

# STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter Spring 2019



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council



# Village Gates



**WE  
LISTENED**

At the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2018 the issue of speeding was discussed and amongst other things, it was agreed that the Parish Council would investigate installing village gateways.

The Department of Transport advises that they can be effective in certain locations. It was thought that they would be relatively inexpensive.

A survey of all speed restrictive entrances to the village was carried out. In some instances, the location was close to a give way junction so a gateway was inappropriate. In other instances, there was insufficient space between the road edge and a ditch. There were locations, however, where if it was felt that gateways would be both straightforward to install and beneficial.

West Berkshire Council ('WBC') is the Highway Authority and the survey was sent to them. WBC made some comments on the survey and as it had sufficient funds in this year's budget, agreed to carry out the work.



There are now six new gates around the village which were installed at no cost to the Parish.

# Fairground Update



- Work has been undertaken to restore the large pond next to the Fairground car park - thanks to a small band of volunteers and parish councillors. Work is about to commence on the smaller pond near the war memorial. Pond work will now be an annual project, taking advantage of the November to February window when newts and other aquatic creatures are dormant.
- An order has been placed for the replacement elephant rocker in the infants' playground. It should be installed before end of February.
- Two new picnic tables have been installed on the Fairground - one next to the existing one by the infants' playground and one overlooking the youth equipment area and the cricket pitch.
- Two young trees were planted on the Fairground on 23rd November by our MP John Redwood ( since Knighted). These were donated under the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy project
- Following the dry summer, work will shortly commence on helping the Fairground grass to recover. This will entail aerating and scarifying and will include the main play areas, but not the grazing area.

# Electric Car Charging

The idea of providing public electric vehicle (EV) charging in Mortimer was first floated via the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) household consultation in 2016. The NDP included the provision of public EV charging as one of a range of possible areas on which to spend the Parish Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income. Whilst there was a level of public interest in the headline idea it was clear that most respondents needed more information in order to make an informed comment.



At the Full Council meeting in November, Councillors voted to investigate the installation of electric car charging points in the village. Central government funding is currently available to local authorities to help with the costs of procurement and installation of charging points, but location, number and type of charging point will all need to be considered.

Please do get in touch with any comments or feedback you may have with regards to the provision of charging points – the contact details can be found on the back page.

If you have or are considering buying an electric vehicle please note that on January 12<sup>th</sup> the government announced the extension of current grant rates for both the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme, and Plug-in Car Grant, which provides up to £4,500 to help motorists make the switch to electric. Details of these are available on the internet at <https://tinyurl.com/EVfunding>.

# **Stratfield Mortimer Annual Parish Meeting 2019**

This year's Annual Parish Meeting will be held at

St John's Hall Mortimer on  
Monday 29th April from 7pm

The agenda and further information will be posted on the Parish Council notice boards, website and Facebook page nearer the date.

The agenda will include the Chairman's  
Annual Report on the Parish Council and the presentation of the  
2019

Community Award (see below).

## **Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council COMMUNITY AWARD 2019**

Nominations are sought for the 2019 Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Community Award, which is an annual award given to a person who has devoted outstanding time and energy over a substantial period for the benefit of the community of Stratfield Mortimer. Nomination forms are available from the Parish Council Office, the Library or available to download from the Parish Council website.

The closing date for nominations is 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019.



# Parish Council Elections

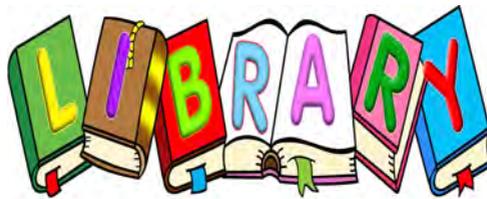
Parish councillor elections are held every four years and 2019 is election year in West Berkshire for both Parish and District Councils. The elections will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Formally, all current Parish Councillors finish their term of office four days after the election and are replaced by those just elected. Current councillors can stand for re-election.



SMPC is the statutory body democratically elected as the first tier of local government and is not a political council. The Parish Council is the voice for the community in the local decision making process and aims to improve the quality of life in the Parish. The article on the Parish Council budget (page 11) gives an insight of what the Council and its committees do. Most councillors will expect to attend two formal meetings per month, but there may also be additional working group meetings.

There are fifteen seats on the Council to be filled. In order to stand for election you need to be an EU (inc UK) or Commonwealth citizen aged 18 or over and meet the local qualification criteria (basically being on the electoral role for the Parish or living in, owning land or having your principal place of work in, or within three miles of, the Parish for the last 12 months). Fuller details will be available from West Berkshire Council (who organise the election) or from the Parish Clerk. At present we know that the period to submit nominations is 15<sup>th</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> April. You can also find information on the process at:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-and-community-council-elections-in-england-and-wales>



You may recall that two years ago the library was under threat of closure as part of West Berkshire Council's (WBC) efforts to cut costs. The parish Council stepped in and made a financial contribution to help keep the library open. At the same time several volunteers came forward from the community to help run the library on a day to day basis and the opening times were reduced.

