

Shillington Parish Council

Annual Report 2011/2012

Chair's report

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

Following last year's concerted effort by the local Neighbourhood policing team to control a spate of anti-social behaviour, we are now receiving growing reports of damage to vehicles and 'egging' of properties. This, coupled with motor cyclists now being spotted riding across our fields, particularly around the Bury Road area, has prompted us to put pressure on the police for more presence in the village. The SNT will of course greatly benefit from any information/intelligence we can provide, so we rely on parishioners to contact the call centre and report any sightings of such anti-social behaviour.

During last year a STREETWATCH group was formed by volunteers in the village. Although few in number they patrol in pairs around the main centre of the village and provide a comforting presence. They are not intended to replace the police, or become involved in any incidents, but just act as a local 'eyes and ears' and report back to the police on their observations. They are there for a friendly chat or to share any community concerns (as indeed is the Parish Council). This coming year members will be trained up on 'SPEEDWATCH' – so drivers through the parish will need to be more speed limit focused.

The April Parish News featured heavily on dog fouling – not a pleasant subject, but one which needs to be urgently addressed. We benefit from a great network of footpaths for all to enjoy – young families and older folk out enjoying the sunshine and our wealth of wildlife creatures and flora. Our Playing Field – enjoyed by all those young footballers and walkers alike. All currently littered with dog excrement. Please – if you have a dog – be more community spirited and take your doggy bag with you, collect any deposits and place in the bins provided, or take home and double wrap into your dustbin. Don't just leave it to be walked through, or sprayed across the Playing Field when our grass cutters are out at work, or even hanging in our hedgerows in plastic bags.

On the planning front – we have faced some disappointments this year, in decisions reached by Central Beds Council despite wide opposition from residents, who were supported by us. We objected in the strongest possible terms to the demolition of Scyttels Court and the building of 13 homes – much too crowded and of course the loss of a much

needed community car park, which served the Churches with their many social activities. This development will have a major impact in the centre of our village and we will have little to show for it as we will not receive any s106 money on the back of it to improve village infrastructure.

Despite the 'unsuitable for HGV' sign installed at the bottom of Church Street and at the junction of Hillfoot/Bury Road – large vehicles are still attempting to access upper Church Street. One of the historic Old School buildings has recently sustained damage by a poorly driven HGV as well as the wall at 'the Electric Shop' being yet again demolished. Such vehicles should be discouraged and it is up to householders in the area to make their suppliers aware of the narrow access in the oldest part of our parish.

Although we have village improvements in the pipeline that have received verbal support from Central Beds Council, they are working to reduce their outgoings and unfortunately are now pushing back on parishes, with an expectation for requests like speed limits at Higham and a village footpath network to be locally funded. As we are not going to receive any s106 monies from two forthcoming development schemes, we are not able to meet the high costs of such schemes from our current precept.

The Village Green has been on our agenda for a while now with concerns on the detrimental affect all the parking is having. No-one has asked permission to park on it and legislation decrees that parking is not permitted on Village Greens. Local consultation has taken place and feeling is that the Green should be preserved and enhanced, rather than become a full time parking area.

We count ourselves fortunate to have the benefit of local shops offering a host of services as well as post office, garages and pub/restaurants. Local businesses are being run from home, or occupy former redundant agricultural buildings and offer local employment; and a wealth of village groups offer fitness, interest and well being. These all count on your support to ensure their sustainability and hopefully you will continue to use them to the greatest benefit. Thanks to those who are prepared to make the commitment to provide these services.

It just remains for me to thank the Clerk for her hard work on behalf of the Council. 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 community.



Chair Person

Introduction

This Report describes the main achievements of Shillington Parish Council during the year ending 31st March 2012. 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 1,810 (2009 mid year estimate, published by the Office for National Statistics)

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

Web: <http://shillington.bedsparishes.gov.uk>

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 1st 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 at Shillington Congregational Church. Additional meetings are held when necessary. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. During 2011/12 the council met on 14 occasions and the finance committee met once.

As well as fulfilling the requirements for regular meetings, councillors received invitations to attend numerous other meetings and events representing the residents of Shillington parish including those organized by the Central Bedfordshire Council and other partner organizations.

When necessary Councillors and the Clerk attend training courses and during the year New Councillor Induction training and training in Planning were undertaken. Following the May 2011 parish council election the parish council continued to meet the four eligibility criteria conditions to enable them to be eligible to use the new 'Power of Well-being'. This power enables the council to take decisions which it considers will promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.

Parish Councillors

Shillington's ten parish councillors were all elected on 5 May 2011 and will remain in office for a period of 4 years, the next election being in May 2015. The Parish Council operates under a strict code of conduct which all councillors must abide by.

Councillor Sue Chalmers

Contact via the Clerk to the Council

Councillor John Clark (Tel No: 01462 711446)
Hillside, Hillfoot Road, Shillington

Councillor Alison Graham (Tel No: 01462 713543)
21 Church Street, Shillington

Councillor Tony Howells (Tel No: 01582 881611)
Chapel Cottage, Pegsdon Way, Pegsdon

Councillor Dr David Middleton
Contact via the Clerk to the Council

Councillor David Mott (Tel No: 01462 711222)
Pump Farm Lodge, 141 High Road, Shillington

Councillor David Simkins (Tel No: 01462 711209)
Rose Hill Farm, Shillington

Councillor Helen Smith (Tel No: 01462 711714)
19a Hanscombe End Road, Shillington

Councillor Sally Stapleton (Tel No: 07711 504489)
26A Apsley End Road, Shillington

Councillor Derek Turner (Tel No: 01462 712462)
54 Bury Road, Shillington

Offices

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the council are elected annually in May. During 2011/2012 the following Councillors held office:

Chair: Cllr. Sally Stapleton

Vice-Chair: Cllr David Simkins

The Chair of the Council receives an annual allowance to cover expenses incurred whilst carrying out her duties (currently £200) but other councillors do not receive any payment or allowance for attending meetings or for carrying out any Council business.

