

# **NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT – MARCH 2007**

### ***MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN***

This year, as in previous years, the Parish Council has been very busy and a great deal has been achieved. In particular the launch of the Council Website earlier in mid 2006 and most recently, the endorsement of the North Horsham Parish Plan - as you have heard from our guest speakers earlier this evening. Both of these events take the Council closer to achieving Quality Status.

The entire Council membership is up for re-election in two month's time – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007 when it is hoped all 19-councillor vacancies will be filled as a result of those elections. In May 2003 we were short of 6 candidates, which up until now was one of the required criteria that stopped the Council from applying for Quality Status. I am determined that we do not fail again on meeting this criterion. Ideally it would be good to have contested elections in all four wards. That requires a minimum of 23 candidates and if achieved will enable the Council to seek Quality Status as early as possible in the new council year. The last time actual votes were cast for any vacancy on the Council was for a bye-election in about 1996. Since then due to insufficient candidates all Councillors, by way of default, have been 'elected' unopposed. This is not true democracy.

So why not put yourself forward and let the public have a real choice in who they want to represent them. When we achieve Quality status new challenges and responsibilities will be put before us but, I am sure that with our councillors and staff continuing to work together with you the residents of North Horsham we will achieve new heights. There are exciting times ahead.

I have been pleased to be Council Chairman for the past two years and in particular would like to pay tribute to all our staff that have been supportive through some difficult times and continue to serve the Council in an exceptional manner.

I would also like to thank the members of the council for their untiring and unselfish time they have given to the Council

The message for the future is that we will continue to build on our successes and at the same time review Council policies to ensure we listen to residents' concerns and respond as effectively as possible. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the highlights of the past year.

***Councillor John Charles***

### ***PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP***

Sadly, in August, Councillor Geoff Couch passed away. Our condolences go to Joy and her family. It is hoped that an outcome of the Council's Photographic Competition/Exhibition in Mid April, will be the acquisition of some photographs of old Holbrook and Roffey displayed here in the Roffey Millennium Hall in Geoff' memory.

In the past month, another valued Councillor resigned due to the increasing success of her business. Maria Aguilar imparted a great deal of her human resources and personnel experience to the Council's benefit.

Unfortunately, when councillors do not attend meetings for six months without acceptable apologies for absence, then they become automatically disqualified. Two Members found

themselves in this predicament in November when they ceased by law to remain members of this Council.

Every time a councillor vacancy occurs the Council is obliged by law to place a Public Notice in the local press. It needs just 10 electors in the affected Ward to write to the Returning Officer at Horsham District Council to make a Bye-election happen. When this fails, the law empowers the remaining Councillors to fill the vacancy. Most people feel democracy is important so it remains a puzzle why so many vacancies are filled without any democratic elections.

We held a 'Council Open Day' just two days ago on Saturday, to encourage local residents to find out what it more of what it means to be a Parish Councillor and how to become a candidate in May. The display boards around the hall this evening help tell that story. If you wish to know more about being a Councillor then contact the Clerk, Tom O'Hara or Sue Kemp, the Deputy Clerk before you leave this evening.

## ***ALLOWANCES FOR COUNCILLORS***

The Council has a Scheme of Members' Allowances, which is independently reviewed. Currently this is £250 per year. A Parish Councillor may elect to forego payment of the allowance.

The Councillors listed below were paid the following allowances during 2006/07

Geoff Couch	£84.24
Mrs Kim-Jean Farhall	£250
Simon Torn	£250

## ***TRAINING & CONFERENCES***

Councillors and staff are encouraged to attend training courses organised by a number of outlets as well as conferences. The following is a list of courses/conferences attended during the year:

Councillors	John Charles	National Association of Local Councils Conference, Liverpool (September 2006)
	David Searle	Action in Rural Sussex and Sussex Association of Local Councils AMG – Ardingly, (October 2006)
Staff	Tom O'Hara (Parish Clerk)	Society of Local Council Clerks AGM – Heathfield (March 2007) SLCC Regional Conference – Uckfield (November 2006) National Association of Local Councils Conference, Liverpool (September 2006) Action in Rural Sussex and Sussex Association of Local Councils AMGs – Ardingly, (October 2006) Finalising studying for the Certificate in Local Council Administration SALC Clerks' Information Days – twice a year (Hassocks & Storrington)
	Sue Kemp (Deputy Clerk)	NALC Conference Liverpool (September 2006 – 1 day as an invited guest speaker)
	All Staff	Health & Safety Awareness Training - (July 2006)

## ***COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY MATTERS***

**Website** - The Council is committed to improving communication links with local residents, organisations and businesses. When you visit our website ([www.northhorsham-pc.gov.uk](http://www.northhorsham-pc.gov.uk))

you will find a wealth of useful information about services and facilities provided by the Parish Council. There are full details of the business of the Council – agendas, reports, minutes, etc. If you want to see your local organisation listed, please let the Clerk know. Enquiries for hiring each of the Council’s three Community Halls can now be made on line at: [hall.bookings@northhorsham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:hall.bookings@northhorsham-pc.gov.uk)

**NHPC News** – The Council’s newsletter is produced several times a year and contains useful information about Council services, etc. If you have not received your copy recently please contact the Parish Office.

