

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GATHERING OF PARISHIONERS HELD AT 7 PM ON WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2019 AT THE FBC CENTRE, GORSE RIDE NORTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE

PRESENT: Councillor R. Cundy, Chairman.
Councillor S. Bromley, Vice Chairman.

Councillors S. Bowers, D. Cornish, Mrs C. Driver, G. Jukes OBE, Mrs N. Jennings-Frisby, Mrs S. McDonald, R. Marshallsay, J. May, A. Pearce, S. Weeks, R. Woof.

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

Over 60 residents.

Representatives from local organisations including:
Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Cllr Angus Ross,
Maurice Driver, Sue and Ed Sampson, Finchampstead and California PCC; Wendy and Keith Graham, Finchampstead Society; Gordon Wrigley, Finchampstead Society / Allotment Association; Adrian Hobbs, Finchampstead Society / Moor Green Lakes Group; Neil Doody, Sue Napper, Bev Kemp, Finchampstead Park Management Committee; Jim Gallagher, Finchampstead Baptist Church; Peter Bowsher MBE, MS Therapy Centre; Al Campbell, Finchampstead Allotment Association; Dennis Eyrie, Wokingham United Charities; Sheila Morgan, formerly Royal British Legion; Neil and Pauline Wilby, Keep it Green; PC Cosmin Radu, PCSO Patrick Glenister, PCSO Craig Bryant, Thames Valley Police; Ruth Hopkins, Legal & General Homes; Phil Evans and Margaret Newstead, Wokingham Volunteer Centre; Deana Humphries, Joyce Stoner, WBC; David Kimber, Brian Stainton, Friends of Finchampstead Ridges; Mandy Ozficipi, Homestart; Tim Hanson, Keep Mobile; Stephen Eddy, Finchampstead Neighbourhood Action Group.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Cllr Cundy welcomed everyone to the Annual Gathering and thanked all present for attending.

Cllr Cundy stated how good it was to see so many familiar faces as well as new people, including residents, representatives from several local organisations and volunteer groups which provide services for our community, colleagues from the Borough Council and our Churches.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from
FPC Cllrs Mrs B. Eytel, Mrs R. Margetts, R. Rampton, G. Veitch, FPC; WBC Cllr R. Stanton.
P. Baveystock, A. Gibson, A. Fletcher, WBC.
Inspector A. Lloyd. Thames Valley Police.
K. Bennett, Arborfield Green; L. McDaniel, Me2Club; S. Croft, Blackwater Valley Partnership;
C. Fox, Finchampstead and California PCC; R. Sharp, Ramblers; C. Knox, Wokingham Volunteer Centre; Dr P. Wilford, CPRE; A. Brown, Nine Mile Ride School.
J. Cornish; P. Grainger; M. Atkins; M. Jeater; J. Laphorn; M. Popplestone; L. Potts; M & C Minter.

THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr R Cundy. Appendix A refers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports were presented by representatives from each of the Councils Committees. The slideshow presentation is included as Appendix E, additional reports are included as noted below.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Mrs C. Driver. Appendices B and E refer.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT & ARBORFIELD STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Cllr R. Marshallsay. Appendices C and E refer.

RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr R. Woof. Appendix E refers.

ROADS AND ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr S. Bromley. Appendices D and E refer.

FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr R. Woof. Appendix E refers.

FINCHAMPSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Finchampstead Parish Councillor David Cornish provided an update on progress with the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Irum Gulzar of Wokingham Borough Council gave a presentation on waste and recycling.

OPEN FORUM

A number of questions and comments were taken from the floor.

CONCLUSION

Cllr Cundy 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 2018/19, to view the information on display and to join Parish Councillors for refreshments.

Chairman's Report 2018/19

Every Town and Parish Council has to have an annual meeting for its Parishioners. This meeting – our Annual Gathering – gives us the opportunity to tell you what we have been doing over the last year on behalf of Finchampstead. It also allows us to meet and listen to you - our residents, as well as to others who provide support or services for those in our Parish.

We have had an interesting and busy year which our Committee representatives will tell you more about shortly. Before I hand over there are just a few points I would like to cover.

You may or may not know that there are quite a few of us on the Council – in fact we have 17 Councillor places. Some vacancies have arisen over the last year and we were delighted to welcome Sylvia McDonald to the Council in April last year, and more recently Rebecca Margetts who joined us in January this year. We now have a full house! Most of the Councillors are here tonight and you will have a chance to meet and speak to them later.

Chairmans' summary presented after the Committee reports

As you have heard this has been a year of challenges and opportunities. You have heard about the challenges around local housing development, the progress with the Arborfield Strategic Development Location and about the start of the regeneration of the Gorse Ride Community. At the same time Community Infrastructure Levy funds provide us with a real opportunity to direct funds to priorities which are important to you, our residents.

We will continue to listen to and communicate with you, our residents and are looking forward to an exciting year ahead working on your behalf.

Councillor Roland Cundy
Chair, Finchampstead Parish Council

Amenities Committee Report 2018/19

Good Evening. I'm Chris Driver, and I chair the Amenities Committee. We meet on average three or four times a year though many of our projects are long-term and on-going.