Staff

The Clerk to the Council: Mrs Karen Cousins

The Clerk to the Council has been employed by the parish council since 1996 on a part time basis working 42.5 hours per month. In March 2010 she was awarded a Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) the professional qualification for local council clerks.

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 which was purchased 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 (Central Bedfordshire Council being responsible for the remaining lighting) as well as road side seating and bus shelters.

Achievements during the year

Further work on the skate ramp in Horns Pasture was carried out this year although the ramp has been the subject of vandalism on numerous occasions. Some landscape work is still required to meet all the conditions of the planning permission (including the creation of a bund around the ramp) and that work is hoped to be completed soon.

For the younger children, the fish rocker play equipment in the Play Area of the playing field was replaced with a bright new mobile butterfly.

With a grant from the Bedfordshire Rural Transport partnership the parish council installed a cycle rack at the rear of the Jubilee Room at Shillington Village

Hall which it is hoped will be used by visitors to the hall and encourage the use of cycles.

Thanks to donations from Shillington Men's Club and Revd Angus McCormick the lower section of the war memorial was cleaned this year and railings and sign repainted. The parish council plans to have the upper section of the memorial cleaned during 2012/13.

Much needed work to trees on the Village Green was carried out to alleviate overcrowding at the end of 2011. Unfortunately the area is increasingly being used for parking and the parish council is working to tackle this problem.

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 Central Bedfordshire Council who took them into account when reaching planning decisions.

A total of 45 new applications were considered by the Parish Council during the year.

Despite every effort being made by the parish council and residents to prevent planning permission being granted for the demolition of Scyttels Court and the erection of 13 new dwellings, planning permission was granted in February. This development is just one of several which have been approved over recent years and we are likely to see the completion of some 50 new houses in Shillington over the next 2-3 years.

Promoting Shillington

Shillington parish is a thriving parish with a great sense of community and is fortunate to have residents who give willingly of their time and energy. The Parish Council has a web site (<http://shillington.bedsparishes.gov.uk>) 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 Civic Function

The Council has continued to play an important Civic role. The Remembrance Sunday service was this year held on 13 November at The Congregational Church followed by the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial and was very well attended by residents as well as several serving members of the

armed forces. This year Mr Tim Benwell kindly played the last post at the Act of Remembrance.

Highways, Traffic and Transport

Central Bedfordshire Council is the Highways Authority responsible for Highways matters but the Parish Council takes an active interest in traffic issues advising Bedfordshire Highways of matters of local interest.

During the year the Parish Council raised a number of issues with the Bedfordshire Highways including road safety and maintenance issues.

The bus shelters in the parish were improved this year to meet requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and following concerns expressed by bus users the parish council is working with Central Bedfordshire Council to identify a better location for buses returning to the village to safely drop off passengers in Hillfoot Road.

Quality Council

The Council wishes to continue to provide residents with value for money and the highest level of service and is working towards achieving Quality Council Status.

How your money is spent.

Each December, the Parish Council sets a budget for the next financial year. For 2011/12 £33,000 was raised by a precept to meet the budgeted expenditure. The money was collected from the 850+ houses in the parish by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the council tax with band D equivalent properties paying £41.35 to the Parish Council's expenditure.

A summary of the unaudited accounts for 2011/12 are opposite.

Grants and donations

Organisations benefiting from donations made by the parish council this year included Whitbread Wanderbus, Mid Beds Link-a-Ride, Victim Support, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Mid Beds Citizens Advice Bureau and All Saints Church, Shillington (churchyard maintenance work).

Summary of the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012

We opened with a balance of £20,603.12 and closed with £28,806.18 of which £5,718.30 are restricted funds. The major receipt was the precept (£33,000) which is the local charge on the Council Tax.

Summary of accounts (unaudited):

RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept	33,000
Advertising – Parish News	1,808
Grasscutting subsidy – CBC	1,129
Loan repayments received	1,200
Bank Interest	50
VAT reclaimed	3,407
Rental Income	500
Insurance Claim	430
Grant from Beds Rural Transport	558
Other Income	480
	42,562
PAYMENTS	
Staff	7,552
Chairman's Allowance	200
Administrative expenses	3,136
Donations	1,096
Upkeep of roadside verges	1,927
Street lighting	3,066
Upkeep of Bus Shelters	76
Road Side Seat Maintenance	7
Tree Work on Village Green	580
Playing Field expenses (inc Play Area) including litter cleansing	4,433
Horns Pasture expenses including Litter cleansing	5,146
War Memorial expenses	701
Printing Parish News	1,681
Community Safety Group expend.	837
New Cycle Rack	558
VAT on payments (to reclaim)	3,363
	34,359

Comments

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.

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(Large Print copies of this report are available on request from the Clerk to the Council)

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