parish has a population of 1,850 (2006) compared to 1,840 in 2001

## **Shillington Parish Council**

The Council's address is: 20A Vicarage Close, Shillington, Near Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3LS.

Tel No: 01462 713567

Fax No. 01462 713567.

Email address: [shilling1@talk21.com](mailto:shilling1@talk21.com).

Web: <http://eoe.xarg.co.uk/shillingtonparishcouncil>.

Shillington Parish Council was created under the Local Government Act of 1894. In 1964 it was divided into two wards and thereafter known as Shillington and Stondon Parish Council. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1985 Shillington and Stondon were divided and became separate Parish Councils.

## **The Council and its Committees**

The full Council oversees all the activities of the Council.

The Council meets at 7.45 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. Additional meetings are held when necessary. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. During 2008/9 the council met on 12 occasions and the finance committee met once. As well as fulfilling the requirements for all the regular meetings, councillors received invitations to attend

numerous other meetings and events representing the residents of Shillington parish. Councillors and the Clerk have also attended training courses and meetings organised by the Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils, Bedfordshire Police, CPRE, the Mid Beds District Council and Bedfordshire County Council.

## **Parish Councillors**

Shillington's ten parish councillors were all elected on 3rd May 2007 and will remain in office for a period of 4 years. The Parish Council operates under a strict code of conduct which all councillors must abide by.

Councillor Sue Chalmers  
55 Bury Road, Shillington

Councillor John Clark  
Hillside, Hillfoot Road, Shillington

Councillor Alison Graham  
21 Church Street, Shillington

Councillor Tony Howells  
Chapel Cottage, Pegsdon Way, Pegsdon

Councillor David Mott  
Pump Farm Lodge, 141 High Road, Shillington

Councillor Sandra Mott  
Pump Farm Lodge, 141 High Road, Shillington

Councillor David Simkins  
Rose Hill Farm, Shillington

Councillor Helen Smith  
19a Hanscombe End Road, Shillington

Councillor Sally Stapleton  
26A Apsley End Road, Shillington

Councillor Derek Turner  
54 Bury Road, Shillington

## **Offices**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the council are elected annually in May. During 2008/2009 the following Councillors held office:

Chair: Cllr. Sally Stapleton  
Vice-Chair: Cllr David Simkins

The Chair of the Council receives an annual allowance for carrying out her duties as Chair but other councillors do not receive any payment or allowance for attending meetings or for carrying out any Council business.

## **Staff**

The Clerk of the Council: Mrs Karen Cousins

The Clerk to the Council is employed on a part time basis working 42.5 hours per month and is currently studying for her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA).

## **Council Facilities**

The Parish Council is custodian trustee of Shillington Memorial Playing Field although the day to day management of the facility is the responsibility of a management committee. The Parish Council owns the neighbouring field known as Horns Pasture and has continued to develop this into an area for recreation and sport since its purchase in 2003. The Parish Council also maintains the Village Green and is sole trustee for the War Memorial and the car park opposite All Saints Parish Church.

The Council provides and maintains street lighting in some areas of the parish (the Central Bedfordshire Council (formerly Beds County Council) being responsible for the remaining lighting) as well as road side seating.

## **Major achievements**

During the year the Parish Council with the help of grants of £4,160 from Mid Beds District Council and £300 from Beds County Council's Community Leaders Fund carried out major work in the play area at Shillington Memorial Playing Field at a total cost of £11,330. New safety tiles were laid and play equipment painted. This has ensured that the play area is now a safer and pleasant area. The Council acknowledges that further improvements are needed to the play area to provide better facilities for our young people but this will require significant capital investment which is not available at this time.

During the year the Council has made available loan monies and a grant to Shillington Village Hall to enable improvements to be made to the heating system. Grant monies were also made available to Shillington All Saints PCC for essential works in the churchyard.

## **Planning**

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications. As such it is responsible for commenting upon all the applications which fall within the parish. During the year those comments were passed to Mid Beds District Council who took them into account when reaching planning decisions.

A total of 41 applications were considered by the Parish Council during the year. The largest of these being the redevelopment of the Chalkley Bush Farm site in Hanscombe End Road, Shillington which will comprise 12 homes, and the addition of 8 low cost homes at Marshalls Avenue, Shillington. The Council recognises that there is pressure for more developments within the parish to help meet the housing need and whilst it was able to support the aforementioned developments it considers that development must be sympathetic and not be allowed to reduce the quality of our environment.