Following the resignation through ill-health, of Roger Long, our Litter Warden, we were delighted to appoint two new Wardens who job-share. They began work in November and have so far collected over 150 sacks of rubbish from our streets. It's a sad reflection on our throw-away society that so much litter is around, and we are grateful to the Wardens for their hard work. Thanks also to the growing band of people who have signed up to the Adopt-a-Street scheme. If you would like to help keep your own area tidy, there is information at the back of the hall.

The Allotments continue to thrive and are a joy to behold! There are 95 plots, which necessitated extra car-parking and water points. The work was completed in the Autumn and was partially funded by the Allotment Association.

Trees are such an important feature of Finchampstead that the Veteran Tree Association, of which my fellow Councillor, Gordon Veitch is a member, is hoping to carry out a survey of the spectacular Redwoods along Wellingtonia Avenue. Gordon has also been instrumental in the planting of oak trees at Burnmoor Meadow, and a Hornbeam in the new Churchyard to commemorate the end of the First World War.

In conjunction with St. James' Church, we marked the end of the conflict with a splendid concert, featuring the Arborfield Military Wives Choir. The Beacon was lit as part of the national celebrations, the bells rang out and we enjoyed mulled wine and food provided by the Church. It was a wonderful community event enjoyed by several hundred people.

It's now possible to read on the web-site about the Bell Barrow in Warren Woods, and we hope to have an information board on-site. English Heritage believes that it is a pre-historic Bell Barrow, but an enthusiastic dig in the 60s has made it difficult to have absolute proof of its age.

Barkham Ride roundabout continues to be a bit of an eye-sore. The Parish Council is keen to fund improvements to the roundabout and surrounding area but has met with little enthusiasm from the Borough Council. However, with work to begin soon at California Crossroads, we have not given up hope and we may yet have flower baskets and a more attractive roundabout at Barkham Ride.

We now have more defibrillators, and Heartstart is to run a training course on how to use them on 21st March in Wokingham. We hope to arrange a session in Finchampstead in the Autumn.

And finally, our annual Community Litter Pick will take place on 24th March. Cllr Sylvia McDonald has taken on the task of organising the event and will be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to help and information is available at the back of the hall. We are also planning a Tidy-up of California Crossroads on 19 May, our 6th since 2015 so please do come and help to keep Finchampstead looking beautiful.

I would like to end by thanking the members of the Amenities Committee for their commitment and hard work, and the Clerk for all her support, which is very much appreciated.

Councillor Mrs Christine Driver
Chair, Amenities Committee

Planning Committee Report 2018/19

The Planning Committee has responsibility on behalf of the Parish Council to review, consider and make comment on all planning applications and related matters, both within the Parish and in adjoining parishes. The parish council are “consultees” and as such do not make the final decision, this is the responsibility of the borough planning committee. We also review tree works proposed to trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO’s). The Committee meets every four weeks and in the past 12 month period we have reviewed over 200 planning applications, on average 15 per month. Most of these applications are routine and non-controversial, often for minor changes or extensions; others are more complex and controversial. When considering applications the committee tries to represent the views of the immediate neighbours and the majority view of parishioners.

Unsuccessful applicants may Appeal the decision and 13 new appeals were considered. When such appeals result in a public enquiry, the planning committee will normally attend and may speak at the hearing, which is chaired by a government inspector from the Planning Inspectorate.

From time to time there are planning related matters that contravene planning policy and guidelines. Such matters are referred to the Borough Planning Enforcement team for attention. The parish council maintains a list of parish issues and reviews these monthly through to resolution in order to ensure nothing is overlooked and that issues are dealt with in a timely and effective manner. From time to time major issues are taken to court for resolution.

Perhaps the most controversial issue dealt with this year has been the continued receipt of unwelcome planning applications from developers for large scale and unplanned housing developments in the parish. An example of this is the application for 80 homes and a greenspace (SANG) on land adjacent to Sand Martins golf club, Finchampstead road, and Land off Johnson Drive, for 25 homes. Both applications are the subject of current appeals against the Borough Council’s decision to refuse the applications. Such applications are opportunistic, having been submitted in order to try and take advantage of the perceived failure by WBC to demonstrate they have a 5 year land supply. WBC is now able to demonstrate a 5 year land supply of 7.8 years, well exceeding this target.

You can be assured that your parish council will continue to treat this issue with the utmost urgency. We share the concerns of parishioners with regards to over-development and the resultant impact on our parish, its roads and its precious greenspace.

The Local Plan Update

WBC continues with the development of its new local plan for the period to 2036 and you may recall me mentioning last year the phase known as “Call for Sites”. This is when land owners put forward sites for possible development. The Parish Council took the opportunity to be part of the site assessment process, a planning sub-committee was formed and reviewed and considered all 44 sites submitted for Finchampstead Parish plus a further 8 sites immediately adjacent to the Parish. We have subsequently reviewed the Finchampstead sites with WBC and again as part of the latest phase of the local plan.

