

Shillington Parish Council

Annual Report 2010/2011

Chair's report

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

We have been very concerned with the increasing anti-social behaviour from a group of young people – ranging from abusive language and intimidation to actual criminal damage to residential properties and community buildings. It is totally unacceptable to expect residents to live in fear and even consider moving to where they would feel safer. Much pressure has been put on our Police Safer Neighbourhood Team to help restore our parish to the pleasant, rural setting we all formerly enjoyed. We have had much support from the police in their attempts to get some order back into the community and by the latest reported incidents it looks like their efforts have paid off. We have asked for their continued support as the summer holidays loom and have been assured of their attention for another couple of months with a further review of the situation at the end of that time.

A meeting was held in March involving youths, parents, police, ASB Co-ordinator, Central Bedfordshire Council ('CBC') youth workers, Aragon Housing representatives and Parish Councillors to work on a way forward for all concerned. The youth workers will be arranging separate meetings with the young people to identify what activities they would like in the village, or transport to get them to appropriate centres where such activities take place. Further feedback is awaited.

The skate ramp is finally securely in place and boxed in and all that is left to do now is complete the ground works around it. However, we note that this has already received attention from a local graffiti artist with his silver spray can. This is very disappointing as a lot of hard work and financial investment has gone on behind the scenes. Much effort by a local landscaping contractor has been made to assemble it securely and permanently, box it in and paint green to enable us to meet both legal and health & safety requirements.

Some of the younger members have mentioned that the ramp is being dominated by older youths, preventing them from using it as they would like. As a Parish Council we have taken all the necessary steps to meet requirements, but we are unable to provide an adult to oversee usage on a regular basis. It would be rather nice to see some of the parents spending a little time with their youngsters by the

ramp, as well as some of the older youths taking responsibility for more fair play for the younger members to get a chance on the equipment.

The proposed Church Street parking scheme has been shelved, at least for the time being – apart from being too costly for both CBC's budget and ours, it was felt that it would probably create as many problems as resolve any. Even with support for a 'limited parking zone' by High Road Stores, we have been advised the costs would be the same for the whole scheme or parts of it.

We have managed to obtain 'unsuitable for HGV' signs at the bottom of Church Street and at the junction of Hillfoot/Bury Road – which we hope are preventing misguided HGVs from trying to access the Church Street/5 Bells Corner.

We were successful in obtaining agreement from CBC for a 40mph speed limit through Higham Gobion, however were advised that the parish would need to fund it. Unfortunately we don't have £7,500 spare in the precept, which amount we felt we could not justifiably expect the parish to shoulder.

The zebra crossing identified in the Parish Plan to access the Post Office in High Road is an item identified as part of the s106 from the developers following CBC consent for the High Road development (24 houses) which, against much local opposition and representation, has received CBC approval as part of the LDF consultations. We await confirmation with interest.

Always keen to promote local businesses, we count ourselves extremely fortunate that Mr. Steve Ansell has decided to invest in our community by taking over the Methodist Chapel in High Road and providing the parish with a new Village Stores and Post Office. Hopefully you have visited and benefitted from the large range of stock items and postal/banking services.

All of our local businesses and various voluntary organisations count on your support to ensure their sustainability, 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 remains for me to thank the Clerk to Council 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 2010/11. 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. Additional meetings are held when necessary. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. During 2010/11 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 including those organized by the Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedfordshire Police

When necessary Councillors and the Clerk attend training courses and during the year training in Planning, Intermediate Chairmanship Skills and The Code of Conduct For Parish and Town were undertaken. During 2010/11 the parish council met the four eligibility criteria conditions to enable them to be eligible to use the new 'Power of Well-being' which came into force in 2009/10. This power enables eligible councils to take decisions which they consider 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 3rd May 2007 and will remain in office for a period of 4 years, the next election being on 5th May 2011. 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 David Mott (Tel No: 01462 711222)

Pump Farm Lodge, 141 High Road, Shillington

Councillor Sandra 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 2010/2011 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 (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 is employed on a part time basis working 42.5 hours per month. In March 2010 she was awarded a 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 being responsible for the remaining lighting) as well as road side seating and bus shelters.

Achievements during the year

During the year, the skate ramp in Horns Pasture was finally installed. Wet weather towards the end of 2010 delayed the installation of the ramp and whilst the ramp is now installed and useable 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 during 2011/12.

Parking spaces in the car park at Shillington Memorial Playing Field were remarked during the summer, swing seats within the play area were replaced and additional maintenance work carried out where necessary.

A new litter bin has been provided at the War Memorial Garden.

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 41 applications were considered by the Parish Council during the year which was surprisingly more than during the previous year given the current financial climate. The Council recognises the pressure for more development within the parish to help meet the housing need but it considers that development must be sympathetic and not be allowed to reduce the quality of our environment.

During the year the consultation on the Central Bedfordshire Council allocation of housing within the Local Development Framework Development Plan Document continued. The Parish Council repeatedly made representations objecting to the inclusion of site H006 off High Road, Shillington for housing but the Planning Inspector, appointed by The Secretary of State, in his final report chose to include the site which is now binding on Central Bedfordshire Council.

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 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 14th 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 Flying Officer Piers Compton kindly played the last post at the Act of Remembrance and Shillington Beavers shared their thoughts on 'remembrance' during the service.

Maintenance work on the war memorial is hoped to be carried out before next year's service.

Highways and Traffic

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 County including road safety particularly in Church Street and at Higham Gobion.

In December residents were consulted on a parking scheme for Church Street. Both the parish council and highways authority acknowledge that this is a difficult problem to solve and the parish council received very few responses to the consultation and those that were received showed little or no support for a scheme. Again due to lack of funding no scheme will be implemented at this time. The parish council has funded the provision of additional 'Unsuitable for HGVs' signs in Hillfoot Road to discourage large vehicles using Church Street.

Following the submission of a petition Central Bedfordshire Council have agreed that a reduction in the speed limit through Higham Gobion is warranted but lack of funding prevents this being implemented at this time.

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. The net budget for 2010/11 was £33,730 although only £30,000 was raised by a precept, the council preferring to subsidise the budget and unforeseen expenditure from reserves. The money was collected from the 850+ houses in the parish by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the council tax. Each household contributed, on average, £35 to the Parish Council's expenditure.

A summary of the unaudited accounts for 2010/11 are opposite.

Grants and donations

Donations were made to a number of local organisations during the year including the Whitbread Wanderbus, Mid Beds Link-a-Ride, Victim Support, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, and Mid Beds Citizens Advice Bureau.

Summary of the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2011

We opened with a balance of £18,412.21 and closed with £20,603.12. The major receipt was the precept (£30,000) which is the local charge on the Council Tax.

Summary of accounts (unaudited):

RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept	30,000
Advertising – Parish News	1,748
Grasscutting subsidy – CBC	1,118
Loan repayments received	1,200
Bank Interest	40
VAT reclaimed	2,890
Rental Income	500
Other Income	258
	37,754
PAYMENTS	
Staff	7,191
Administrative expenses	3,738
Upkeep of roadside verges	2,108
Street lighting	3,033
Donations	945
Playing Field expenses (inc Play Area)	5,350
Horns Pasture expenses	6,894
War Memorial expenses	488
Printing Parish News	1,680
Chairman's Allowance	200
Upkeep of Bus Shelters	110
Community Safety Group expend.	261
Road Side Seat Maintenance	158
VAT on payments (to reclaim)	3,407
	35,563

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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