



**Great Horwood
Parish Council**

Great Horwood Parish Council Chairman's Report for the year May 2007 to April 2008

The Parish Council

As a result of the local elections on 3rd May 2007 the new Council consisted of 2 existing councillors - Moya Berrill and James Samways and 4 new councillors - Rod Moulding, Ian Lamberton, Michael Brocklehurst and myself. We also had one unfilled vacancy. This was eventually filled when Diana Yates was co-opted to the Council at our November 2007 meeting meaning that her first meeting as a Parish Councillor was in January 2008.

The Clerk to the Council

Sue Brazier gave notice to leave the role soon after the new Council was formed and we recruited Duncan Trigg to replace her, however he did not start until 1st October 2007.

So we started the year with very little experience of running a Parish Council and it has been a steep learning curve for many of us. However I am pleased to report that we have made significant developments in a number of areas on which I would like to report as follows.

Developments during the year.

Fixed schedule of meetings for the year

In order to ensure that all councillors and other interested parties can plan their diaries we decided to fix the second Monday of each month (exc. August and December) for the Ordinary Meetings of the Council and published the whole list of meetings for the year ahead. This date in the month also allows time to get an article written and submitted following the meeting by the Focus deadline of the 15th of each month. This arrangement appears to be a success and so I expect it to continue into future years.

Adopted Policies

It became apparent early on in the year that the Council did not have any up to date policies to govern its operations and so during the year we have adopted 3 major new policies as follows:-

Code of Conduct adopted on 18th July 2007
Financial Regulations adopted on 18th July 2007
Standing Orders adopted on 11th February 2008

Many thanks to Cllr. Moulding for all of his work on all 3 of these policy documents, which we believe will ensure good governance.

Website

This was set up under the auspices of the facility provided by Bucks CC and has the address www.bucksinfo.net/greathorwoodpc. On the site you will find the minutes of all the meetings of the Council and the minutes of all the meetings of the Recreation Committee. It also has the adopted policies, a small photo album, a list of dates of forthcoming events and other “useful” information. It also contains the Council’s response to the AVDC Local Framework and the AVDC Affordable Housing Draft as noted below and a Great Horwood bus timetable prepared by the Parish Plan Steering Committee. There have been an increasing number of hits on the site and a Google search for Great Horwood now lists the Parish Council Website on the first page in position 5.

Monthly Report in Focus

As mentioned above it has become practice to submit an article to Focus each month reporting on the proceedings of each Ordinary Meeting of the Council in an attempt to ensure that residents are aware of the activities of the Council. I am unsure whether this is appreciated, however I do believe it is important that everybody in the village is informed about what is being discussed and agreed at its Parish Council meetings.

Regular Reports from Committees.

We have set up the regular reporting at each Parish Council meeting from:-
Planning Committee – the report is now added to the minutes of the meeting.
Recreation Committee – the minutes of all their meetings are posted on the website
Parish Plan Steering Committee.

Other notable events

Completion of Street Lighting Project
Completion of Nash Road Parking Scheme (apart from hand rails)

Finances

It became clear early in the year that the major expenditure on the new street lighting was going to drastically reduce the Council’s reserves and so we reluctantly had to refuse applications from BCC for contributions to the Nash Road Parking Scheme and from AVDC for a contribution to add to a grant for improving the facilities at the football club. We even had worries at one point about the possibility of running our current and deposit accounts down to an unacceptably low level. In the end we got through the year but after comparisons with the level of precept set by many local parishes we decided unanimously on the need to more than double our precept. Some of this is needed for the maintenance of the new Recreation Ground and to repay the

loan for the new street lighting which must be paid back at nearly £1,000 per annum. In addition we have allowed for the refurbishment of the old recreation area, in Willow Road, and for professional maintenance in other areas of the village. Although this might seem a tremendous additional burden on Council Tax Payments the actual costs to a Band D household is 37 pence per week or 27 pence to a single person household.

The values of insurance cover for all the Council's assets has also been reviewed and updated during the year.

Litter Pick

A successful litter pick was held on Sunday 9th March with nearly 30 people turning out to help. A big thank you from the Council for all those who were involved.

