

STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter January 2020



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council



Welcome to the first Parish Council newsletter of 2020

CONTENTS INCLUDE:

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Inside this issue, you will find information on our up-coming public consultation on projects to move forward with in the coming year.

The survey questions can be found in the middle of the newsletter for you to complete and return to the drop off points by Saturday, 8th February 2020.

Additional copies of the survey will be available from the Library.

Have your say on how the Parish Council should spend your money (Part 1)

In the centre of this newsletter there is a very short survey to which your answers will help the Parish Council make decisions on new projects it should pursue. The survey is open to all those living or working in Stratfield Mortimer.

The details about the way the Parish Council will make this happen, and the background and constraints on spending are contained in part 2 of this article (*pages 8 – 13*).

In summary the Parish Council will receive about £350,000 over the next few years from the developers of the 110 houses behind the Horse and Groom and will spend that money to enhance the amenities of the village. However, any new project will, almost certainly, have an ongoing running cost that will have to be paid for from the council tax. You are asked to give your views on the use of the £350,000 bearing in mind those future ongoing costs.

The survey can be filled in and dropped off at Budgens, The Baobab, the Surgery or the Library by Saturday 8th February.

Alternatively, the survey can be filled in online at: <https://tinyurl.com/Mortimer2020>

More information about the process and the possible projects is also available on line at: https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/projects_consultation-3866.aspx or at a manned exhibition in the Library on:

- Tuesday 28th January 2pm – 4pm
- Friday 31st January 5:30 – 7:30pm
- Saturday 1st February 10am – 12:30pm

Finally, the survey asks you to think of any new projects that are not listed and that you believe would enhance the village and help deliver the vision set out in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

THE PARISH COUNCIL

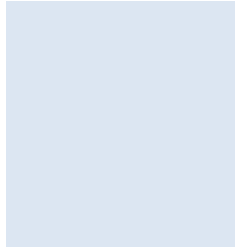
Mike Dennett



Dave Kilshaw



Simon Beard



Graham Bridgman



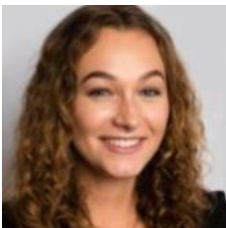
John Bull



Nick Carter



Keeleigh Field



Stephen Hill



Dudley Ives



Kevin Johnson



Lucy Jones



Chris Lewis



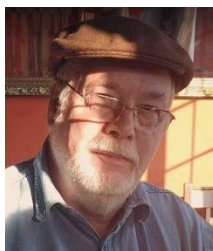
Mollie Lock



Danusia Morsley



John Wells



YOUR PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CLLr. M. Dennett – Chairman

CLLr. D. Kilshaw - Vice Chairman

- *and are ex-officio members of all Committees.*

Fairground and Cemetery: CLLrs J. Bull (Chairman), S. Beard, S. Hill, K. Johnson, L. Jones, M. Lock, D. Morsley.

Finance and General Purposes: CLLrs M. Dennett (Chairman), D. Kilshaw, G. Bridgman, J. Bull, N. Carter, C. Lewis, and D. Morsley.

Planning: CLLrs D. Morsley (Chairman), S. Beard, S. Hill, D. Ives, K. Johnson, L. Jones, C. Lewis, J. Wells and Mr. N. Kiley (co-opted)

Roads Footpaths and Commons: CLLrs C. Lewis (Chairman), S. Beard, G. Bridgeman, S. Bull, N. Carter, S. Hill, D. Ives, K. Johnson, L. Jones, J. Wells.

There are also currently four working parties dealing with Communications, Garth Hall, Library and Strategy.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE TEAM

Parish Office

Lynn Hannawin took up the role of **Clerk to the Council** in 2018.



Bernise O'Reilly joined the office team in March 2018.



Lynn and Bernise are in the Parish Council Office on **Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

As the most recent chairman of the Planning Committee I would like to let everyone know what we do.

When anyone sends a planning application to West Berkshire Council, it gets validated by the staff there and put on their Planning Portal. If it is in Stratfield Mortimer, the Parish Clerk receives notification of this with the date by which we need to submit our comments.

To make sure we comment on applications in time, we usually schedule two meetings of the Planning Committee every month – one at 6:45pm in the Methodist Church Hall, immediately before the monthly Full Council meeting (second Thursday of the month), and a second at 5:30pm in the Library, usually on the Thursday two weeks later. If there are no applications to consider for a particular meeting, that date is cancelled. You can find all the dates of past and planned meetings at https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/Meetings_and_Minutes_3873.aspx

Within the statutory period prior to the meeting, the Clerk sends the agenda to all the members of the Planning Committee. This has

details of the applications we are going to discuss, and members can read and look at the plans before the meeting.

Anyone can come to a meeting of the Planning Committee; it is a public meeting and you will be asked if wish to say anything at the beginning of the meeting. You might wish to speak in favour of, or to make some objections to, a particular application. The Committee will listen and take what you say into consideration. There is a time limit of 3 minutes per person.

At the start of the meeting proper, members will state if they have a personal interest in any of the applications; they might live next door to an application or be a very close friend of the applicant. If they feel this means they have a financial interest in the application (for example, it might devalue their own house), they won't take part in the discussion of that application.

The Committee looks at each application in turn; various plans and documents are projected onto a screen so we can all see them together. We are particularly looking to see whether it adheres to the policies in our Neighbourhood Development Plan and those of WBC. We don't discuss our personal likes and dislikes, but whether there is enough information for us to see that an application follows all these policies and will thus fit in with what has been agreed for the parish.

