

Pebworth Parish Council Annual Report 2018 - 2019

Parish Council – Our council consists of 7 members who meet monthly to consider all matters within our jurisdiction which affect the running of the Parish. Our aim is to continually maintain or improve our surroundings and provide support to community organisations and individuals. We are ourselves supported by our Parish Clerk John Stedman who is now in his seventeenth year as Clerk to our council. Our ongoing thanks are always due to John for his commitment to ensuring that everything we do is correct and meets the strict requirements, and for his unending work to guide us and produce a stream of administration work to progress and record our actions.

The role of Parish Lengthsman and Handyman has been held for a number of years by Cllr John Hyde. These duties include maintenance of Parish assets (play equipment, fencing, etc) as well as clearing vegetation, pruning and removal of tree branches and dead trees, weed spraying on pavements and gutters, and numerous other jobs which keep the Parish running. We thank John for his continued hard work and support, often in difficult conditions and bad weather.

2019 is an election year, and there are changes all round. At District Council level it means that we will unfortunately lose our Councillor, Alastair Adams who is standing down after serving as our District Councillor for the last 8 years. His campaign slogan of “energy and enthusiasm in local issues” has been especially felt in his home village of Pebworth where he has worked tirelessly and channelled his considerable influence to improve so many aspects of local people’s lives, including championing the flood alleviation schemes in Broad Marston and Pebworth, representing us on major planning decisions, influencing the design and build quality of new housing, organising numerous upgrades to roads and footpaths, helping local organisations to obtain funding, and being the driving force behind superfast broadband arriving in Pebworth and the surrounding villages. We pass on our most grateful thanks to Alastair for all he has done for us.

At Parish Council level no election will take place as no other candidates have come forward, therefore the existing Parish Councillors will continue to serve. We have one vacancy which is to be filled by co-option and we encourage anyone who may be interested in a role as Parish Councillor within our community to come and talk to us and find out more about what this involves.

This vacancy has arisen as Cllr Pam Veal has decided to step down after serving the parish council for almost 15 years since her co-option in September 2004 when she topped the poll of three other candidates.

Pam has been hugely influential in her support of the main village institutions, including the Church, Village Hall, and the School as well as continually championing new initiatives for young people and for the future of the village. We thank Pam for her selfless long service and invaluable contribution to our community over so many years.

The Parish Council continues to provide our support to the community across a range of issues large and small. Some of the main matters to report on this year are:

Precept - Precept will rise by £1,500 to £33,500. This is a 3.6% rise or £2.82 per band D house. This compares to a rise of £3,500 or £7.17 per band D house last year. This additional funding will be used as a contingency to help cover cost for the Village Hall refurbishment and to continue the streetlight upgrade project.

The councils total net expenditure for the year was £80,245 which includes £24,990 for the new play equipment.

Play equipment on the Close - 4 new items of play equipment will be installed on The Close starting tomorrow 9th April 2019. These will be:

- Inclusive roundabout (to replace the old one which had to be removed for safety reasons)
- Double swing Eagle with nest seat
- Rope tree aerie with metal posts
- Ground trampoline jump XL 2x3 m

The purchase and installation of these items is costing approx. £25k of which approx. £21k is paid for by Section 106 funding from the Cala Homes development, and the remainder from Parish Council reserves.

Neighbourhood Development Plan - Work continued all year on bringing the NDP towards its final stages, and we thank the NDP steering committee who have led the process, Brodie Planning Associates who have provided their expertise and direction, and everyone else who has taken the time to come along to meetings or made comments to assist. The current position is that the final draft plan is now with an independent examiner who is making sure that all elements comply with policy and requirements. If he agrees and signs off the plan it will go to a referendum of Pebworth parishioners. The referendum is a straight Yes or No vote to the adoption of the plan, if Yes it will become a legal document which will help to guide policy in this village for the period to 2030. The cost of this project has been funded entirely by a grant of £20,000 which Pebworth Parish Council applied for and received on the grounds that we were one of the first Parishes to take this initiative. The draft plan is published on the WDC website.

Planning - 24 full planning applications were considered by the council during the year, the applications varying from a change of windows to sizable development for dwellings such as the 3,100 new homes proposed on Long Marston airfield.

Within the Parish the approved outline application by Persimmon Homes to build 380 homes on the Sims Metal site has encountered a number of delays, namely in discussions around the amount of affordable housing and the connectivity to the adjacent St Modwen site. This proposal now appears to be moving towards implementation, and this scheme will represent a significant boost to housing supply within the Parish.

Within the village, the NDP supports the inclusion of 10 – 12 new dwellings on part of the Fibrex Nurseries site during the plan period, which was indicated by most parishioners as the preferred number and location.

Village Hall refurbishment project - Parish Council are supporting the village hall committee with funding applications including the recently successful application to WDC for the NHB legacy fund for £100k. We are committed to ensuring that this project can go ahead and will support with further financing or administration work as required.

Recreation Field – It was encouraging to see that the MUGA was well used over the summer months last year, especially for tennis and football. In support of this the tennis net was left up permanently over the summer and the intention is that this will happen again this year. The large mounds of soil that were left over from the excavations were removed at the end of last year and the area is now recovering and being re-seeded as required. As a new addition to the Recreation Field a new outdoor table tennis table will be installed shortly, and hopefully during the summer a new flagpole, both of which have been made possible by being fully sponsored by the generosity of individual parishioners.

Traffic and speeding – We periodically continue to monitor traffic and speeding within the village and aim to raise awareness or promote enforcement action where possible. It is clear that the effect of speeding is felt most in Little Meadows and on the Honeybourne Road coming past Fibrex. Other village roads are narrower and speeding cars are thankfully limited by bends and parked cars, however verge damage from large vehicles remains a constant problem. The installation of oak bollards on Front Street has helped to stop the constant erosion of the grass bank by vehicle tyres, but flatter verges are still at risk. This can be helped by considerate parking of vehicles at roadsides wherever possible. Parking outside Pebworth School and Pre School at peak times has also been highlighted as a growing problem and our clerk has written to the School and Sunflowers Nursery to ask for their assistance in controlling this.

Streetlights –The council’s project to upgrade all the Parish streetlights has continued throughout the past year. So far 18 out of the total 42 lights in the Parish have been changed to the new design and the next phase will continue this year. Obsolete concrete columns are being removed and all new lights will have grey painted steel columns, new curved brackets and carefully chosen lanterns with improved LED lighting. When completed the project will bring a number of improvements in terms of energy efficiency and an overall reduction in electricity and maintenance costs, as well as ensuring that all streetlights within the parish are of a smart, high quality, and consistent design.

Thank you to all parishioners who support us in our efforts.

Cllr Simon Shiers
Chairman Pebworth Parish Council