

## **RINGMER PARISH COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2007 – 2008**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

In May last year new Council elections were held. For the first time in a number of years there were more candidates than places available and the level of interest was encouraging. The new Council remains committed to pursuing the interests of the whole community and continues to focus particularly on housing, employment, transport and environmental issues. It is also seeking Quality Council status and is embarking on a series of steps to achieve it by the end of 2008. This annual report is part of that process that seeks to give you an insight into the work of the Council, its achievements and how your money is spent.

Sadly the year has also been marked by the loss of Brian Cruttenden who for many years volunteered to clear litter and was a great friend of the village. Brian will be greatly missed.

#### **THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council works at a number of levels. These include: seeking to influence the services provided by the district and county councils and other organisations; facilitating the work of voluntary organisations via grants; and providing services itself. Above all it sees its role as the 'champion' of our community and being open and accessible to everyone. Below are a range of activities and issues which we have worked on over the last year.

##### **Play area improvements**

During the last year we have spent over £51,000 refurbishing the play area at Broyle Close and installing additional equipment at the Fingerpost Field and Village Green play areas. In addition £29,400 was spent on replacing the path across the Green. All this was paid for by developer's contributions and was not a charge on our Council Tax. Further monies remain available for eligible recreational purposes up to 2011 and the Council will consider how best to use them over that period.

##### **Affordable Housing**

Following the offer of land at Potato Lane from the Glyndebourne Estate, for two pairs of semi-detached dwellings, meetings have been held with the District Council, Hastoe Housing Association and other parties. A draft development proposal is being drawn up for public consultation and the hope is to produce accommodation for rent to Ringmer and Ringmer connected people. The proposal will be for a pair of two-bedroom and a pair of three-bedroom properties.

##### **Traffic calming and parking**

We work closely and well with the County Council across a range of traffic issues and continue to be indebted to the work of RADAR in keeping vehicle speeds down and

for taking a pro-active interest in road safety issues. This year additional roundels and improved signs have been put on our roads to reinforce the speed limit; improvements have been sought to 'The Forges' roundabout and an extended 30mph speed limit obtained; footpath repairs have been obtained; a limited parking scheme has been negotiated with the County Council; and we are on course to get vehicle activated 30 mph signs installed on the approaches to the Community College very soon. Some of this will involve considerable expenditure by the Council but is considered to be worthwhile.

### **Access to the countryside**

We continue to put time and resources into maintaining and improving the footpath network. For a third year we have installed kissing gates on some paths to improve access for those who are less agile. During 2008 all the paths between The Broyle and the centre of the village will be covered as well as the footpath from the new churchyard to the A26. The next stage is to install gates on the path from Gote Lane to the Mill Post starting in 2008 and finishing in 2009. None of this would be possible without the co-operation of the various landowners concerned and this is much appreciated.

### **Maintaining grounds and other facilities**

The Council is responsible for maintaining all the open spaces in the village including the Green, Anchor Field and Fingerpost Field. Grass cutting; maintaining trees; and providing seats, bins and litter clearance are all within its remit. Particular efforts have been made this year to improve the pond. Cutting back of some trees and other measures should improve the quality of the water and allow plant life to develop and provide a better balanced environment to the benefit of the wildlife. For the first time in many years all the allotments have been let and it is pleasing to see such good use being made of them.

### **The old churchyard and the war memorial**

It is Council's responsibility to maintain the old churchyard, a task in which it receives great help from the church wardens. In addition to grass cutting and managing the trees this year work has been initiated to renovate the grave of the Reverend Edward Palmer. Dated 1748 this is of historic significance and the Ringmer History Study Group has made a contribution towards the cost and the Friends of St Mary's Church have also volunteered to make one. Work will be completed by September. As usual the war memorial has been cleaned this year and additionally the posts around it renewed.

### **Law and order**

This is the first year in which the Council has contributed towards the cost of a second Police Community Support Officer. People seem to feel that this has been worthwhile and provision has been made to make a similar contribution next year to retain our second officer. Vandalism and anti-social behaviour continue to be a concern and the Council itself has had to contend with damage to play equipment, bus shelters and notice boards. Damage to bus shelters alone has cost in the region of £5000 and while this is mostly covered by insurance it has greatly inconvenienced residents and will no doubt cause Council's premium to rise in due course. A very positive step being taken

by the police in conjunction with Lewes District Council is to create a non-street drinking zone in the village. Details of this will be subject to public consultation but the hope is that it will include the Green, the area around the shops and a significant area around the centre of the village. The Council has already expressed its support and offered comments on an early draft of the proposal.

## **Planning Matters**

A significant part of the Council's time is taken up with planning matters. Each month the Planning Committee considers local planning applications and passes comments back to Lewes District Council, which is the statutory planning authority for the area. Around 90 applications were considered in 2007 ranging from small extensions to significant applications for new developments. Obviously the most significant applications considered in 2007 related to the proposed wind turbine and the related temporary meteorological mast. For its part Council did all it could to ensure that all points of view could be expressed before eventually recommending refusal of the turbine application. At the time of writing the outcome of the public enquiry is awaited.

