

## FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GATHERING OF PARISHIONERS HELD AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2015 IN THE FBC CENTRE, GORSE RIDE NORTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE

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**PRESENT:** Cllr R. Cundy, Chairman.  
Cllr G. Markham, Vice Chairman.

Cllrs Ms L. Blackwood, S. Bowers, S. Bromley, W. Chapman, Mrs C. Driver, Mrs N. Jennings-Frisby, R. Marshallsay, J. May, Mrs L. Newcombe, A. Pearce, R. Rampton, G. Veitch, S. Weeks, R. Woof.

Clerk – Mrs K. Dagnall  
Assistant to the Clerk – Mrs A. Kent

Steve Cartwright, South Central Ambulance Service  
Dennis Eyriey, Wokingham United Charities

53 residents, members of local organisations, representatives from Thames Valley Police and from Wokingham Borough Council.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

Cllr Cundy welcomed everyone to the Annual Gathering, again being held in the FBC Centre where the Council is based, and thanked all present for attending.

Cllr Cundy stated how good it was to see so many residents present, as well as representatives from several local organisations which provide services for our community, and colleagues from the Borough Council, the Police, and from our churches.

Ian Jones from the South Central Ambulance Service, and Dennis Eyriey from the Wokingham United Charities, were also welcomed to the meeting.

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from

Cllr Ian Pittock; WBC Cllr Angus Ross; WBC Officers - Chris Buggy, John Cawdell, Peter Baveystock; Sonia Burt (PCSO); Jim Gallagher (FBC Centre); Sam Harper (MS Therapy); Christine Lalley (BALC); Dr Phillip Lee MP; Mark Popplestone; Fred Rule (Keep Mobile); Ray Sharp (Ramblers); Cherry Woodley (former Clerk).

#### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GATHERING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2014.**

The minutes of the 2014 Annual Gathering were agreed and signed as a true record.

#### **THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Cllr R Cundy. Appendix A refers.

#### **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr G Markham. Appendix B refers.

#### **PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr Mrs L Newcombe. Appendix C refers.

#### **Arborfield Strategic Development Location.**

Cllr G Veitch. Appendix C refers.

### **ROADS AND ROAD SAFETY REPORT**

Cllr S Bromley. Appendix D refers.

### **AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr G Markham. Appendix E refers.

### **RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr R. Woof. Appendix F refers.

A number of questions were taken from the floor. The Council was thanked for all of its work on behalf of the local community.

### **SOUTH CENTRAL AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Steve Cartwright from the South Central Ambulance Service spoke about community defibrillators, and demonstrated a unit.

### **WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES**

Dennis Eyriey, Chair of the Organisation, outlined the history of the Charities and its current work providing almshouses in Wokingham, and grants through a relief in need fund. Recent changes mean that all of Finchampstead Parish is now covered by the organisation.

### **BUSINESS OF PARISH INTEREST**

Tom Conlin, Chief Executive, Berkshire County Blind Society spoke about the work of the Society, and thanked the Council for its ongoing support.

Eric Twigg spoke about the new Finchampstead Emergency Response initiative and asked people to sign up as 'early responders' who could help out in the early stages of any local emergency.

A resident complimented the summer hanging baskets at the California crossroads.

Cllr Cundy advised that Bert Vile, a former chair of the Parish Council, passed away recently.

### **CONCLUSION**

Cllr Cundy encouraged those present to provide email addresses so that information could continue to be distributed to residents, and to use the Council's web site.

Cllr Cundy stated how proud he was of the Parish Council, and thanked the Parish Councillors for their hard work, all undertaken voluntarily, over the past year. The Clerk and Assistant to the Clerk were also thanked for their support and work over the year.

