



About the Parish Council

Parish Councils are statutory bodies and are the first tier of local government, at the heart of the community. Finchampstead Parish Council is made up of 17 Councillors, supported by the Clerk and the Assistant to the Clerk. The Councillors all act voluntarily, and the Council is not political.

The Council's activities fall into 3 main areas; representing the local community, working with partners to deliver services to meet local needs, and striving to improve the quality of life and community well being.

The Council meets monthly, as does its Planning Committee. The other Committees - Amenities, Finance & General Management, Rights of Way, and Roads & Road Safety - each meet up to 4 times a year. We also have a number of Working Groups dealing with specific projects or activities. Members of the public are always welcome to attend our meetings. Please see the meeting schedule on our website or contact the Parish Office.

The Council also has representatives on a number of outside organisations from the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership and the Finchampstead Park Management Committee to the Neighbourhood Action Group and groups linked to the planning of the Arborfield development. For full details see our website.

Chairman's report

This year we have continued to work on your behalf to protect the character of the Parish and to ensure it remains a great place to live and work. We work closely with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), local organisations and our neighbouring Parishes, as through working together we can make best use of resources to help maintain services and facilities for our residents.

The year has brought both opportunities and challenges. Housing development continues to be a concern but we are pleased to see the regeneration of the Gorse Ride Estate finally moving forward. Plans for the southern part of the Arborfield development which lies within Finchampstead are now progressing, and after many years the new nature reserves in the south of the Parish are nearing completion. We have started work on a strategic plan to guide our work in the coming years and the outcome of the household consultation (see below) will contribute to this. The work of the Council is summarised here, along with some of our plans for the coming year.

Roland Cundy

Household consultation - your views matter

We issued our household consultation in November 2017 and were delighted with the response. We asked residents to give us their views on which type of projects we should support - using Community Infrastructure Levy funds or through other means - to help improve life for the people of Finchampstead. We asked residents to rank 5 types of facility in order of importance, and this was the outcome.

1. Footpaths, cycleways and bridleways
2. Roads and road safety schemes
3. Parks, open spaces and play areas
4. Community halls and indoor facilities
5. Outdoor sports facilities

We also received hundreds of useful comments and are looking at each and every one to see what action we can take. Many areas are outside our control but we will consider how we can influence others to take action on the issues raised.



The Council contributed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds to the new Green Way which opened in December 2017. The popular route runs from the FBC Centre to Arborfield Green.

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Finance & General Management

Household consultation

Over the coming year each of our Committees will be analysing the consultation comments which relate to their areas of work. The Committees will be looking at issues they can address in the short and longer term, and others which should be referred on to WBC or other bodies. We will provide regular updates on our website and through our e newsletters.

This Committee is responsible for the overall management, systems, policies and procedures and financial arrangements of the Council. This includes preparing and monitoring the budget, and setting the precept - the amount collected from residents by WBC as part of the Council Tax.

In 2017/18 our precept was £126,944 and our budgeted expenditure was £142,800. The balance was met from income and reserves. Our budget and Annual Return are published on our website.

The Committee also leads on important issues affecting the Parish Council and the Parish itself. This year our focus has been on starting work on a strategy for 2018 onwards, and on communication and consultation with Parishioners. This will continue as a priority in the coming year.

We work closely with WBC over the Community Infrastructure Levy, ensuring funds are spent for the benefit of our residents. We also oversee staffing matters, risk management and business continuity planning, and Finchampstead Emergency Response.

The Committee assesses all grant applications and considers support for organisations providing services for our residents, making recommendations to the Parish Council for awards to be made. See below for details.



We provided a donation towards the maintenance of the St James' Churchyard

Grants and donations

This year we have awarded over £40,000 to organisations providing support or services to our residents. We have increased our support for the youth activity programme run through the FBC Centre and continue to support the Blackwater Valley Partnership. Donations have been made to our community halls, local schools, and the St. James' Churchyard. We have awarded grants to Berkshire Vision, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Keep Mobile, Home Start, Job Support Centre, Me2 Club, MS Therapy Centre, Finchampstead Junior Netball Club, the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, the Volunteer Centre and the Womens Group.

Planning

Our Planning Committee has considered over 180 new planning applications in 2017/18 including some applications in adjacent Parishes which may impact on Finchampstead.

Wokingham Borough Council is the Planning Authority and makes the decisions on planning applications. However we are notified of every development application submitted within the Parish and our Planning

Committee considers and comments on all the applications. These can be large or small from porches to agricultural buildings. There have been 17 new Appeals this year, and we have attended a number of

Hearings, presenting the views of the Parish Council. 17 planning enforcement cases have been closed but there have been 66 new cases. We liaise with WBC over these, helping to monitor local issues.

Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update

We continue to liaise with WBC over the Local Plan Update and policies which will shape the future of Wokingham Borough, guiding development for the next 20 years. This includes not only housing, but new employment, schools, roads, parks, shops and community facilities. We are aware of the anxiety about the level of housing development we see locally and around the Borough, and the number of planning proposals and applications coming forward. In December 2017 we circulated an e newsletter information item to explain the current situation, and we have been lobbying Central Government for changes to the policies which are putting such pressure on Finchampstead and Wokingham Borough.



