

ELSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2016/7

INTRODUCTION

1 This report describes the main items of business carried out by the Council during the financial year 2016/17. It is available on the Council website (www.elstead-pc.gov.uk).

COUNCIL MEMBERS

2 The members of the Parish Council are Mrs Kathryn Brooke, Mr Leif Davidsen, Mr Roger Gardiner, Mrs Joan Holroyd, Mr Roger Holroyd, Ms Jane Jacobs, Mr John Mathisen, Mr Patrick Murphy. and Mr Richard Rees. At its May 2016 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

3 In 2016/7 the Council received £63,149.90 and spent £47,291.42. 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 (£5,039.40) and the maintenance of the recreation grounds and village greens £9,001.70 (grass cutting only). A grant of £1,500 was made to the Clockhouse Day Centre at Milford and one of £1,000 to the Village Hall. Further grants of £500, £400 and £300 respectively were made to St James Primary School, Help in Elstead and to Elstead Sharks Junior Football Club (for new goalposts).

7 The precept for 2016/7, at £35,000, was 5% lower than the previous years. The Council's cash balance at the end of 2016/7 was £86,122.93 which is 23% higher than the balance at the end of the previous year. One reason for this is that the Council has been setting aside funds specifically for the longer-term replacement of play equipment at the children's play areas in the village. These earmarked funds now stand at £18,000, £3,000 more than in 2015/6.

2016/7 MAIN OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE

5 At its May 2015 meeting the Council determined that its main priority for the coming year should again be the further development of the Neighbourhood Plan. 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 increased (from 15% of levy receipts to 25%) for parishes with Neighbourhood Plans.

6 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 following the required statutory consultation process

7 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..

8 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.

9 The next step was 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 most encouraging response which indicated a high level of public involvement in the planning process.

10 The responses to the questionnaire were analysed and were presented at a further public meeting held in July 2016. Following this consultation, a series of draft objectives were defined by the Neighbourhood Steering Group, covering housing, employment, transport, services, the environment and recreation. These formed the basis for a follow-up questionnaire which was again circulated to all households in the Neighbourhood Plan area in November 2016, which sought views on the draft objectives. The response from the public was again most encouraging and indicated strong support for each of the objectives.

11 The next step will be the preparation of the first draft of the plan, which is already under way. The aim is to have this ready for public consultation by July 2017, following discussions with Waverley Borough Council planners.

OTHER ISSUES

The Former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works Site - Planning Application

12 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 69 dwellings, together with a care home, on the former Federal Mogul/Weyburn Works site, which is in both Peper Harow and Elstead parishes. This major employment site, covering 8 acres, has been lying derelict since the works closed in 2008.

13 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.

14 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. MMC2 Land and Regeneration lodged a second planning application in Spring 2016 for 61 homes. In parallel, the company also appealed against the refusal of their first application and this appeal was the subject of a Public Inquiry in January 2017. Mrs Davidsen ably represented both Elstead Parish Council and Peper Harow Parish at the Inquiry. Regrettably, the Inspector ruled in favour of the applicant and allowed the appeal. By this time, WBC officers had decided to recommend approval of the second application (for a reduced number of homes). At the joint Planning Committee hearing on the second application, the Parish Council reluctantly supported the second application in preference to the plan approved by the Inspector, mainly owing to the exclusion of the land to the north of the site which is subject to periodic flooding.

15 We understand that the developer is now likely to pursue the second plan for the smaller number of homes. The Joint Planning Committee has recommended the establishment of a liaison committee comprising representatives of the developer and local residents to ensure the smooth implementation of the development, which will be the largest single development in or adjacent to the parish in the last half-century.

16 The Parish Council has separately taken up with the Local Planning authority its dissatisfaction with the terms of the S106 planning agreement which it has entered into with the developer in connection with the planning consent. This provides, inter alia, for over £250,000 to be paid to Surrey County Council for the expansion of primary education provision in Witley. No provision has been made to enable St James School in Elstead (the nearest primary school) to cope with the additional demand for school places from the development. Nor does the S106 agreement make any provision to enable the two parishes concerned (Elstead and Peper Harow) to meet the additional demand for recreational and leisure facilities.

Planning Decisions by Waverley Borough Council.

