

ELSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2015/6

INTRODUCTION

1 This report describes the main items of business carried out by the Council during the financial year 2015/16. It is available on the Council website (www.elstead-pc.gov.uk).

COUNCIL MEMBERS

2 A new Parish Council was formed in May 2015, as the term of office of the previous Councillors had by then expired. Seven valid nominations were received and as this was 2 less than the number of Councillors to be appointed no election was therefore necessary.

3 The seven elected members are Mr Leif Davidsen, Mr Roger Gardiner, Mrs Joan Holroyd, Mr Roger Holroyd, Ms Jane Jacobs, Mr John Mathisen and Mr Patrick Murphy. Mrs Kathryn Brooke and Mr Richard Rees were subsequently co-opted to the Council to bring its number up to 9.

4 The retiring members were Mr Andrew Jones, Mr Bryn Morgan, Mr Richard Terry and Mrs Anne Thomas, all of whom were thanked for their dedicated service to the Council. Special thanks were given to Mr Terry for his service of over 40 uninterrupted years on the Council, both as a member and as vice-Chairman.

5 At its May meeting, the Council re-elected Mr Murphy as its chairman and elected Mr Davidsen as its vice-chairman. Ms Jacobs was re-elected as chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee. The Council is again grateful for the regular attendance at its meetings of Councillor David Harmer (Surrey County Council) and Councillors Jenny and David Else (Waverley Borough Council).

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

6 In 2015/6 the Council received £71,911.58 and spent £63,873.27. The main items of expenditure in the year (other than administrative costs and sundry maintenance items) were the further preparations for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan (£14,919), and the maintenance of the recreation grounds and village greens (£11,608, of which £7,799 on grass cutting alone). The PC also spent £1,759 on the installation of the three defibrillators that the PC purchased. A grant of £1,000 was made to the Clockhouse Day Centre at Milford. Further grants of £500, £1,500 and £224 and respectively were made to Citizens Advice, Godalming, to Elstead Sharks Junior Football Club (for new goalposts) and to Elstead Cricket Club (for new nets).

7 The precept for 2015/6, at £37,000, was 26% higher than the previous year in order to cover the costs of the preparing the Neighbourhood Plan (see below). The Council's cash balance at the end of 2015/6 was £67,125.45, which is 44% higher than the balance at the end of the previous year. There are two main reasons for this increase. First, the Council has over the past 3 years been rebuilding its cash balances to bring them into better alignment with official advice on the prudential management

of the Council's finances, ie to retain a cash balance of between 6 and 12 months normal annual expenditure. This has now been achieved. Second, the Council has been setting aside funds specifically for the longer-term replacement of play equipment at the childrens' play areas in the village. These earmarked funds now stand at £15,000.

2015/6 MAIN OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE

8 At its May 2015 meeting the Council determined that its main priority for the coming year should be the further development of the Neighbourhood Plan

9 Neighbourhood planning provides an opportunity for communities to set out a vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10-20 years in order to meet identified local needs. More specifically, they allow the community to choose where it wants new homes, offices and shops to be built and to have its say on what new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. In addition, parish receipts from the new Community Infrastructure Levy will be doubled for parishes with Neighbourhood Plans.

10 Early in 2015, following a well attended public meeting, Elstead and Peper Harow parishes jointly submitted to Waverley Borough Council (WBC) a proposal for the designation of a Neighbourhood Plan area covering the whole of the parish of Elstead together with the Weyburn-Tanshire area of Peper Harow. This designation was approved by WBC in May 2015, following the required statutory consultation process

11 In parallel, 5 working groups were set up, consisting both of Parish Council members and parishioners, whose remit is to decide what should be included in the plan under 4 headings: environment; heritage and design; housing and community facilities; transport, parking, utilities and services; and employment. A fifth group has the specific remit of identifying the best use of the former (now derelict) Federal Mogul site on the boundary of Peper Harow and Elstead Parishes. The work of the groups has been co-ordinated by a Steering Group chaired by Councillor Jacobs (Vice Chairman Dawn Davidsen), assisted by an experienced consultant in neighbourhood planning, Ms Angela Koch..

12 The Council increased the precept for 2015/6 by some £7,000 to cover the additional costs of the Neighbourhood Plan process. It had already received a similar amount from Locality, a government funded agency, for the same purpose.

13 At a further well-attended public meeting held in July 2015, the 5 working groups reported back on the progress to date. This consisted in the main of information gathering and the identification of key issues. The meeting provided a further opportunity to obtain feedback from parishioners on whether they agreed the working groups were proceeding in the right direction. In the main, the feedback proved to be extremely positive.

14 The next step has been the development of an extensive questionnaire covering all of the main issues identified by the working groups in the light of the feedback from parishioners. This was circulated in hard copy form to all households in December 2015 and at the same an on-line version was made available. Responses were received

for 557 individuals living or working in the Neighbourhood Plan area, a remarkable response rate given that the population of Elstead parish and the Weyburn part of Peper Harow is less than 3000 in all. The Council is extremely encouraged at this demonstration of public involvement in the planning process.