The Parish Council has now agreed to make another contribution for 2019/20 of £3,735. However, in doing so it was noted that the number of people using the library was in sharp decline. As such it was felt that other things needed to happen to encourage more use of the library and, hopefully arrest the decline in usage.

Several ways were identified for increasing footfall to the library. These included:

- Promoting library activities – such as craft mornings and children's activities
- Promoting ancillary library services i.e. photocopying, foodbank collection, battery collection
- Promoting the free replacement library card, which ran until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.
- Holding a book amnesty (this happens on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of February – see below)
- Looking to provide tea and coffee
- Requesting second hand books - if you have any newish good quality books the library will be happy to put them on the shelves for others to borrow
- Promoting the use of the library by Mortimer New Mummies – a group of mums looking for a place to meet socially.
- Establishing an after school board games group

Discussions have been held with both Sean, the librarian, and West Berkshire Council Library Services to review the proposed ideas. All suggestions discussed were received positively, although some need to fit in with the WBC timetable i.e. it is not possible to hold a book amnesty for Mortimer alone, but a West Berkshire wide fines amnesty is being held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February. There will be no overdue charges for items returned to any of the West Berkshire libraries on these dates.

The possibility of SMPC taking over the library building was also raised. This is something that has been done by other councils and whilst WBC would continue to provide the library service, owning and managing the building by the Parish Council would give rise to other opportunities for the use of the building. This needs to be explored further.

The Parish Council Office has been actively promoting new library initiatives, such as free e-magazines and books, library based activities and the free replacement library card. There are indications that the promotions are already having a positive effect on book issues. If you would like to have a free source of up to date books or magazines on your e-device just ask at the library how to do it or go on to the WBC library web site at <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/35201>

The after school Board Games Club started very successfully on Friday January 11<sup>th</sup> and runs weekly on Fridays from 3.45pm – 5.45pm. The club is for ages 8 and above, as this reflects the library's policy on unaccompanied minors. Volunteers have been found and board games have been sourced.

We are also currently looking to provide tea and coffee in the library. The various options have been identified and are being costed, and this will be decided on in February.

# Remembrance Day

The Remembrance Day service, procession and laying of wreaths took place on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November. As this day marked 100 years since the end of the First World War, the Parish also took part in the nationwide series of events 'Battle's Over – A National's Tribute'.

After the Thanksgiving Service at St John's at 6 pm, events took place on the Fairground. The national tribute 'Tribute to the Millions' was read by

Cllr. Tina Reade and this was followed by Cllr. Neil Kiley reading The Roll of Honour of those commemorated on our War Memorial. Air Vice Marshall Barry Newton gave a moving recital of the poem 'In Flanders's Fields' followed by the Exhortation. At 6:55 pm Bugler Paul Chaplin played the Last Post and at 7 pm exactly the 'WW1 Beacon of Light' was lit. These last two events occurred simultaneously at over 1000 sites in the UK and Commonwealth. The bells of St John's then rang to 'call us all to Thanksgiving and To Go Forward Together in Hope.' The event concluded with a short selection of WW1 songs.



The events on the Fairground were organised by SMPC in conjunction with The Royal British Legion and The Parish of St Mary and St John, who we thank for their support and cooperation. SMPC gratefully thank those who helped with the event: Mortimer Music Live, in particular Ryan Saunders and Richard Cole, provided the excellent sound system; Calor Gas (Reading) kindly provided the propane for the Beacon and James Strang provided and installed the tower for the Beacon.

## **Resignation of Councillor Tina Reade**

We are sorry to announce the resignation of Cllr. Tina Reade as a Parish Councillor. Tina has been a very active member of SMPC and was elected Chairman in May 2018. Tina contributed to all areas of the Council's activities but had particular interests in Community Projects, chairing that committee before becoming Chairman of the Council. Under Tina's chairmanship, the Council made substantial progress in developing community projects, in reviewing and updating its policies and in reorganising office activities. The Council will miss her accounting expertise! We thank her for all her hard work and extend our best wishes to her.

A new Chairman will be elected at the next Full Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February. That Chairman will serve until the May meeting when the Chairman for the following year will be elected following the Parish Council elections on 2<sup>nd</sup> May (see article on page 6).

## **Possible Co-option**

Normally after the resignation of a councillor, the Council must advertise the vacancy which enables members of the public to request an election. This is not necessary as this vacancy occurred within six months of a scheduled election. The Council can decide to co-opt a councillor who would be in office until the election. The Council will decide whether to do this at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February.