Associated Organisations

I and other Councillors were very keen to ensure that Great Horwood was well represented and had its voice heard in wider local forums and so I am pleased to say during this last year we have been active participants in:-

BCC Aylesbury Vale Local Committee

BCC Winslow Local Area Forum

NBPPC (North Bucks Parish Planning Committee) Activities – inc. attendance of John Bercow at the meeting of 29th November 2007 in preparation for a debate that he had obtained on 4th December 2007 on developments in Aylesbury Vale.

NAG (Neighbourhood Action Group) – liaison with local PC Nikki Tipping and PCSO Nicole Bruce together with representatives from other local parishes.

Aylesbury Vale North Sports Committee

BALC (Bucks Association of Local Councils) AGM

Responses to consultations.

During the year we have submitted responses to the following consultations:-

AVDC Local Development Framework – Preferred Options Consultation and this is available on our website.

Buckinghamshire Waste Development Plan Document Preferred Options Consultation Report and have seen the possible siting of a Waste Transfer Facility and Household Waste Recycling Centre at the Winslow end of the B4033 (in a site enclosed by the A413, Furze lane and the disused railway line) removed from the current BCC plans.

BCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2011 prepared by the Environment and Footpaths Group of the Parish Plan and submitted in the name of the Parish Council. We are one of only three parishes not already part of the Parish Paths Partnership (PPP) that was invited to participate in a PPP meeting on 22 January. The PPP may be a source of funding for existing and new footpaths, and in any case it is clear that we are now being involved more closely.

AVDC Affordable Housing draft and this is available on our website.

Milton Keynes Core Strategy Preferred Options.

Responses to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Rural Strategy

New Recreation Ground

During the year 2 members of the Council have been members of the Recreation Committee and trustees of the Great Horwood and Singleborough Recreation Trust which now owns the land at the bottom of Spring Lane (Horwode Pece) on which it is planned to develop the new Recreation Ground for the village.

During the year the formal transfer of ownership of the land took place and Planning Consent was received for change of use from farmland to recreation ground.

Current work involves investigating and obtaining funds and grants for preparing and equipping the land and in obtaining quotes for the equipment to be installed. We have still to resolve the issue of whether the Parish Council should apply for the grants and pay for the equipment as this may be favourable from the point of view of VAT treatment.

Parish Plan/Village Design Statement

The Parish Council has supported the Parish Plan Steering Committee and Village Design Group to promote progress on the Village Design Statement.

Training

Cllrs. Brocklehurst, Gilbey, Lamberton and Moulding attended a full days training on Saturday 2nd February which led to the need to review the membership of the Parish Council Committees and to consider whether it is necessary to set up a new committee for decisions on the emergency expenditure of funds.

Disappointments

Demise of Farmers market

No progress with any traffic calming measures for the village which is largely due to the fact that BCC do not appear to support or fund any of the methods which appear common in other adjacent Counties. e.g. speed cameras, fixed speed indicating devices (SID's), chicanes and humps. Undaunted we shall continue to work on providing solutions for the safety and comfort of all residents.

Continued problems from dog fouling around the village

Lack of participation from residents except by a small number of regulars.

Plans and Thoughts for the next year

Encourage and develop a forum to listen to villagers views and respond accordingly and appropriately.

Support the development and equipping of the new Recreation Ground

Decide on and implement alternative use of old Recreation Ground in Willow Road

Decide whether to install Dog Bins

Continue with the quest to find and install suitable traffic calming measures.

Be prepared to respond to further developments on SE Plan and AVDC Local Development Framework.

Be prepared to respond to other local consultation issues.

Continue to ensure that the voice of Great Horwood is heard in all appropriate local forums.

Resolve issues arising due to current organisation and responsibilities between the Parish Council, the Recreation Committee of the Parish Council and the Great

Horwood and Singleborough Recreation Trust, which owns the new Recreation Ground (Horwode Pece) land.
Revise the method of working of the Planning Committee of the Parish Council.
Decide on whether the Parish Council should appoint a Finance Committee.
Consider whether we should try for a Rural Exception Affordable Housing Scheme.
Consider ways of completing the footpath in Nash Road opposite to Chapel House.
To further develop the Parish Council website.
To support any initiatives to provide and/or maintain facilities and resources required by our community.
To encourage other village organisations to attend and report to the 2009 Annual Parish Meeting.
To encourage and support further training for Councillors and the Parish Clerk

To develop the community and community spirit of Great Horwood and Singleborough for the benefit of villagers from all sections of the community

**John Gilbey – Chairman Great Horwood Parish Council
May 2008**