**Planning Surgeries (clinics)** have been held once a month since January 2007 at Roffey Millennium Hall. These are held from 10am to 11am on the Saturday morning before each Planning, Environment & Transport Committee, when a Member of the Committee will be available to help you view planning applications and listen to your concerns. Residents that attend are encouraged to also attend the planning meeting on the following Thursday. Already quite a lot of residents have used this new service effectively.

**Holbrook and Roffey Community Groups** – These groups meet every three months in both Holbrook (at North Heath Hall) and Roffey (Roffey Millennium Hall). This is an opportunity to meet with councillors from the Parish, District and County Councils for the area. It is open to individuals as well as local organisations. Hot issues discussed recently have included the proposed relocation of Horsham Town football club on the Holbrook Club site in North Heath Lane. If you have not attended before make a note of the next meetings and come along- you will be made very welcome!

December 2006 saw the second **Community Carol Service** held at St Marks Church, Holbrook sponsored by the Parish Council. The service was very well attended with readings by local residents. The Council wishes to thank the Rev Michael Broadley and Rev Kevin Agnew for officiating. Arrangements are in hand for the Community Carol Service to be held at St Andrews Methodist Church, Roffey in December 2007.

**The Citizens Advice Bureau** continues to be held at Roffey Millennium Hall on Fridays, between 10am and 1pm. Many local residents have used this local CAB outreach, which is proving increasingly popular.

## ***SOCIAL MATTERS – VANDALISM, etc***

**Property Maintenance Van** – The Council now has a van to enable speedier and more timely response to repairs and maintenance of Council owned property. Eamon Flynn heads this small team and has carried out numerous repairs to date. Earlier in the year a seat was damaged beyond repair and instead of arranging for someone else to clear it away, Eamon popped along and did it – saving money and getting the job done much quicker. So next time you see our very own White Van Man – give him a wave – he’s working for you!

**Speed Indicator Device (SID)** – Local residents frequently express concerns about speeding traffic, especially near schools. S.I.D is a speed indication device that is available for use by local communities under police supervision. It is used to promote awareness of the dangers of speeding and safer driving habits. The Parish Council supports this scheme and together with Councillors we seek local residents to volunteer to be trained in the use of SID. Will you volunteer?

**Bus Shelter Renewal Programme** – The Council owns 9 bus shelters and has been renovating and replacing them over a three year period. Two were renovated and two new ones built over a year ago. Three old brick bus shelters were demolished just a few months ago and replaced with modern see-through shelters. West Sussex County Council provided grants of 50% of the costs involved to date. The two remaining shelters – Crawley Road

near the Norfolk Arms and North Heath Lane near Novartis – are due to be replaced in the coming months. Again, grants will be sought from the County Council.

**Multi Court Improvements** – The multi courts at Holbrook Recreation Ground are having a makeover! New goal and tennis posts/nets have already been purchased. The fencing has been repaired and in the late spring a new ‘Proflex’ surface will be laid. The total cost exceeds £33,000. The final result will provide 1<sup>st</sup> class facilities and give renewed impetus for tennis as well as the existing 5-a-side soccer and netball use. So get those tennis rackets out of the cupboard under the stairs or in the garden shed and book a court throughout the summer.

**Vandalism** – The past 12 months have seen a number of incidents of petty, mindless vandalism to Council owned facilities. A seat was completely destroyed at the Amberley Close Open Space (three new anti-vandal seats are soon to be installed). Three ornamental trees had bark stripped from the trunks – almost killing them. Fence panels at Holbrook Recreation Ground are continually kicked in (new chain link fence now agreed). Part of the safety surface at the Birches Road children’s play area was dug up and a gate to the play area severely damaged. External lights at Roffey Millennium Hall are regularly targeted. The Parish Council WILL prosecute offenders and would ask residents to be vigilant and report incidents to both ourselves AND the police. This is criminal damage and has cost residents several thousand £’s in repairs and replacement. Without your assistance we are helpless!

**Travellers** – Last summer saw the intrusion of travellers at Earles Meadow. Due to the instant efforts of Sue Kemp and the delicate use of bailiffs, the travellers were gone within days rather than weeks. Council staff promptly dealt with the resulting rubbish and minor damage. Please keep on the alert and contact the Parish Office if it occurs again. You are our eyes and ears!