Those present were invited to take a copy of the Council's Annual Report for 2014/15, to view the displays and information, and to join Parish Councillors for refreshments.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

## Chairman's Report 2014/15

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This meeting is our annual parish meeting, and is a statutory requirement for all Local Councils. We know this as the Annual Gathering, and like to look on it as an opportunity to tell you what we have been doing over the past year, and also to meet and listen to as many local people and representatives from local organisations as we can.

The Parish Council has had another busy and successful year, and I am grateful to our 17 Councillors, supported by our Clerk and Assistant to the Clerk, for their efforts over the past year on behalf of the community.

We have undertaken several projects this year, perhaps the most unusual are the 'Wokingham Remembers' project, commemorating the centenary of the start of World War I, and providing the first community defibrillator in Finchampstead.

You will hear more about these and other projects later in the meeting, as well as about our work relating to the Arborfield development, which has been a priority this year.

We have also continued to develop our communication with local residents, and to build on our links with Wokingham Borough Council officers, and local groups and organisations who can, with us, help to protect and enhance the Parish, and improve the quality of life for our residents.

One of the local organisations which plays a major role in making Finchampstead a safer, cleaner and friendlier place to live is the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Action Group. This Group provides an interface between residents, Thames Valley Police, Councils and other agencies. I would particularly like to thank all those involved with the NAG for their efforts on behalf of the community.

**Roland Cundy**

Chairman, Finchampstead Parish Council

## Appendix B

# Finance and General Purposes Committee Report 2014/15

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The Finance Committee includes chairpersons or representatives from all committees and is responsible for budgets and control of finance and governance of the Parish Council. This includes:

- Compiling the annual budget, including the requirements for Amenities, Roads and Road Safety and Rights of Way Committees.
- Recommending to the Main Council the precept to be collected for the coming year from residents by WBC.
- Overseeing the completion of the Annual Return and Audit.
- Periodically reviewing our policies on such diverse matters as data protection, complaints, financial controls etc.
- Managing the grant process and making grant recommendations to Main Council. We receive many applications and only make grants where it can be seen that Finchampstead residents will benefit. In the last year we made donations to the Berkshire Blind Society, Blackwater Valley Country Park, CAB, Finchampstead Scouts, FBC for their excellent youth work, MS Therapy and local schools for extra curricular activities and other local bodies. We do ask organisations not based here to demonstrate that Finchampstead residents will benefit, generally by asking how many of their clients live in the Parish. We do not sponsor individuals.

Plans for the coming year include continued development of the web site and improvements to communication with local residents by using social media. Plans for potential devolution of services will be closely monitored.

Although the Parish precept is only a small part of your total council tax bill I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have maintained it at the same level as 2013/14 for the coming year. Provision has been made for support for recreational projects, particularly for local teenagers, and also for work required in connection with the Arborfield Strategic Development Location.

**Geoff Markham**

**Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee.**

## Planning Committee Report 2014/15

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The Committee continues to meet on a 4-week cycle to correspond with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Planning Committee meetings.

Since last March, we have dealt with 175 applications, some 15% down on last year. Quite a few of these have been amended applications or for Certificates of Lawful Use where a householder wishes to regularise an existing extension. As usual, the vast majority of planning applications have consisted of minor extensions to existing houses. We had no objections to 139 and had comments on or objected to the remainder. The WBC has disagreed with our recommendations on 21 occasions. 2 applications which had been refused by the WBC were taken to Appeal and are awaiting a decision by the Inspectors. Of those on which the Inspectors have decided, including some left over from the previous year, 5 were allowed and 12 dismissed. We were advised of 2 applications under the new Householder Prior Notification procedure. We are consulted on applications for development which are just outside our boundary as a Neighbouring Parish. Members of the Planning Committee are always willing to attend meetings of the WBC Planning Committee in order to make our comments in person, and to attend Appeals where necessary.

