

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting, 17th May 2010, by the Chairman of Fittleworth Parish Council

Introduction Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome.

The Parish Council has again held formal meetings on the third Monday of every month of the past year except August, our fallow month. Out of a possible 11 occasions, I have been present on 10, Mike Allin, John Barstow, Alan Butcher, Susanne Dipper and Paul Stanforth on 9, Julie Hawkins on 7 and Hazel Barkworth on 6 despite daunting family problems; John Mills alone has managed 100% attendance. More often than not we had 8 out of 9 councillors present at our meetings - an impressive record when 3 is a quorum. I would also stress that our Parish Clerk, Peter Henderson, again has a 100% attendance record. We also extend our thanks to Janet Dunton, our District Councillor, and her husband Chris, our County Councillor, for their presence at most meetings; and to John Butler, our remarkably loyal and supportive press officer.

Subcommittees: The Finance subcommittee (in fact the whole council) tried hard to keep the precept at the 2008 figure but could not quite manage this for a second year; for 2010 our precept will cost the average Fittleworth householder just under £1 more than two years ago, and well below the average for the District. The Planning subcommittee, efficiently led by Alan Butcher, backed by Mike Allin and John Mills, and Susanne Dipper when available, visits properties and writes up the council's views. Of a much reduced total of 30 applications this year, 9 of them for tree work, they have only felt the need to object to 1 applicant's proposal, and that was withdrawn and adjusted. Finally Mike Allin, almost synonymous with Hesworth Common, has continued to chair that subcommittee helped by Hazel Barkworth, Susanne Dipper and advisors from the South Downs Conservation Group. They walk the Common, plan its development, organise working parties and maintain the Common for our enjoyment. It is only too easy to take the work of these groups for granted.

All councillors have continued to share responsibility for health and safety around the village, reporting regularly on the recreation ground, the playground, Hesworth Common & Birchwalk Woods, the triangle which includes the bowling green and rifle range, the pavilion, the arch and the centenary garden. Essential work has been done on the Arch by the Swan, several dangerous trees have been reduced or felled, the Alley Dick extension east of School Lane has a newly-planted hedge, litter has been picked up, and drains and ditches have been cleared by our own working parties and by contractors. While special mention should again be made of the heroic efforts of Nancy Allen in clearing the Alley Dick ditch, I should like especially to stress the debt owed to Mike Allin and John Mills, often assisted by Alan Butcher, for the work they have done around the pavilion and the village generally, saving hundreds of pounds in the process.

Working Parties: These groups, which usually include a majority of interested villagers, have continued to operate. The Communications working party, chaired by Neil Plumridge, has achieved its initial aims, with the notice board improved, the website 'www.Fittleworth.INFO' up and running and the Village Magazine so successful under its own committee; he plans to meet soon to review the website. The Housing

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Development working party under Paul Stanforth has continued to explore possibilities for affordable housing with local land-owners and CDC representatives, as yet with no tangible results, despite all their efforts. The Traffic working party, which I chair, has also met on several occasions, and regularly with West Sussex with whom we have useful contact. The impressive exhibition put on in the Village Hall just over a week ago attracted villagers' attention; special thanks are owed to Cyril Stiling, Robin Wilson, Chris. Welfare and Pam Wall. Six members are soon to be trained to operate a speed indicator device in Fittleworth.

The Youth working party, chaired by Susanne Dipper, has arranged activities in the evenings at the school, visits by the purple bus and use of the mobile skate park. It has also explored the possibility of erecting a shelter (more popular with parents than the youngsters themselves!) and plans further meetings to take ideas forward. The Community working party, chaired by Julie Hawkins, has been greatly involved in last year's Fete (next year's is 24th July) and the extraordinarily successful pantomime - both great ways to bring people together from all walks of life. We plan to combine the Community and Youth groups and work to common ends, one of which remains a welcome pack for new arrivals in the village. Meanwhile a new working party, designed to improve the tidiness of the village and thereby fend off possible vandalism and crime, has started under its chairman John Barstow.

Representation Councillors have continued to attend, or serve on, various outside bodies. Locally, of course, this means the Village Hall Committee, the Fittleworth & District Association and the Petworth & Bury Neighbourhood Police committee; on a wider basis we are always present at the North East Parishes Forum, the County Local Committee, the CDC Annual Meeting, the South Downs Authority and the Chichester District Association of Local Councils. That way we keep up to date with local trends and are able to represent Fittleworth's views. Most recently, of course, this has been to co-ordinate opposition to the proposal to extract sand from Horncroft. In that connection I extend a heartfelt thank-you to those who attended our public meeting and conducted themselves with such decorum, to Mike Elliott who spoke, and to Susanne Dipper for crafting learned rebuttals on Landscape and Ecology.

