

Fairlight Parish Council - Chair's Report 12th May 2017

1. Councillors and the Council

At the last Annual Meeting, I was re-elected Chairman, and David Thatcher Vice-Chair. The next Annual Meeting takes place on the 23rd May, when the Chairman, Vice Chair will be elected, and Councillors will be appointed specific roles.

I am pleased to report that the one remaining casual vacancy was filled by co-option in February. The Council welcomed Nick Jones as its newest Councillor, and I am sure he will prove to be a great asset to the Council. Also in February, the Council appointed Kate Darbyshire as the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

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. 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, which is collected with the Council Tax, was set at £47,000 for 2016/2017. For 2017/18, The Parish Council voted to keep the precept at the same level. In addition to the precept the Council receives other income, which includes a Council Tax relief grant.

Large expenses included the collection of waste from the dog bins, subscriptions to Council Associations, repairs to noticeboards, legal fees for the purchase of the Woodland Way Twitten, neighbourhood plan, electricity for the compressors re the cliffs, grass cutting and insurance. The Council took out a loan this year for £75,000 to cover the cost of phase 3 of the Coast Protection Capitals Works.

4. Grants

The Parish Council awarded grants totalling £6200.

The principal ones were -

Activate Youth Club £500

Village Hall £1000

MOPPS £1500

St Andrews Church (graveyard) £1800

Fairfest £250

Fairlight Playgroup £450

Pett Level Rescue Boat £250

John Lutman Award £150

Smaller grants (£100 or less) went to the Rother Rural Trust, Sussex Air Ambulance, Fairlight Open gardens and Victim Support.

5. 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.

Children's' Play Area on Wood Field

Repairs were carried out to the wooden surround around the slide, and new play bark purchased.

6. Parish Website

An excellent website can be found at www.fairlight.org.uk . Bill O`Reilly has done an excellent job in maintaining the site again this year. The PC continues to support the project and once again has paid for the web hosting. Various clubs and societies contribute entries and advertise on the site. Please continue to notify Bill of all your club's latest news and events.

7. Highways – General

As the Council's Highways Officer, I continue to do my best to be a nuisance to get things done e.g. potholes, gullies etc. I would encourage everyone to report any problems they encounter with the Highway on their new website www.eastsussexhighways.co.uk

You can view existing reports on the website, as well as view scheduled works in the area, to include roadworks, gully cleansing and grass cutting.

8. 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 2016 was Shirley Gilbert. 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.

9. 1 Planning – General

The Parish Council is only one of many consultees on planning matters in Rother District and it has no statutory powers to approve or refuse planning permission. The Council takes a considered view of all planning applications and makes its recommendations to Rother in the interests of the whole Parish. The Parish's comments can be viewed within 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. It meets on a fortnightly basis in the Village Hall (if there are Planning Applications to discuss). The general public are welcome attend.

Recently Cllr Leadbetter and the Planning Committee looked at the proposed Market Garden Site in detail. The planning committee meeting which discussed the application was very well attended by members of the public. The Planning Committee submitted a detailed report to Rother about the application, details of which can be found in the full council meeting minutes on the village website. The original deadline for Rother to make a decision on the application was at the end of May, but this is expected to be delayed.

9.2 Neighbourhood Planning

A lot of work has been carried out this year with the 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. Andrew Mier has committed much of his time as part of the Design Team, who will be able to present their report shortly. A meeting with the consultants should take place in the coming weeks to progress the Neighbourhood plan further.

10. Fairlight Cliffs

The work is now complete with the middle section of the berm in place. The village website provides lots more information including pictures of the work being done. Thanks go to the Fairlight Preservation Trust, and all those who contributed financially to get this project brought to a successful conclusion.

11. Knowle Wood

Councillor David Thatcher and his helpers continue to work tirelessly on this project. They have done a fantastic job of clearing many of the brambles to clear the area. Some trees that were dead or decaying have also been removed. Their efforts will encourage more wildlife and wildflowers in the area, and this has already been witnessed with the beautiful display of bluebells this year.

12. Water issues

Many residents will be acutely aware of the water issues in Fairlight both from a supply and discharge point of view. We have been notified by our District Councillors that a meeting with Inland Drainage Agency, Southern Water, the Environment Agency, ESCC and RDC has been arranged for June. It is hoped that this meeting will establish who is responsible for the ongoing water drainage issues, and we look forward to hearing the outcome.

13. Woodland Way Twitten

The Council is still in the process of purchasing the twitten which leads from Woodland Way to Wood Field. It is hoped this will be completed shortly, and work can begin on re-establishing the twitten.

Cllr Revd Val Gibbs,
Chair Fairlight Parish Council