With regard to Enforcement, there have been a number of changes in personnel in the Enforcement team at WBC, but we have continued to raise our concerns with them. The Vice-Chairman and I attended a very useful training session at WBC on Planning and Enforcement, and more sessions are planned this year to which other members of the committee will go. We were given a briefing note to be included in our publications which lists those examples of work which are not breaches of planning control: breaches of restrictive covenants, internal works (to a non-listed building), small scale running of a business from home, chopping down non-protected trees, trespass, damage to property, behaviour of builders, sale of cars from the highway or grass verge, blocking a drive or private right of way, parking a touring caravan on a drive.

The committee completed a questionnaire on Gypsy & Traveller Needs, as well as responding to the consultation on the draft options for the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan, also a questionnaire on Rural Housing Policy. We submitted a response to the WBC consultation on the South Wokingham Distribution Road, favouring the Northern route, and completed a questionnaire on Shaping our New Communities.

As usual, the WBC has given us the opportunity to comment on all new Tree Preservation Orders and advises us of all permitted felling and trimming of those trees with existing TPOs. We continue to be consulted on street naming and numbering.

As always, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their continued enthusiasm for this committee. I would of course also like particularly to thank the assistant to the Clerk, who has responsibility for the Planning Committee, for all her hard work on our behalf.

**Lauraine Newcombe.**  
**Chair, Planning Committee**

## **The Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location (SDL)**

As plans for the development progress, we have continued to make this one of our priorities. Our aim is to minimise the potential negative impacts on existing residents, and to ensure that infrastructure – for example transport and education – meets local requirements. We have submitted detailed responses to the outline planning applications submitted in November 2014, one from AGLC and one from MFT, and also held a public exhibition to share information with and gather the views of our residents. We have also commented on the planning application for the new secondary school due to open in September 2016. We continue to play an active role in the monthly Steering Group meetings, and are also involved with specific initiatives relating to transport and education provision. The AGLC application and that for the new secondary school is expected to be determined by the WBC Planning Committee at its March meeting. The MFT application will be determined later.

As part of the proposed development, major road improvements are proposed at some of the key traffic bottle necks, - Barkham Bridge - Commonfield Lane, among others. In Finchampstead, we are concerned that California Cross roads is improved and enhanced, in order to ensure any increase in traffic is accommodated with maximum safety and minimal inconvenience to pedestrians and other road users. Parish councillors recently visited Poynton in Cheshire in order to evaluate the benefits of the “Shared Space” solution implemented there and assess if such a solution might be applicable to Finchampstead. A working group has now been established with WBC, the Parish council and some local businesses, in order to progress these ideas further.

**Gordon Veitch**

**Vice Chair, Planning Committee, and Finchampstead Arborfield Steering Team.**

## Roads and Road Safety Committee Report 2014/15

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This committee of 8 councillors meets quarterly. We work with Thames Valley Police, WBC and others to help make the Parish a safer place for residents travelling around - whether by public transport, car, on foot, bicycle or horse.

We have some limited funds of our own to support small projects and we try to act as a liaison group to deal with residents' local issues.

During 2014 /15 we have been focussing our work on 6 areas:

- Improvements at Avery Corner Car Park
- Monitoring traffic volume and speeds throughout the Parish
- New Gateway on Barkham Ride
- Parish owned Lamppost rationalisation
- Flooding prevention
- Promoting Green Routes

### ***Avery Corner Car Park.***

The improvement of the layout of Avery Corner Car Park continues. We are currently working with WBC to draw up plans to re-layout the car park including a drop off zone. We expect to complete this work in 2015/16 increasing the car park capacity by an additional 10 spaces. Following this we will begin work to implement civil parking enforcement as appropriate.

### ***Monitoring Traffic Level and Speeds***

We continue to deploy our two speed data recorders (SDR) on roads throughout Finchampstead. This enables us to keep regular records of traffic levels so that we can establish trends in the Parish and this data is now well established as a credible source of information.

