

Balcombe Parish Council

Chairman

Robin Williamson
Greenaway, London Road, Balcombe, West Sussex RH17 6HS
Telephone: 01444 811519

Clerk

Richard Greig
11 Foxwells, Balcombe, West Sussex RH17 6LZ
Telephone & Fax: 01444 811833
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Members

Neville Ashcroft - 01444 811125
Susan Barker-Danby - 01444 811018
Simon Greenwood - 020 7370 6830
Peter Huxley - 01444 819264
Carol Jarvest - 01444 811081
Robin Lindsay-Stewart - 01444 811405
Gary Marsh (also District Councillor) - 01444 811320
Sarah Moore-Williams - 01444 811045
Rodney Saunders - 01444 811598
Alison Stevenson (Vice Chairman) - 01444 811676

Communications

Much effort is devoted to keeping residents informed of things that matter to the village. Each month there is a Parish Council column in the Parish Magazine and newsletters are distributed regularly. The Council's notice board (opposite the Victory Hall) displays matters of interest, as does the weekly column in the Mid Sussex Times. The village website is updated regularly. Nevertheless, constructive suggestions on how communications could be improved are always welcome.

Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 23 April 2007

7:30 pm in the United Reformed Church, Bramble Hill

Guest speaker: Inspector Ed Henriët

"Policing rural Sussex"

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Balcombe Parish Council



Annual Report

2007-2008

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A year ago Balcombe's **Parish Plan** was published. The Plan reflected the views of over two thirds of Balcombe's residents, and was the result of a year of detailed research by a dedicated team. Your Parish Council took office in May last year, and our first decision was to implement the aspirations set out in the Plan, as far as we are able. This Report sets out our progress so far, and looks ahead to the plans we have for the next twelve months. Six of our ten Parish Councillors are on the Council for the first time, and I can report that they, together with those who stayed on from the previous Council have shown great dedication, working hard on what is often a frustrating task. We're making progress on **traffic calming** issues, and will be consulting the village on options for the future when we have studied the report we've commissioned from consultants. We're continuing our support for '**Balcombe First**' and are behind the Balcombe First Week next month. We help fund the **Victory Hall**, and are fortunate that such a fine village facility is managed by an independent trust – other villages carry a much higher financial burden where the Parish Council is fully responsible for the village hall. After being dormant for over a year we are reviving the **Youth Club**, and hope that young people will take an active interest in this and find ways of contributing positively to our community. Your Council has actively supported the campaign to save the **Princess Royal Hospital**. We are pleased that Neville Ashcroft has agreed to become the Parish Council's nominee as a governor of the **Balcombe C of E Primary School**, and Peter Huxley is our nominee on the **St Mary's Trust**, so the Council maintains its links with the wider village community. We are grateful for the **Speedwatch** team who turn out in all weathers - between August 2007 and February 2008 they logged some 1,690 vehicles exceeding the speed limit by at least 6 mph. Finally, I warmly thank Alison Stevenson, our Vice Chairman, for her tireless work in managing the many **planning applications** that come to the Council and Richard Greig for the efficient way he runs the day to day activities of the Council - you'll see details of some of this on page 6 of this report.

Robin Williamson

The Parish Plan suggested action plans for Housing & Environmental Matters, Facilities & Amenities, Traffic Matters, and Safety & Security Matters, and contained reviews of the facilities for Local Organisations and Young People. One of the first acts of the new Council was to establish working groups to address these action plans, and progress reports from these groups are set out on pages 2, 5 and 6.

YOUNG PEOPLE

The group is focussed on enabling young people to determine the facilities that they want in the village, and the immediate objectives are to resurrect the Youth Club and to provide some entertainment that young people will enjoy. In consequence there will be two major events this year for young people.

On Saturday 17th May there will be an open barbeque at the pavilion on the recreation ground. This will provide an opportunity for young people to discuss amongst themselves and tell us informally what facilities they would like in the village.

