

Fairlight Parish Council

Chair's Report 2016 – (6 Pages)

1. Councillors and the Council

At the last Annual Meeting, Cllr Andrew Mier was re-elected Chairman, and me the Vice-Chair. Unfortunately, for personal reasons, Andrew has had to relinquish the role of Chair and I have been elected as his successor. Due to the timing of this Assembly, the Annual Meeting for 2016 will not have been held and the Chair and other Officer roles will not yet have been decided. A list of current Councillors and their responsibilities is attached.

I am pleased to report however that the one remaining Councillor vacancy has been filled by Michael Jones. I am sure he will prove to be a great asset to the Council.

Although, it would be impossible to mention every task which the Councillors have undertaken this year, some will be mentioned during this report and my thanks go to all our Councillors for all their hard work, support and dedication throughout the year.

2. Matter Arising from last year's Minutes – There appear to be none

3. Budget, Expenses and Finance

The accounts were passed by both the District Auditor and External Auditor without qualification.

The precept – the amount of money the Parish Council levies on parishioners and which is collected with the Council Tax – was set at £44,800 for 2015/2016. For 2016/17, The Parish Council has voted to increase this to £47000, which, for a Band D household equates to about £1.04 per week. This money will help the Council carry out extra tasks locally such as completing the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting the Cliff phase 3 Coastal Protection works.

In addition to the precept the Council receives other income.

Other large expenses included the collection of waste from the dog bins, replacement of dog, grit and litter bins, refurbishment of the 3 fingerposts on Battery Hill and Pett Level Road, neighbourhood plan, electricity for the compressors re the cliffs, grass cutting and Insurance.

The cctv was replaced this year but that was covered by the Council's Insurance.

4. Grants

The Parish Council awarded grants totalling £6204.

The principal ones were -

Activate Youth Club £600

Village Hall £1000

MOPPS £1000

St Andrews Church (graveyard) £1800

Fairfest £250

Fairlight Playgroup £300

Pett Level Rescue Boat £250

Association of Carers £486.72

John Lutman Award £150

Smaller grants (£100 or less) went to the CAB, Rother Rural Trust, Sussex Air Ambulance, East Sussex Association for the blind, Hastings Community Transport.

5. Projects carried out during the Year

Brighter Fairlight

The gardening club continue to pursue this initiative and I think the Village looks wonderful as a result.

Cctv

The system failed this year and we were fortunate to be able to replace this thanks to our Insurance Company and as a result we now have a much more up to date and better system in place.

Children's' Play Area on Wood Field

Fox proof waste bin installed, fencing replaced and benches treated.

Channel Way

My thanks go to Paul Draper (Fairlight Preservation Trust) who has made some great progress on sorting out the ownership of Channel Way and hopefully in 2016 even more progress might be made towards a satisfactory conclusion.

Bins

The Parish owned grit bins and several dog and litter bins have been replaced this year.

Fingerposts

The fingerposts on Battery Hill and Pett Level Road have either been replaced or refurbished this year.

Notice boards

The dilapidated boards at Channel Way and Waites Lane/Knowle Road have been refurbished and wood replaced where necessary.

6. Assets

The Parish Council owns the following assets –

Wood Field Recreation Ground

Knowle Wood (part of)

Land between Channel Way and the cliff edge (SSSI)

8 Dog/Waste Bins

7 Salt Bins

Bollards on Circle

Bus Shelters (Coastguards Lane, Knowle Road, Just Property)

Benches (Various)

Office equipment used and housed by The Clerk – but this has a minimal value.

The Circle Roundabout and verge opposite the Post Office is owned by ESCC as part of the highway, but the Parish maintains and cuts the grass under licence.

7. Parish Website

An excellent website can be found at www.fairlight.org.uk . Bill O`Reilly is doing an excellent job in maintaining the site. The PC continues to supports

the project and has paid for the domain name. Various clubs and societies contribute entries and advertise on the site.

It is only as good as the information which is provided so it is important to keep relevant information about your organisation up to date.

This report will go on the site.

8. Highways – General

I am also Highways Officer and I have continued to act as our contact with ESCC Highways, succeeding in calling them in to fill potholes, unblock gullies and generally being a nuisance to get things done. I am also grateful to Michael Hall (resident) who also continues to badger East Sussex Highways into dealing with these problems. I am also aware that other residents have also reported problems and I would everyone to report any problems they encounter with the Highway direct to East Sussex County Council.

The Parish Council has continued to support proposals by the Fairlight Preservation Trust to divert at least some of the surface water on Channel Way into the Highways drain which has been exacerbated by the gorse work undertaken on the Firehills. Meetings with Hastings BC and Natural England regarding this issue have been undertaken and progress is being seen.

9. The John Lutman Award for Community Service

This is given by the PC each year in honour of the late John Lutman. The recipient for this year will be announced during this meeting and the winner for 2015 was George Hensher.

Whoever wins, I am sure they will be a worthy recipient.

They will be presented with their award by Janet Lutman and also be able to choose which Charity should receive the cheque for £150 made available by the Parish Council.

10. Community Post Office and Shop

It was sad to see that the attempts to succeed in raising the funds to complete this Community venture failed. I hope that a successful sale can be completed by the present owners which will allow this business to continue in the future.

11. 1 Planning – General

The Parish Council is routinely notified of planning applications within the Parish, but is not the Planning authority and does not make planning decisions. The Planning Working Party considers and comments to the Planning Authority (Rother District Council) on the applications. The Parish's comments can be viewed with the minutes of Parish Council meetings, and on individual applications on Rother's website.

Cllr Stephen Leadbetter is the Planning Officer and Chairman of the Planning Committee which was set up last year. It meets on a fortnightly basis in the Village Hall (if there are Planning Applications to discuss). The general public may attend.

The Planning Committee and the Parish Council are also very concerned with developments or planning applications which occur within 100 metres of the Cliffs due to the erosion problems in that area and I make no apology for repeating this again this year in my report.

11.2 Neighbourhood Planning

A lot of work has been carried out this year with this plan and my thanks goes to Stephen Leadbetter who has given up a lot of his time to make sure that this continues to progress. Many of you attended the open meetings which have taken place and your views are not only welcome but also essential to make sure this project succeeds.

12. Fairlight Cliffs

Good progress has been made towards getting the work underway and it is hoped this should start in August which will be a great relief to everyone once work begins.

I have been pleased to see the level of commitment within the Village towards this project and I have been impressed by the desire to raise funds by different organisations to help achieve this monumental financial task.

The Parish Council has also very recently been given approval by the Department for Communities and Local Government to borrow £65000 towards its commitment to this project.

My thanks goes to everyone involved in getting the project this far.

13. Knowle Wood

I am extremely grateful to Councillor David Thatcher and his helpers for the sterling work they have undertaken to clear brambles and other undergrowth to make the Parish`s part of the wood so attractive.

14. Water issues

Many residents will be acutely aware of the water issues in Fairlight both from a supply and discharge point of view. Everyone is acutely aware that the sewer/surface water issues remain although at least it now seems that regular visits to stop tree root ingress is occurring.

The long awaited replacement of the main water pipe on Battery Hill is currently being done.

15. Local Successes

I am sure there are many which go unnoticed and I would love to celebrate them so please let me or any Councillor know when any notable success has been achieved.

Cllr Revd Val Gibbs
Chair Fairlight Parish Council