# Parish Council adopted Budget and Precept Request 2019-2020

The budget for 2019 -2020 was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and is shown in the table below along with the previous budget.

| Description  | 2018/19 Budget | 2019/20 Budget | Comments  |
|--|----------------|----------------|---|
| Precept  | 142,329        | 146,580        | Raised by Council Tax   |
| Cemetery Fees  | 8,345          | 7,210          | Burials, cremations, memorials  |
| Fairground Fees  | 3,065          | 3,371          | Hire fees, tennis courts  |
| Bank interest, Wayleave and other  | 595            | 645            |   |
| <b>Parish Council Operating Income</b>   | <b>154,334</b> | <b>157,806</b> |   |
| Administration Operating Costs   | 71,817         | 75,468         | Personnel, office rent / costs, meetings, training, subscriptions               |
| Grants to other bodies   | 14,735         | 17,330         | Willink, Library, Handybus  |
| Communications   | 9,625          | 7,600          | Newsletter, website costs   |
| Fairground & Cemetery  | 37,180         | 39,408         | Grasscutting, maintenance, rent, improvement projects                           |
| Roads, Footpaths & Commons   | 22,000         | 18,000         | Maintenance and improvements  |
| <b>Parish Council Operating Costs</b>  | <b>155,357</b> | <b>157,806</b> |   |
| <b>Parish Council Operating income less Operating Costs</b>                    | <b>(1,023)</b> | <b>0</b>       |   |
| <b>Community Infrastructure Projects</b>                                       |                |                |   |
| Community Infrastructure Levy income   | 70,000         | 85,000         | Money from Developers as a result of the NDP                                    |
| Community Projects spend   | 68,977         | -              |   |
| Funds held - Community Infrastructure Projects                                 | -              | 85,000         | Funds held while projects are investigated and prioritised with community input |
| <b>Community Infrastructure Income less spending / funds held for projects</b> | <b>1,023</b>   | <b>-</b>       |   |
| <b>Summary</b>   |                |                |   |
| <b>Total Operating Income</b>  | <b>154,334</b> | <b>157,806</b> | Regular Council income  |
| <b>Community Infrastructure Levy Income</b>                                    | <b>70,000</b>  | <b>85,000</b>  | CIL income  |
| <b>Total Income</b>  | <b>224,334</b> | <b>242,806</b> |   |
| <b>Total Operating Costs</b>   | <b>155,357</b> | <b>157,806</b> | Regular Council costs   |
| <b>Community Infrastructure Spending / project funds held</b>                  | <b>68,977</b>  | <b>85,000</b>  | Project costs / funds held  |
| <b>Total spending / funds held</b>   | <b>224,334</b> | <b>242,806</b> |   |

## **Approach to the Budget for 2019-2020**

Over the next three years Mortimer is expected to receive a sizeable amount of funding from developers, known as Community Infrastructure Levy, or CIL. These funds must be spent on new infrastructure or facilities to improve the life of the village. The amount of CIL that the Parish Council receives has increased considerably during 2018 as we now have an NDP in place. Taking this and the next three years into account, the total CIL funding for Mortimer is likely to reach some £350,000.

During 2019 the Parish Council will be consulting with the village, in order to identify needs and shape priorities. A number of views on potential new village facilities were expressed through the NDP, and other ideas have since come forward and these will also be included.

CIL Income for 2019-2020 is budgeted at £85,000. Given the longer term nature of this spending, the budget assumes that these funds will be held separately during 2019 while projects are investigated and then prioritised, with input from the community.

Given this CIL funding is both temporary and ring fenced for specific capital project developments, it is important we separately ensure that the Parish Council "Operating Costs" are funded sustainably by the Precept and other "Operating Income" sources. For this reason we have separated the Budget into two sections - Operating Costs and Income, and Community Infrastructure Projects.

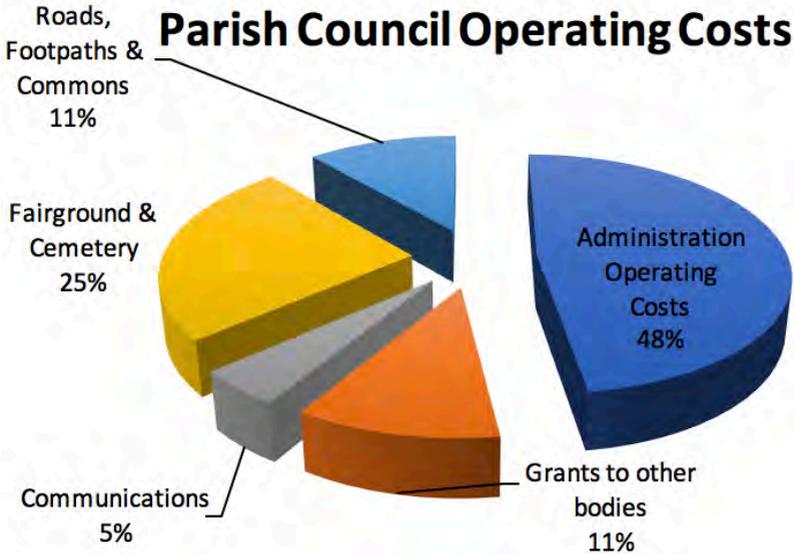
Operating Costs and Income need to balance so we are able to continue to carry out all of the day-to-day activities of the Council, and to manage the existing facilities and services in the village. The primary source of Operating Income is the Precept.