On a date to be confirmed in late June there will be a 'Battle of the Bands' in the Victory Hall. We are seeking young people both to participate, and to help organise, compere and judge the event.

We are committed to restarting the youth club, and we will be pleased to hear from anyone who is willing to be involved in this.

We are looking for the most appropriate way to use of the tarmac area adjacent to the pavilion; ideas will be welcome.

Anyone interested in participating in any of the above should phone Carol Jarvest on 811081 or email balcombeyouth@hotmail.com.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PARISH CLERK

- Providing access to planning applications by residents and advising Mid Sussex District Council of the Parish Council's and residents' comments and recommendations.
- Arranging subsidised rail cards and bus passes for the over 60's
- Supplying green garden waste bags on behalf of the District Council to help reduce the cost of household waste collections.
- Arranging regular freighter services.
- Publishing Parish Council news in the Parish Magazine, on the Parish Council notice board and via the Balcombe websites and Mid Sussex Times.
- Acting as Executive Officer for the Parish Council and maintaining links with Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex County Council and the Sussex Police.
- Taking bookings for pitch hire and use of the recreation ground, and making arrangements for the maintenance of the pavilion.
- Managing the contract with EDF for the provision of street and footpath lighting in the village.
- Supervising and coordinating the duties of the Parish Ranger.

TRAFFIC MATTERS

The speed of vehicles on Haywards Heath Road and London Road remains a major concern to residents. However any measures intended to reduce the speed of vehicles must comply with current regulations, must have the support of Balcombe residents, must be approved by the local authorities, and must be paid for. Following the receipt of some informal guidance from the local Highways Manager, the Council has engaged Atkins Ltd to conduct a feasibility study into the measures that could be adopted. Atkins is currently carrying out the necessary investigations, and a report is expected by the end of March. Thereafter the Council will seek the opinions of Balcombe residents on the proposals before taking any further action.

Parking is an even more intractable problem. The various factors that affect the problem include the view that double yellow lines are unsightly in a rural environment, the need to enforce any method of controlling parking, the fact that if you stop people parking in one place they will inevitably park somewhere else, and that reducing on-street parking is likely to increase the speed of through traffic. The search continues for effective and affordable measures that will persuade people to park only in appropriate places.

SAFETY & SECURITY MATTERS

The objectives identified in the Parish Plan are an effective police presence and increased support for Neighbourhood Watch.

The group is liaising with our Police Community Support Officer with the aim of establishing a regular 'surgery' in the village, and is promoting awareness of the activities of Neighbourhood Watch.

Following recent incidents, security measures in and around the pavilion on the recreation ground are being reviewed.

An additional street light is being installed at the bottom of Bramble Hill, and other locations where increased lighting would enhance security will be considered.

LOCAL SOCIETIES

A comprehensive list of all the organisations, clubs and societies in Balcombe has been compiled. This list, which provides brief details of activities, dates, times and places of meetings and contact details will be included in the Balcombe Village Welcome Pack. A copy of the list can be obtained from Susan Barker-Danby, telephone 811018.

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

The group reviews all planning applications and makes recommendations to the Parish Council. Although the Parish Council has no powers to accept or reject such applications, its views do influence the decisions made by the District Council.

The current Local Development Framework, which determines the extent of housing development within the Parish up to 2015, has been kept under regular review. The Inspector's report, published in November 2007, did not recommend any of the sites within the Parish that had been proposed. Thus the only new housing within the Parish that is likely in the next seven years will be "infilling" within the existing built up area or, possibly, affordable housing similar to Barn Meadow. The Core Strategy for 2015 – 2026 proposes 1,000 new dwellings spread among the villages of Mid Sussex. Although no specific locations have yet been identified, this figure is considered to be too high and has been opposed by the Council during the consultation period.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES

Dog fouling was identified in the Parish Plan as a major concern and we are seeking to increase the number of dog litter bins; "pooper scoopers" are available free of charge from the Parish Clerk.

To facilitate pedestrian movement around the village, a survey is being undertaken to identify footpaths that are in need of repair.