17 The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications submitted to the local planning authority, Waverley Borough Council. On several occasions recently WBC has taken decisions on applications which appear to have disregarded the Council's comments, without any satisfactory explanation or justification. In one

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. In another, planning consent was granted for a change of use from retail/business premises to a dwelling when in the Parish Council's view there appeared to be no commercial justification for the change.

18 These cases led the Council to make both representations and a formal complaint to 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 was held with Waverley planners in June 2016 which it was hoped would lead to improvements in decisions, but recent experience suggests this has not led to significant progress.

19 These concerns about the effectiveness of WBC's planning department are shared by other Parish Councils in the area. A most recent development is that WBC has commissioned the development of an 'improvement plan' for its planning service and has retained external consultants for this purpose. The Parish Council has met the consultants and has raised the concerns mentioned above.

Milford Road Traffic Calming

20 Many residents have over recent months expressed increasing concern about the speed of traffic along the B3001 through the village. In addition, there has been a series of traffic accidents, some involving injuries, on the Milford Road close to its junction with Shackleford Road.

21 The Parish Council accordingly discussed with its County Councillor, David Harmer, and with Surrey County Council Highways officers possible improvements to traffic management along the Milford Road. It was agreed as a result of these that the 30 mph limit on the Milford Road should be extended eastwards beyond the junction with Shackleford Road, and that an additional Vehicle Activated 30 mph Sign (VAS) should be installed at the site of the previous 30 mph limit. These measures have now been completed. The Parish Council hopes they will help reduce the speed of traffic entering the village from the east and at the same time improve safety. It is grateful for the efforts of David Harmer and Surrey County Council highways officers in implementing these improvements.

Burford Lodge Play Area Redevelopment

22 The Parish Council has for some time been planning the redevelopment of the Play Area at Burford Lodge Recreation Ground to make it more interesting, attractive and accessible. The Recreation Ground is already widely used for football and tennis and the neighbouring allotments are also used by many families with children. Currently however the play area is poorly equipped in terms of catering for a wide age range and needs to be improved in order to enable the Recreation Ground to be enjoyed to the full by the large number of young people who already visit there. The aim is enable children to build in confidence by challenging their abilities and experimenting safely with more up-to-date play equipment for different ages, including a zip wire facility.

23 The redevelopment project is being prepared by the Council's Playground Sub Committee, chaired by Councillor Joan Holroyd, assisted by the Parent and Teachers Association at St James Primary School. The wider community will be kept up to date and informed and able to give feedback via the village Facebook, the Elstead Village News and the Parish Council website.

24 To date the Council has applied successfully to Waverley Borough Council for £3,000 and Surrey County Council for £1,500. We have learnt that we have been shortlisted as regional winners for Tesco Bags of Help Scheme. Parishioners will be able to vote in Milford, Guildford and Guildford Bridge Street branches in May/June and we will be awarded either £1,000, £2,000 or £4,000 depending on the number of votes we secure. The Chair has also applied to the Billmeir Charitable Trust and also to A.F Blakemore & Son for funding. This is all in addition to the £18,000 which the sub-committee already has available from ring-fenced Parish Council funds.

25 The plan is for the redevelopment to take place towards the middle of the summer.

Updated Emergency Plan

26 The Elstead Emergency Response (EER) volunteer group working with the Parish Council have built upon the existing Elstead Emergency Plan, continuing to refine and develop the set of processes and guidelines, with an intent to bring increased communications and assistance to residents during an Emergency. The robust plan sets out how we define an emergency and propose how we as a community can facilitate improved community communications and support for those in need during such a time. There is more to follow in bolstering the plan, processes and guidelines, with constructive comments received to develop it further.

Parish Council Contractor

27 The Council's contractor, Richard Knight, continues 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. Without exception, this work is carried out promptly, effectively and economically.

Parish Clerk

28 Our new Parish Clerk, Juliet (Jules) Williams took over from her predecessor Elaine Felton in January 2016. Since then Jules has consistently provided excellent support to the Council over the past year, in spite of a much increased workload associated in particular with the Neighbourhood Plan process. I wish to record our recognition of her efforts in this regard.

P W Murphy
Chairman, Elstead Parish Council
May 2017