The Local Plan is not just about housing

The Arborfield Garrison Development (SDL)

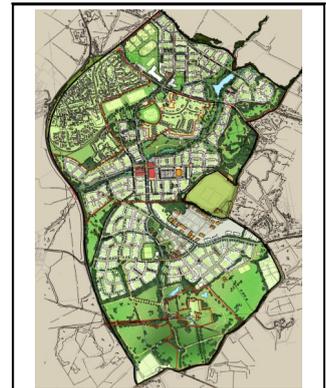
The Council monitors progress with the development and is represented on the Steering Group and the Community Liaison Forum. We maintain contact with the Borough Council, Crest Nicholson, Redrow Homes and other relevant bodies. We have submitted detailed comments on all 'reserved matters'

applications which have come forward over the last year.

This year we have seen the construction of the first new homes which fall within our Parish - on the Redrow Homes development.

The Bohunt Secondary School has been completed and we are pleased at the popularity of the new school.

The southern part of the SDL which lies within our Parish is now owned by Legal and General. Outline plans for this part of the development include up to 1500 homes, a community centre, primary school and public open space. We expect to see the first detailed plans for this area later this year and will keep you informed.



The Arborfield SDL



Our War Memorial

Amenities

This year we adopted the red telephone box at the California Crossroads - the only traditional box in the Parish. It has been refurbished and turned into a book swop. We have planted more trees at Burnmoor Meadow, and have installed two more defibrillators, making 5 community accessible units in the Parish. We

also arranged a local training session through Heartbeat Swallowfield. We have held two tidy up sessions at the California Crossroads and continue to provide floral displays for the area.

Plans for 2018-19

- Secure a longer lease for the allotment site.

- Extend the car park and water supply on the allotment site.
- Arrange further tidy up sessions at the California Crossroads.
- Work with St James' Church on events for the centenary of the end of World War I.
- Publish information on Warren Wood and its Bell Barrow.

Our Litter Warden has collected over 1000 sacks of litter from our roadsides over the last year, adding to the regular collections by WBC and the work of our **Adopt a Street Volunteers**.
If you would like to 'Adopt your Street' do get in touch. We can supply all of the equipment and WBC collects the waste. Volunteers just do what they can when they can - every little helps.

Rights of Way

We have 26 miles of rights of way in the Parish. Our Footpath Warden carries out regular maintenance to supplement the work of WBC who are responsible for the local network.

Working in partnership with WBC, the Ramblers and local landowners we seek to improve access to the network and this year

several paths have been improved with new surfacing and removal of overgrown vegetation.

We contributed to the new California Green Way, a popular route for walkers and cyclists.

Plans for 2018-19

- Monitor progress with the restoration of Fleet Hill and Manor Farms for nature conservation

and public access.

- Seek to progress improvements to FP33.
- Encourage and comment on plans for further Green Way routes.
- Publish a 4th circular walk.
- Seek to promote appropriate cycle routes.



One of our many popular footpaths



Our second circular walk starts at Simons Wood



Roads & Road Safety

We are pleased that we are now running weekly Speed Indicator Device (SID) sessions thanks to the help of volunteers from FinchNAG - the Neighbourhood Action Group - and residents. This year we have reported 1077 vehicles driving over the speed limit, an average of 21 vehicles per session. Thames Valley Police follow up on our reports, and carry out enforcement in repeat problem areas including Longwater Road, Nine

Mile Ride and the Finchampstead Road. Our two Speed Data Recorder units are rotated around 20 regular and several ad hoc locations in the Parish and provide information to prioritise SID sessions and to input to wider traffic monitoring activities. We liaise closely with WBC over our activities and work in partnership, for example suggesting problem areas where WBC could usefully install its Vehicle

Activated Signs (VAS). All our street lights have now been replaced and have energy efficient LED lanterns.

Plans for 2018-19

- Complete the Avery Car Park school drop off zone.
- Implement further 'gateway' signs at entrances to the Parish.
- Purchase and utilise a pole mounted SID.
- Purchase a digital camera to assist with SID sessions.



We need more volunteers for SID sessions - if you can help please get in touch.



One of the 'gateway' signs which help to provide a Parish identity with a reminder of the speed limit

We hope you have found this report interesting - please get in touch if you have any comments or queries.

You can find more information about our work and activities on our website - and through our regular e newsletters. Please contact us if you would like to receive our newsletter.



clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Chair: Cllr Roland Cundy Vice Chair: Cllr Steve Bromley

Councillors:

Steve Bowers; David Cornish; Chris Driver; Becky Eytel; Nancy Jennings-Frisby; Graham Jukes OBE; Jim May; Roger Marshall; Andy Pearce; Ian Pittock; Richard Rampton; Gordon Veitch; Simon Weeks; Roger Woof.

Clerk: Katy Dagnall BSc(Hons), PSLCC. **Assistant to the Clerk:** Anna Kent.



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