Assisted shopping trips and improved access to day care centres for elderly residents are being investigated.

The Balcombe Village Welcome Pack is being reviewed to enhance the experience of joining the Balcombe community.

Two key events are to be held in the village during 2008:

- In May the 'Balcombe First Week' will promote local enterprises. Various events will be held to identify what is available and to encourage Balcombe residents to support Balcombe businesses.
- In October the 'Keep Balcombe Tidy Week' will focus on the need to recycle and to preserve the environment in which we live.

Longer term projects include the possibilities of a quarterly table top sale in the Victory Hall, and a regular farmers market.

FINANCE

The table opposite sets out the budgeted and actual financial performance of the Council in the year ended 31 March 2008, and the approved budget for the year ending 31 March 2009. The pie charts below illustrate where the Council's funds come from and how it spends these funds. In both the table and the pie charts 'Facilities' refers to income and expenditure in connection with the recreation ground, the pavilion and general maintenance.

Past Year (ended 31 March 2008):

The main difference between the budgeted and actual financial performance is that the Council did not draw down the grant for further traffic calming measures held by Mid Sussex District Council. As shown in the budget, it is anticipated that this grant will be drawn down and used during the current year.

At the end of the year reserves amounted to some £15,000, but £14,000 of this total is committed to traffic calming, leaving general reserves of about £1,000.

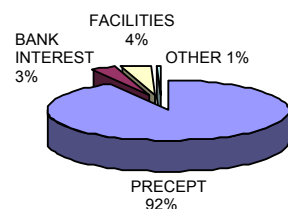
Current Year (ending 31 March 2009):

As forecast in our Autumn Report, the Council decided to raise the precept from £32,000 in the past year to £42,000 in the current year, the first increase since 2001 when it was increased to accumulate a reserve to pay for traffic calming measures. In recent years this reserve has been subsidising general expenditure, a situation which the Council believes should not continue. In addition, if any of the expectations that are apparent from the Parish Plan are to be realised, an appropriate level of general reserves must be achieved and maintained. The new precept will allow the Council both to meet its general expenditure and to start building up a general reserve. Although the new precept represents an increase of 30%, the impact on the Council Tax of Balcombe residents is less than 1%. In 8 out of the 24 parishes in Mid Sussex residents pay a greater precept contribution than do those in Balcombe

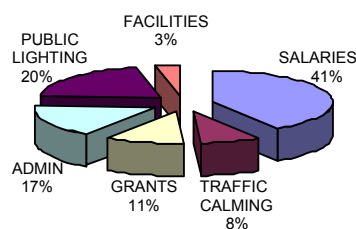
	2007/8		2008/9
	BUDGET	*ACTUAL	BUDGET
RESERVE AT START OF YEAR	£16,738	£16,738	£15,323
INCOME			
Precept	32,000	32,000	42,000
Traffic Calming Grant	9,000	0	9,000
Bank Interest	750	1,179	750
Facilities	1,320	1,336	1,410
Other	0	191	300
TOTAL	£43,070	£34,706	£53,460
EXPENDITURE			
Salaries (Clerk & Ranger)	16,100	14,760	16,250
Traffic Calming	12,500	2,880	14,000
Grants	3,000	3,936	4,100
Administration	7,820	6,035	7,850
Public Lighting	6,750	7,294	6,750
Facilities	2,500	1,216	2,600
TOTAL	£48,670	£36,121	£51,550
RESERVE AT END OF YEAR			
General Reserve		1,085	7,995
Traffic Calming Reserve		14,238	9,238
TOTAL	£11,138	£15,323	£17,233

- Actual figures are provisional and subject to change

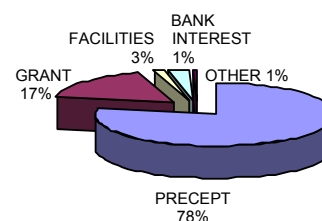
ACTUAL INCOME 2007/8



ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2007/8



BUDGET INCOME 2008/9



BUDGET EXPENDITURE 2008/9