Planning is also a strategic activity with long-term implications for the community. Under Cllr. John Kay's expert guidance considerable effort has gone into considering the future needs of the village. Building on the Village Action Plan the Council published its own Employment Plan in May 2006 and will be seeking views on its draft Strategy for Residential Development 2006 – 2026. The aim is to have both documents recognized within the Local Development Framework being developed by the District Council and thus have some influence on key developments and policies affecting our community. As things stand housing allocations for the Lewes District, arising from the South East Plan, are at the lower end of expectations and the Council will strongly resist further 'greenfield' development in the village. It will, however, support smaller infill developments on existing sites and is recommending challenging targets for developing affordable housing.

The proposals for a South Downs National Park have yet to be agreed but the Council has welcomed proposals (with just a few minor caveats) to extend the boundary down from the escarpment to include Gote Farm and parts of Ashton Green and a significant area to the west of the village between Ham Lane, the A26 and the B2192. Additional protection of the landscape bordering a large part of the village can only be welcomed.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Raising money**

The Council's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March and the bulk of its annual income comes from the precept; a sum raised via the Council Tax.

#### 2007 - 2008

For 2007/08 Council set a net budget of £82,342. This was financed by a precept of £75,897 and supplemented by £6,445 from reserves.

The Council also had the benefit of a developer's contribution arising from large local housing developments to meet the cost of play area and recreational improvements. In 2007/08 £80,400 was received from this source.

#### 2008 - 2009

Looking to 2008/09 Council has set a net budget of £85,299. The precept has been set at £77,794, an increase of 2.5%, and it is planned to supplement this with £7,505 from reserves.

#### **How your money is spent**

The table below gives an overview of the main areas of the Council's budgeted expenditure for 2007 - 2008. Although the net budget was set at £82,342 items of income and funds set aside for specific purposes mean that the approved expenditure budget for 2007/08 is actually £86,210. The list below shows the significant expenditure items.

<b>Main Expenditure Items 2007 - 2008</b>	<b>£</b>
Staff	33,860
Office & General Administration	5,805
Audit & Insurance Fees	4,425
Grants to Organisations	3,500
Maintenance of grounds, (the Green, the Pond, Anchor Field, Fingerpost Field and others) including grass cutting, tree maintenance etc	8,101
Play area maintenance, inspections etc	3,670
Contribution to Police Community Support Officer costs	10,000
Election costs	3,000
Maintenance of Old Churchyard & War Memorial	2,570
Emptying of dog bins	2,000
Allotments – grass cutting, water charge, lease	705
Footpaths – maintenance & installation of kissing gates	1,300
Rent for Anchor Field and Broyle Close play area	500
Rent for office and meeting accommodation	2,625
Other sundry expenditures	4,149
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,210</b>

#### **Auditing the accounts**

The Council is required to have both an internal and external auditor to oversee its accounts. The final accounts are signed off by the external auditor in August/September and are available for inspection. A notice is placed on the notice board stating the period when the accounts can be inspected.

**RINGMER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLORS & COMMITTEES**

**Tel: 01273**

Cllr. A. R. Peters, **Chairman**  
Plashett Park Farm, Ringmer BN8 5SJ 812389

Cllr. J. E. Kay, **Vice-Chairman**  
Fair Meadow, Rushey Green, Ringmer BN8 5JB 813388

**Planning Meeting comprises all Councillors**

**General Purposes Committee**

Cllr. P. Longhurst, **Chairman** 813574  
Dart Cottage, The Elms, Ringmer BN8 5EZ  
Cllr. Mrs J Fordham, 53 Broyleside Cottages, Broyle Lane, Ringmer BN8 5NS 813471  
Cllr. Mrs E L Pitts, Chanctonbury, Broyle Lane, Ringmer BN8 5PG 813366  
Cllr. K. White, Celandines, Bishops Lane, Ringmer BN8 5LD 813121  
Cllr. Mrs J. Woollons, 36 Christie Avenue, Ringmer BN8 5JT 812639

**Greens Committee**

Cllr. R Wilcox, **Chairman**  
5 Gote Lane, Ringmer BN8 5HP 812810  
Cllr. A. J. Grindley, 25 Springett Avenue, Ringmer BN8 5HD 812933  
Cllr. Mrs. V. Humphrey, 26 Oakmede Way, Ringmer BN8 5JL 814472  
Cllr. Ms. P. Lewis, 3 East View Cottages, Harrisons Lane, Ringmer BN8 5LP 814637  
Cllr. R. B. Truman, 1 Cheyney Cottages, Lewes Road, Ringmer BN8 5QA 812862  
Cllr. I P Wilson, Dorian, Rushey Green, Ringmer BN8 5JB 812143

**Chairman & Vice-Chairman are Ex Officio on both the above Committees**

**Office & Finance Committee:** Cllrs: A. R. Peters; R Wilcox  
Mrs J Fordham; P Longhurst; J. E. Kay

**Internal Control Committee:** Cllrs. Mrs.V. Humphrey; Mrs Pitts,  
R. Truman;

**OFFICERS**

**Clerk:** Mr. N. J. Hall

**Responsible Financial Officer:** Mr. K G Harvey  
Parish Council Office, Village Hall, Lewes Road, Ringmer BN8 5QH  
Tel: 01273 813242 (24 hr answerphone/fax)  
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