Events and Activities In the course of the year so many things have happened that one can only highlight a few. Maintenance has been a major theme under the wise guidance of John Mills assisted especially by Mike Allin. It will be no exaggeration to say that the windows and doors of this pavilion will have been completely refurbished by the end of this year, at a cost to the village of some £10,000. The work was sorely needed, and will ensure that the building remains a useful amenity for years to come; this is not, of course, the end of the story as the roof will need attention and internal fixtures such as boilers and the like are on their last legs and costly to replace. Without the generosity of these two councillors the costs would have been much greater.

We also gratefully acknowledge other benefactors - CDC for a grant towards work on the notice board, Les Mann for his splendid efforts in cleaning the bench opposite The Terrace, the Brownies for tidying the garden there and the very generous donation from a Trust which wishes to remain anonymous (though I suspect not unknown to past beneficiaries!) towards the purchase of three replacement benches. The Swan Inn Sign

fell from its moorings last summer and has been duly replaced, the path smoothed by the negotiating skills of Alan Butcher and John Mills. Trees have also proved a drain on our finances, especially the need to deal with the towering pine tree in Church Lane in January, trees in the Hesworth car park and the one which fell on the roof of the Rifle Club. John Mills and Alan Butcher with our tree warden Mike Allen, backed by the efficiency of our Clerk Peter Henderson, have seen these problems satisfactorily resolved. Maintenance of the Children's playground has also required some expenditure this last year.

Last autumn we were told the telephone box outside the Village Hall was due to be scrapped and we were asked whether we wished to purchase it. This we have done, and still hope someone in the Village would like to take it off our hands. Meanwhile Paul Stanforth, with John Mills and Alan Butcher and helped by Peter Henderson, have worked for many months to finalise the lease of the Pavilion by the Parish Council to the Sports Clubs. Thanks also to Paul, and Neil Plumridge, for their presentation at last week's Village Hall Open Evening.

We have welcomed useful and informative visits by Mr Graham Nunn, responsible for Environmental Health at CDC, and PCSO Jen Morely of Petworth Police. In September last year we were pleased to welcome Lord Lytton, accompanied by Mr Trevor Leggo; they came to present Fittleworth Parish Council with the official certificate recognising its achievement of Quality Council Status - recorded by John Butler as 'only the seventh parish council to achieve this honour out of the vast number of councils outside the metropolitan areas.' I can only echo Lord Lytton's warm congratulations to our Clerk, Peter Henderson, for his dedication in gaining the necessary qualifications and compiling the required dossier of paperwork, and to him, and all my fellow councillors, for their efforts and support throughout the last year. You will realise from the preceding summary that they do an awful lot for the village for no remuneration and very little thanks. It is good to be able to redress that balance in this report by thanking them most sincerely on your behalf.

Parish Councillors 2009-2010

Chairman - Tony Poole Vice Chairman - Paul Stanforth
 Councillors - Mike Allin Hazel Barkworth John Barstow Alan Butcher,
 Susanne Dipper Julie Hawkins John Mills

Clerk to the Parish Council

Peter Henderson Dyers Cottage, Little Bognor 865 058

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS - YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2010

CURRENT ACCOUNT RECEIPTS

BALANCE B/Fwd	1252.46
PRECEPT	15500.00
INVESTMENT DIVIDENDS	352.10
LICENCE FEE AND RENTS	3120.00
SUNDRIES	1550.62
COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME	496.50
TRANSFERS FROM SAVINGS ACCOUNT	1450.00
REVENUE & CUSTOMS	1777.93
	<u>25499.61</u>

TOTAL		25499.61
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CURRENT ACCOUNT PAYMENTS

MAINTENANCE of LAND and BUILDINGS	5472.04
HESWORTH COMMON	154.37
INSURANCE	2221.44
DONATIONS	886.80
LOAN REPAYMENTS	1237.94
BANK CHARGES	42.25
AUDIT FEES	222.50
REVENUE & CUSTOMS	941.94
CLERK'S WAGES & EXPENSES	4150.17
RECREATION GROUND	3680.00
SUNDRIES	881.50
ADMINISTRATION	743.32
VALUE ADDED TAX	1508.89
	<u>22143.16</u>

TOTAL		22143.16
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BALANCE@ 31-03-10 C/Fwd		3356.45
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SAVINGS ACCOUNT@ 31-03-10		12647.92
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BIRCHWALKS WOOD A/C @ 31-03-10		5213.93
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INVESTMENTS @ 31-03-10		1645.40
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