Gorse Ride Regeneration

Plans for the regeneration of the Gorse Ride Community are well under way. Permission has been granted for the first phase of the development – including the former Cockayne Court and some properties on Arnett Avenue – and work on the construction of 46 new flats and houses is due to start this year. There has recently been a public consultation on the plans for the remainder of the estate and a planning application is due to be submitted later this year. This second phase will include a further 248 flats, houses and bungalows.

The Arborfield Strategic Development Location (SDL)

Over the past year the new development at Arborfield Garrison, now known as Arborfield Green continues. Approximately 200 homes are now occupied including around 50 in Finchampstead Parish. Although delayed somewhat, the focus now is on the design for the District centre, with plans to include a convenience food store, a public house, coffee shop etc. and an assisted living complex close by. Plans should come forward for this important community facility soon.

The southern part of the site, all of which is in Finchampstead, is being developed by Legal and General Homes and will be known as Finchwood Park. Legal and General have recently gained approval for their first development on the site which will include 178 homes.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their continued enthusiasm and regular attendance at our monthly meetings! My thanks also go to Anna the Assistant to the Clerk, who ensures that we are well prepared for our meetings and achieve our deadlines and of course do the paperwork.

Councillor Roger Marshallsay
Vice Chair, Planning Committee

Roads and Road Safety Committee Report 2018/19

Traffic monitoring

The majority of the effort in the Roads and Road Safety committee is on traffic monitoring. As part of our armoury, we have three types of equipment that we use.

- 2 SDRs - Speed Data Recorders
- 1 SIDs – mobile Speed Indicating Devices
- 2 PSIDs – fixed Pole-mounted speed indicator devices

Our 2 SDRs are permanently deployed in a cycle of weekly monitoring of all the major routes. We use our SID is used weekly by our Speedwatch team in targeted one hour sessions at the worst locations to identify and report to the police any vehicles which are breaching speed limits. And our 2 PSIDs are deployed together in 3 week stints to help educate drivers on the routes with the worst records.

However, improving speed on any route is not an overnight process. As Albert Einstein said “it’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer”. Improving speed problems takes a systematic approach to deploying all our available resources - equipment and our dedicated group of volunteers - over a sustained period, sometimes years.

A good example of this is seen on the next three slides. You can see how we have affected the driving habits of people on a key route in Finchampstead – The Village- over an 8 year period.

These are tables of the volume of vehicles passing in each hour and the 85% percentile showing the operating speed of the road at these times. So just to help you navigate the data at a high level, rather than trying to read the numbers, if it is marked in red, then typical police action would be to issue points and a penalty, anything marked in pink is where a driver would be offered a speed awareness course and if it is green then speed is within police guidelines.

In 2010, don’t worry about the detail, you can see from all the pink that there was a general speeding problem. By 2014 there are still some problems but during the main part of the day from 8 until 5, the behaviour is green, so within police guidelines. By 2018 the route is almost completely within police guidelines throughout the day with anomalies only late at night due to low volumes of vehicles.

Many people raising complaints about speeding problems have unreasonable expectations of a quick fix. The benefit of the equipment and the systematic approach that we use, is that we are able to gather hard facts and then use these to identify appropriate measures to address the problems.

Lamp Column Replacement

Last year we reported on the project to upgrade all the street lamps in Finchampstead to new energy efficient and less light polluting LED lanterns along with a more intelligent remote

monitoring and control mechanism. This replacement activity is now 99% complete, and by combining the approach with the whole of Wokingham, Reading and Windsor & Slough, the implementation costs per unit were kept significantly lower than they would have been if done in isolation.

Avery Corner car park

Also last year we reported that we would be undertaking a project to improve the parking habits in Avery Corner Car park, especially at school drop off and pickup times. This is now complete and we can report that the new drop off zone is working as we had hoped!!

It is likely that there will be further changes to the car park in the future, but this will be done as part of the more strategic California Crossroads development which is still being formulated.

Gateways

We have been implementing the gateway initiative for several years now. Our objective is to give Finchampstead its own village identity whilst reiterating the speed limits in force and we have identified additional locations to deploy gateways. We have to work with Wokingham BC to implement these, and although we are very keen to make progress, it is also fair to say that this may not be the highest priority for WBC and therefore actual progress is slower than we would like.

Signs, potholes & footways and reporting problems to WBC

Signs, potholes, fly-tipping and footways is the area where the Parish Council receives most dialogue from our parishioners.

This is a problem across Wokingham Borough, with a concern that the contractors responsible are not undertaking their management duties effectively. I am pleased to report that the proactive approach from Finchampstead parish council to bring the problems to the attention of WBC is beginning to yield results. After a number of meetings, we can see some improvement – many signs have been cleaned and some areas of footpath encroachment have been improved.

Diligent reporting of problems does make a difference, so it would be very helpful if our parishioners could take photographs of any potential issues and pass these onto us or direct to WBC with detail of the location.

Close

None of this progress would be possible without the active participation of our Clerk and other members of our Roads and Roads Safety Committee as well as our dedicated band of committed volunteers. My thanks to you all.

Councillor Cllr Steve Bromley
Chair, Roads & Road Safety Committee

Appendix E

Committee presentations 2018/19

Presentations for the Amenities, Planning, Rights of Way, Roads & Road Safety and Finance and General Management Committees are included in a separate file.