In turn, this has helped us build a good relationship with the Police to get additional enforcement in place when appropriate. For instance following a report from a resident and supported by our traffic data – the Police undertook an early morning enforcement at the Kingsmere Lake end of Nine Mile Ride, where they caught a fair number of offenders. Another important use of the traffic data has been to influence the plans for the Arborfield development which have now been submitted to WBC.

### ***Gateway on Barkham Ride***

As part of our ongoing programme to mark the entrance to the Parish with a welcome and a prominent reminder of the speed limits, we will be introducing a village gateway on entry into Finchampstead from Barkham. We are working with Wokingham Borough Council to introduce 30mph roundels at this site. We have evidence from recent similar installations at Finchampstead Road and Longwater Road that Roundels and Gateway signage together have an impact on reducing speed.

### ***Parish Owned Lampposts***

All aging and consequently unsafe concrete lamp columns owned by the Parish have been removed or replaced according to feedback from local residents. We have implemented a process to replace any faulty lamp lanterns in Parish owned street lights with more energy efficient LED replacements. We have also implemented a process to mirror "part night lighting" in line with other WBC owned lampposts in that area.

### ***Flooding Prevention***

We have engaged with WBC regarding the flooding on Church Lane, White Horse Lane and Finchampstead Road between Spring Gardens and the Surgery. The gullies and the culverts have been cleared. In the recent flash rain storms, we have seen that this work has reduced flooding successfully on Finchampstead Road

and significantly on Church Lane. We will be continuing to encourage WBC to find working solutions for White Horse Lane and The Gallops.

***Promoting green routes:***

As part of our commitment to encourage cycling in the Parish, we have installed cycle racks at the California Ratepayers Hall to add to those put in at the Post Office last year. These are being used, so we will be continuing the programme by installing cycle racks at the Memorial Park in the Village.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Roads & Road Safety committee members and the Clerk for their continuing hard work and support throughout this year.

**Steve Bromley**  
**Chair, Roads & Road Safety Committee.**



## Amenities Committee Report 2014/15

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The Amenities Committee is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the local environment and supporting local services.

Perhaps our most unusual activity this year was to formally register the Parish Council as owners of land between the road that passes to the south of the War Memorial and Manor Farm. Diligent research by two of our Councillors identified that this land did belong to us but had never been registered.

We provide hanging baskets at California Crossroads, and maintain various assets including seats and notice boards. On the tree planting front we have just planted 15 oak seedlings on Burnmoor Meadow and intend to plant some larger oaks later this year. The Plymouth Brethren kindly donated a bench and this was installed at Moor Green Lakes last November.

We continue to focus on litter, with our part time Litter Warden collecting at least 60 sacks of litter per month from our roadsides, as well as cleaning numerous road signs. You will be aware the Amenity Vehicle service ended earlier this year as it was not possible for WBC to comply with changes in waste disposal and recycling legislation. The Annual Community Litter Pick will take place on 29 March this year.

The Allotments are all taken and there is a short waiting list. The allotment holders have improved the drainage in the site, which is virtually at the same level as the Blackwater River.

We have continued to work with Wokingham Borough Council and English Heritage to find out more about Warren Wood, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and to ensure it is appropriately managed and maintained.

We paid for the installation of the defibrillator mounted on the wall by Jats Pharmacy at California Crossroads in July 2014 and plan to install a second one outside the Memorial Hall this year. FBC have also agreed to install a defibrillator at this Centre.

We researched the lives of several of the soldiers and sailors named on the Finchampstead War Memorial and were able to add much interesting and valuable information to the archives. This was part of the Wokingham Remembers project, which was led by Wokingham Town Council and involved all the local parishes and town councils. You can see that our banners and some from other parishes are on display and there are some booklets available.

**Geoff Markham**  
**Chair, Amenities Committee.**

## Rights of Way Committee Report 2014/15

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This year we have changed the title of our Committee from Footpaths to Rights of Way but our objectives remain exactly the same; to maintain, improve and extend the 26 mile network of “paths” in Finchampstead. The change has been made to more accurately reflect that a significant part of the network is made up of Bridleways and Byways (with varying levels of access permitted) especially in the area of Simons Wood.