## ***MONEY MATTERS***

The Parish Council complies with the statutory requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 in the management of its accounts and financial affairs. The appointed external auditor for the Council is Mazars of Southampton; and the independent internal auditor is Peter J Consultants of Lindfield. The Parish Clerk undertakes day-to-day financial management, as the Council’s Responsible Financial Officer with regular reports to the Finance & Administration Committee. Additionally, each Committee monitors its own budget on a quarterly basis.

The Council’s Budget (Precept) for 2006/07, set in January 2006, was £251,830, an increase of 1.9% on the previous year.

### **How then is your money spent? ...**

The gross budgeted expenditure in the financial year 2006/07 was £447,727, offset by £167,926 of mainly hall lettings income and £27,882 from reserves. Most of the costs of running the three community halls (Roffey Millennium Hall, North Heath Hall and The Tythe Barn/Multi Courts) are met from lettings income. About £140,000 of the total budget is provided to meet the remaining administration costs of the Council. This covers such items as the Office staff salaries, audit fees, office equipment, telephones, postage, membership of organisations and subscriptions, insurance, training, elections, etc.

In addition about £20,000 is repayment of the 26-year loan on Roffey Millennium Hall. The Burial Charges due to Horsham District Council have been maintained at the lower level of £6,000. About £63,000 is paid for grounds maintenance, amenity maintenance, litter wardens, dog bins, street lighting - £19,000 of this has been carried forward towards the £30,000 cost of resurfacing the two multi courts at Holbrook Recreation Ground. £21,000

has been spent on capital projects. Grants of £9,783 were received towards three new bus shelters and subsidising the litter warden.

The budget for 2007/08 has been set at gross expenditure of £452,219 with £182,718 met from income and reserves. The remaining £269,501 becomes the new Precept and is an increase of 7% over 2006/07. Because there are more properties to spread the precept over the actual council tax increase is only 5.4%.

## ***GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS & YOUTH AWARDS***

The Parish Council makes a number of grants and awards to a variety of local organisations and individuals. This amounted to some £11,000 in 2006/07. Recipients were as follows:

Crawley & Horsham Home-Start	£1,000	1 <sup>st</sup> Roffey Scouts	£400
Individual Youth Awards	£650	3 <sup>rd</sup> Horsham Scouts	£400
Horsham in Bloom (NHPC best rear gardens)	£400	Royal British Legion	£50
Horsham CAB	£3,010	Horsham Age Concern	£4,000
Mid Downs Crossroads	£500	Saturday Venture Assoc	£150
Amber Pre-School (Roffey)	£500		

## ***THE PARISH COUNCIL & HOW TO GET IN TOUCH***

### **PARISH COUNCILLORS**

#### **HOLBROOK EAST WARD (5 Members)**

Richard Henman, 17 Hatchlands, RH12 5JX	243163	Appointed 27.05.03
Simon Relleen, 55 Amberley Road, RH12 4LJ	230955	Appointed 17.05.05
Tony Rickett, 33 Bluebell Close, RH12 5WB	217003	Appointed 17.05.05
Ray Turner, 8 Conifers Close, RH12 4QH	259612	Appointed 30.11.04
One vacancy		

#### **HOLBROOK WEST WARD (4 Members)**

Mrs Karen Burgess, 27 Haybarn Drive	273533	Appointed 27.05.03
Peter Burgess, 27 Haybarn Drive, RH12 5JF	273533	Elected May 2003
Ken Spiers, "Robins Post", North Heath Lane, RH12 5PJ	268785	Elected May 2003
Ray Sutton, 7 Cottingham Avenue, RH12 5HU	252741	Elected May 2003

#### **ROFFEY NORTH WARD (6 Members)**

John Charles, 123 Beech Road, RH12 4TY	265351	Appointed 27.05.03
David Searle, 7 Earles Meadow, RH12 4HP	256267	Appointed 13.12.05
Mrs Elizabeth Ferran, 3 Amundsen Road, RH12 5GE	255262	Appointed 27.05.03
Simon Torn, 9 Shepherds Way, RH12 4LT	262199	Elected May 2003
Two vacancies		

#### **ROFFEY SOUTH WARD (4 Members)**

Mrs Kim-Jean Farhall, 2 Elgar Way, RH13 3RH	242108	Elected May 2003
Peter Paffett, 21 Bracken Grove, RH12 4NE	269145	Elected May 2003
Mrs Pat Rutherford, 24 Brambling Close, RH13 6AZ	262001	Elected May 2003
One vacancy		

#### **HOW TO MAKE CONTACT:**

By writing to the Parish Clerk – Tom O’Hara, Roffey Millennium Hall, Crawley Road, Horsham, RH12 4DT. Telephone/fax 01403 750786. Email: parish.clerk@northhorsham-pc.gov.uk

#### ***FEEDBACK (Tell us what you think)***

The Parish Council would welcome any comments on the content of this Annual Report and would also be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**Please contact any of the Parish Councillors or the Parish Clerk.**