We plan to increase the Parish Precept (the element of Council Tax which specifically goes to the Parish) only as much as is needed to cover increases in our Operating Costs. This means a 2.2% increase in the Precept, or an extra £2 for a Band D property.

## Operating Income

The Precept will increase by £4,000 in total for the year 2019-2020. This will cover the increased costs of day-to-day Operating Costs. Parish Cemetery fees and Fairground fees are estimates.

## Operating Costs



Administration costs cover the costs of staff, office facilities, meetings, training and subscriptions. The hand-over to our new Clerk and Assistant was successfully completed in 2018.

The Parish Council makes some grants for the benefit of the Community, such as Willink Leisure Centre, Handybus and support for Mortimer Library, without which, the Library could close.

Expenditure on other items is broadly in line with last year.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact the Parish Office on 0118 933 1955.

# Station Car Park Update

Much work has been done to progress the development of the Planning Application for the Station Car Park expansion project and a number of studies, surveys and designs have been undertaken to mitigate the concerns of WBC Planners. This work has mainly been funded by the Parish Council, with some help from Englefield Estate. Great Western Railway will fund the remaining work required for the submission of the Planning Application.



**Put a note in your diary ! A public consultation on the Station Car Park is planned for Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February in Mortimer Library - look out for further details on the public notices boards and social media. At the consultation, there will be a number of boards showing the proposed layout and design of the new car park and members of the project team will be on hand to discuss and answer questions.**

## New Local Government Ward for Mortimer

The West Berkshire District Council elections on 2nd May will see the introduction of new ward boundaries as part of the move to reduce the number of councillors from 52 to 43.

Locally this means that the existing two member Mortimer Ward will lose the parishes of Padworth (now becoming part of a revised Aldermaston Ward) and Ufton Nervet (becoming part of a new Bradfield Ward) and combine with the existing Burghfield Ward to form a new three member Burghfield and Mortimer Ward (comprising the parishes of Beech Hill, Burghfield, Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield).

As now, the ward will be wholly within the Wokingham parliamentary constituency.

Currently each WBC councillor represents, on average, 2,337 electors (2017 figures). Under the new structure each will now represent 2,825 electors (2017 figures). By 2023 (this was the date the Local Government Boundary Commission for England used for its report) the predicted electorate for the new ward is 8,952, ie 2,984 electors per councillor.

## Other Useful Contacts

|                             |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Fairground Emergency</b> | <b>0743 6807543</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|

To report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground.

For non-emergencies please contact the Parish Council Office  
0118 9331955

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Police Non-Emergency</b> | <b>101</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------|

To report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

|                          |            |
|--------------------------|------------|
| <b>NHS non-Emergency</b> | <b>111</b> |
|--------------------------|------------|

If you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

|                               |                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>West Berkshire Council</b> | <b>01635 551111</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|

|                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Out of Hours Emergency</b> | <b>01635 42161</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|

To report major incidents out of hours.

|   |
|---|
| <b>West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team</b> |
|---|

streetcare@westberks.gov.uk **01635 519080**

To report problems with streets, roads, highways, pavements, etc.

|   |
|---|
| <b>West Berkshire District Councillors for the Mortimer Ward:</b> |
|---|

Cllr. Mollie Lock

Cllr. Graham Bridgman

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Mortimer Village Partnership</b> |
|-------------------------------------|

[www.mortimervillage.org.uk](http://www.mortimervillage.org.uk)

For village news and information on events, including a directory of local clubs and businesses.

## PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Council Office

The Library

27 Victoria Road

Mortimer

RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955

Email Lynn: [the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Email Bernise: [admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Website: [www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

Facebook: [facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil](https://facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil)

Minutes and Agendas of Council meetings, as well as other Council information, can be viewed on the above website or on the Parish Council notice boards which are located outside The Baobab (the old Post Office) and the library.

The Parish Council Office is normally open:

Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays,

09:30 to 17:00

If the office is closed, correspondence can be left with the library staff or put in the library letter box.