We continue to employ a part time Warden who does sterling work throughout the year and cooperate closely with WBC and other organisations like the Ramblers, British Horse Society and local landowners to ensure that our Rights of Way are maintained to a high standard. Our principle adversary the weather has in general been more favourable than last year and the sections of footpath in the Blackwater valley have remained passable although boggy in places. However there have still been plenty of problems to contend with, chiefly fallen trees and flooding but sometimes something rather more unusual causes damage.

This occurred in the autumn when a section of footpath on the approach to Sand Martins golf course had to be closed due to large holes in the surface caused by badger tunnels from a nearby sett. Natural England were consulted and provided directions on how to deal with the situation. Fortunately after tests were conducted the problem tunnels were found to be inactive and therefore the surface could simply be filled in and the path was re-opened in January.

A real success story has been the work done by the landowner last year to cut back undergrowth on footpath 15 near Warren Crest Farm. This has enabled walkers to avoid the really muddy stretches on a short section of the path and enjoy the lovely views from Wick Hill throughout the winter months. Even better news is that it has now been agreed that WBC will build up the bad sections of path with “planings” in the near future.

Unfortunately not all the blackspots have been dealt with. Bridleway 11 (known to many as “the gallops”) remains in very poor condition in wet weather. This is due to regular flooding from White Horse Lane. After meetings on site with Parish Councillors WBC did carry out some work but this has failed to improve the situation and through our colleagues on the Borough Council we are continuing to press for a full resolution. (It should be noted that work by WBC on Finchampstead Road and Church Lane and later by Mr Bishop of Church Farm has been successful in solving the flooding problems in that area)

Improving access to the network remains a priority and I would like to thank the Ramblers organisation for their excellent work in providing and installing a kissing gate at the junction of footpaths 29 and 33 (near the Cemex workings) and installing another provided by WBC on Longwater road. We are currently in discussion with landowners to complete the improved access to this part of the Blackwater Valley path (a National Trail) by replacing the stile near Fleet Hill Farm with another gate.

As reported last year the Committee have been considering some enhancements to the Rights of Way network but have decided, in view of opposition from some residents and road safety considerations, not to pursue the designation of F/p 19 as a bridleway. We do however see great potential for linking Simons Wood to the bridleways around Horseshoe Lake by re-designating FP20 and its continuation Sandhurst FP12. The initial response from Bracknell Forest Council and one of the main landowners has been encouraging and we have requested help from WBC in exploring this opportunity with the other landowners involved. We are also cooperating with Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils to develop their Greenways Plan. This aims to create improved links to the SDL for horse riders and cyclists and includes provision of a link from the existing Bridleway 46 to Nine Mile Ride through California Country Park.

An even more exciting local opportunity is the restoration of the CEMEX quarries on either side of Longwater Road. WBC is currently in the final stages of determining a planning application relating to both their Fleet Hill and Manor Farm sites. The new scheme includes a range of additional Public Rights of Way which will provide a significant enhancement to the Finchampstead network. Additionally, some existing public footpaths will be upgraded to allow for use by horseriders and cyclists. A further extension westwards of the Blackwater Valley path will also be included. Restoration is expected to be completed by 2019 and at that point the RSPB plans to take over the running of these sites, which will be their first bird reserves in Berkshire. Both CEMEX and WBC have involved FPC in these revised schemes and FPC fully endorses them.

Lastly we are on the point of adding to our web site the map, detailed directions and illustrations of the first of three circular FPC Walks, which goes from St James's Church down to Fleet Hill and returns via Fleet Hill farm and the Memorial Field. The route will also be marked by distinctive new purple Waymarkers. We hope to add the other two walks in the course of 2015.

**Roger Woof**  
**Chair, Rights of Way Committee.**