## **Promoting Shillington**

Shillington parish is a thriving parish with a great sense of community and is fortunate to have many residents who give willingly of their time and energy. The Parish Council has developed a web site (<http://eoe.xarg.co.uk/shillingtonparishcouncil>) during the year to provide important information to residents and visitors to the parish and the Shillington village website (<http://www.shillington.org.uk>) is also seen as a valuable resource.

The Parish Council regularly contributes to the bi-monthly 'Parish News' magazine which is distributed free of charge to every house in the parish.

The Council has on occasions during the year taken a more proactive approach with the local press and media most recently when opposing the increase in the number of times the Car Boot Sale at Lower Stondon can operate each year.

In August the Parish Council sent greetings to Shillington, Pennsylvania, USA who were celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## **The Civic Function**

The Council has continued to play an important Civic role. The Remembrance Sunday service was this year held on 9<sup>th</sup> November at The Congregational Church followed by the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial and was very well attended. The Chair has represented the parish at various functions throughout the County including a Rural Housing Seminar at Pirton where she was honoured to meet and speak with the president of the Rural Housing Trust, HRH The Princess Royal.

## **Highways and Traffic**

Central Bedfordshire Council (Formerly Beds County Council) is responsible for Highways matters but the Parish Council takes an active interest in traffic issues advising the County Council of matters of local interest.

During the year the Parish Council raised a number of issues with the County including road safety at Marquis Hill, High Road, Church Street and Hanscombe End Road, speed limits, the siting of a pedestrian crossing near the post office and the resurfacing of roads.

### Quality Council

The Council wants to continue to provide residents with value for money and the highest level of service and has therefore decided to work towards achieving Quality Council Status.

### How your money is spent.

Each December, the Parish Council sets a budget for the next financial year. The net budget for 2008/9 was £27,530 although only £25,400 was raised by a precept, the council preferring to subsidise the budget and unforeseen expenditure from reserves and locally obtained grants. The money was collected from the 850+ houses in the parish by the District Council as part of the council tax. Each household contributed, on average, £30 to the Parish Council's expenditure.

A summary of the unaudited accounts for 2008/09 are at the end of this report.

### Grants to Voluntary Groups

The Council gives financial support to a number of local clubs and organisations. During the 2008/9 the Parish Council awarded the following grants:

|                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Shillington PCC          | £ 175.00         |
| Shillington Village Hall | £1,000.00        |
|                          | <u>£1,175.00</u> |

### Conclusion

The Council welcomes views from residents and people working here on any aspect of life in the parish. Please contact your Councillor or the Clerk to the Council at 20A Vicarage Close, Shillington, Near Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3LS.

Tel No. 01462 713567

Fax No. 01462 713567

Email address: [shilling1@talk21.com](mailto:shilling1@talk21.com)

### Summary of the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009

We opened with a balance of £21,395.99 and closed with £16,990.89. The major receipt was the precept (£25,400) which is the local charge on the Council Tax. Grants were received from Beds County Council and Mid Beds District Council. Total fixed assets at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 amounted to £83,661.

The major items of expenditure were the works to refurbish the play area at the playing field and general upkeep of amenities at the playing field and Horns Pasture.

| RECEIPTS                                 |                  |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Annual Precept                           | 25,400.00        |
| Bank Interest                            | 904.18           |
| Grants received                          | 7,251.89         |
| Donations received                       | 2,545.00         |
| Advertising – Parish News                | 2,058.00         |
| Grasscutting subsidy – Beds CC           | 1,044.46         |
| Community Safety Group income            | 500.00           |
| Loan repayments received                 | 300.00           |
| Miscellaneous income                     | 965.85           |
| VAT refund                               | 7,219.31         |
|                                          | <b>48,188.69</b> |
| PAYMENTS                                 |                  |
| Staff                                    | 6,520.78         |
| Administrative Expenses                  | 4,160.13         |
| Upkeep of roadside verges                | 1,855.10         |
| Street lighting                          | 3,969.68         |
| Donations                                | 1,996.50         |
| Loans to other organisations             | 4,700.00         |
| Playing Field expenses (inc Play Area)   | 17,517.09        |
| Horns Pasture expenses                   | 4,102.88         |
| War Memorial expenses                    | 893.80           |
| Printing Parish News                     | 867.72           |
| Parish Plan expenditure                  | 197.74           |
| Contribution towards additional policing | 500.00           |
| Miscellaneous expenditure                | 311.25           |
| VAT on payments                          | 5,001.12         |
|                                          | <b>52,593.79</b> |