15 The responses to the questionnaire are now being analysed and will be presented at a further public meeting to be held in the early summer. They will form the basis for the formulation of a first draft of a detailed Neighbourhood Plan in the following months.

OTHER ISSUES

Defibrillators

16 As noted in last year's report, the Council agreed to investigate the feasibility of providing 24-hour public access to at least one defibrillator in the village, in order to speed up the availability of emergency resuscitation facilities in the event of cardiac arrest. Councillor Joan Holroyd volunteered to investigate and to come forward with recommendations. In parallel, the Billmeir Charitable Trust generously agreed to fund the provision of up to 6 defibrillators for both Elstead and Thursley Parishes, up to a total cost of £6,000.

17 Following Councillor Holroyd's consultations with the British Heart Foundation and other expert bodies, and the funding offer from the Billmeir Trust, the Council has installed defibrillators in three locations in the village: outside the Spar Store on the village green; in the Pavilion at the Thursley Road Recreation Ground; and adjacent to the Tennis Club at the Burford Lodge Recreation Ground. Training on the use of the defibrillators is being planned for early May.

The Former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works Site - Planning Application

18 The property developer Linden Homes, in association with the owners of the site (MMC2 Land and Regeneration) submitted in spring 2015 a planning application for the building of over 70 dwellings, together with a care home, on the former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works site. This major employment site, covering 8 acres, has been lying derelict since the works closed in 2008.

19 The Weyburn /Tanshire Neighbourhood Plan working group, led by Mrs Dawn Davidsen, developed a detailed response to the planning application, which formed the basis of the Council's own comments on the proposals. Elstead Parish Council, joined by Peper Harow and Shackleford Councils, accordingly opposed the Linden Homes plans on account (inter alia) of the consequent loss of employment land, the environmental impact of such a large number of new homes so close to a Special Area of Conservation and the failure of the developers to provide for adequate pedestrian and cycle access from the site to the services in Elstead.

20 Waverley Borough Council, as the planning authority, refused the Linden Homes application in November 2015, largely for the reasons outlined in the response formulated by the Weyburn/Tanshire working group. The Parish Council is however anxious to see the derelict site put to productive use at the earliest opportunity. It

remains ready to work with the owners and with other parties in the development of satisfactory alternative proposals.

Planning Decisions by Waverley Borough Council.

21 The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications submitted to the local planning authority, Waverley Borough Council. On several occasions during the year, WBC has taken decisions on applications which appear to have disregarded the Council's comments, without any satisfactory explanation or justification. In one prominent case, an appeal decision by an inspector rejected the WBC officers' arguments and fully supported the views expressed by the Parish Council and by local residents.

22 This and other cases led the Council to raise the issue with officers of the planning authority with a view to establishing more effective ways for the Parish Council to feed in its views and for these to be properly considered by the authority. A meeting to take this initiative forward is expected shortly.

Updated Emergency Plan

23 A group of dedicated local volunteers, the Elstead Emergency Response team (EER), was established following the challenging winter in 2014 to help to provide and co-ordinate assistance to the community in the event of disruption to services caused by extreme weather or other factors. Since the EER was established, it has sought to ensure that this voluntary group has a more formal connection to the Parish Council. This would ensure improved communication with the community as a whole and with the more official emergency response agencies. It would also provide a better structure for ensuring our engaged and neighbourly community can support those in greater need in challenging circumstances.

24 Arrangements have now been established which are designed to enable the efforts of this group of volunteers to be directly connected to the Parish Council. The councillors now operate a rota of being available throughout the year, so that there can be effective two way communication between the EER team and the Parish Council, who would in turn be able to engage more effectively with the broader official bodies in place across Waverly and further afield. On top of this, the parish emergency guidelines have been refreshed and incorporate the EER team into the mechanisms of implementing emergency procedures. The team along with the Parish Council have been testing these plans and will before Autumn of 2016 update the parish and remind them of their existence, intent and ability to help those in need during an emergency.

Parish Council Contractor

25 The Council continues to rely heavily on the services of its contractor, Richard Knight, to carry out minor maintenance and renovation works to its property in the village and to undertake other minor public works of importance to parishioners. Mr Knight was seriously injured in an accident at his home in December, but I am pleased to say he has made a full recovery and is again carrying out his work on behalf of the Council both quickly and economically.

Parish Clerk

26 Our Parish Clerk, Elaine Felton, gave notice in late 2015 that regretfully she would have to resign her post owing to an increased workload in her full-time job. In her 2 years in post, Elaine had carried out her duties cheerfully, efficiently and effectively and the Council was extremely sorry to lose her services. The Council has however been fortunate to find an excellent replacement in the form of Mrs Juliet Williams, a village resident and editor of the Elstead Village News. Juliet ('Jules') took over in January 2016 and after a smooth handover from Elaine has settled into her new job splendidly.

P W Murphy
Chairman, Elstead Parish Council
May 2016