The Clerk takes minutes and records the majority view about each application; these notes are used to write the SMPC response to WBC for each application and this is sent to them within a day or two. Our comments to WBC are only advisory; just like those of a private individual, they are put on the planning portal and are considered, but they are not bound by them.

The Committee is also responsible for overseeing some SMPC projects, so these are also discussed. Currently these are the proposed new Station Car Park, monitoring progress of the development behind the Horse & Groom and liaising with WBC and the developers as to how the Public Open Space at the bottom of that development will be carried out.

Danusia Morsley, Chairman

What should Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) spend your money on? (Part 2)

People frequently suggest things that SMPC should do, and facilities we should deliver, and we also have our own ideas. At a time when West Berkshire Council (WBC) is, of necessity, cutting back in some instances to core statutory services, what SMPC can provide has become extremely important.

This article is about how you can have a say in deciding what projects SMPC should spend its (and your) money on, and to introduce our survey seeking your views. You can find out more on our website and at an exhibition (*see page 3 of newsletter*).

Background

SMPC has two principal sources of funding for general expenditure and projects – the parish precept paid as part of your Council Tax and a percentage of the Community Investment Levy (CIL) paid to WBC by certain developers in respect of new developments (more about these funding sources below).

Because of its entitlement to CIL money, SMPC has an opportunity over the next few years to undertake more or bigger projects than previously. The projects that are chosen will impact not only the immediate future, but also the way the village develops. If SMPC provides more services, it too will have to change.

So, how do we start to work out what the village wants/needs that we could provide?

It is worth remembering what the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), which the village voted for in 2017, has to say about the 'Vision' for Mortimer in the future:

The Plan will make it possible for people to live the whole of their lives in the parish if they so wish.

The rural character and setting of the parish will remain with the minimum of intrusion on the existing surrounding green and agricultural space.

The Vision then developed into a number of themes and strategies, and those which might be particularly relevant to SMPC undertaking to do more include:

- Promote the infrastructure services of a modern and attractive parish – superfast broadband, schools, health and welfare services
- Encourage local employment opportunities and successful businesses
- Promote an attractive village centre to increase footfall to support the success of local shops
- Avoid creeping urbanisation
- Encourage/enable walking and cycling within the village and reduce the need for car usage
- Support new school and surgery provision, funded by third parties, at the heart of the village

Several possible projects were proposed by respondents to the NDP. Both these and any new projects which come forward for promotion by SMPC need to be examined against these themes and strategies.

How would new projects be paid for?

SMPC has two main sources of funds to carry out all its tasks and to fund new projects.

Precept and Operating Expenditure

First, we are given a small proportion of the Council Tax paid to WBC each year by those who pay Council Tax. For 2019/20 this is between £58.05 for a Band A property and £174.14 for Band H. The average (Band D) is £87.07

The total SMPC receives from all the properties in the Parish is known as the **Precept**, and together with about £11,000 from charges, such as cemetery fees, Fairground and tennis court hire, provides a total income of £157,800 this year. This is used for the ongoing expenses of the Parish Council, known as **operating expenditure**.

The operating expenditure covers the running costs of the Parish Council including maintenance of the Fairground, Cemetery, tennis courts, play equipment, staff salaries, grants to local organisations, insurance and various small-scale projects. Each year the Council produces a budget of these costs and income for the coming year and requests the precept from West Berkshire Council to balance this budget.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Capital Expenditure

We also receive 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) paid by developers to WBC (because we have an NDP the percentage is higher than it is for other parishes in the district who do not and who only receive 15%). For example, we calculate that that the new 110 house development behind the Horse & Groom will mean that over time SMPC will receive about £350k in CIL money (rather than 15% or about £210k if we didn't have the NDP).

CIL is mainly geared for **capital** funding, – we are not permitted to use it (for example) to subsidise our day-to-day administrative costs, reduce the precept, etc. Having said this, it is important to understand that some of the capital projects proposed below will incur future running costs that will have to come out of operating expenditure and may therefore require an increase in the council tax precept.

For instance, if a new toilet is built on the Fairground there might be a capital cost of (say) £50k but there will also be running and maintenance costs of perhaps £15k per annum. You can see that after a very few years the total running and maintenance cost will far exceed the original capital cost and could continue to grow in the future. The capital cost could be paid for by using CIL, but eventually we will all have to pay for the upkeep and maintenance through increased council tax or find another source of funds.

There are also additional administration costs associated with both the capital and operating costs. The parish office has to organise the construction of new projects and then inspect, organise and pay for any ongoing maintenance or other costs.

The Proposal

At the March 2019 SMPC meeting it was agreed to carry out a public consultation to help determine which projects should be taken forward (and to repeat the exercise in future years). This article is the start of that process.

There are only a limited number of projects that have been researched enough to be subject to a meaningful consultation this year.

A high level of public support through the survey that accompanies this article (or the same survey on the parish website) is needed for SMPC to feel confident in going ahead with a particular project and dedicating a lot of time to developing it to fruition. It is important, however, to stress

that a project receiving a huge level of support might still not go ahead because of factors outside SMPC's control (e.g. refusal of planning permission or lack of consent from landowners) and might have to be abandoned.

There are also potential timing issues with all projects. Complying with external bodies' rules and regulations, such as gaining planning permission, invariably takes a lot of time, meaning projects cannot be completed as quickly as desired.

As has been already mentioned, all the projects will have an impact on the level of the Precept for future years and this must be a major consideration for the Parish Council as well as the individual tax payers.

On a more positive note, you can see that the incoming CIL will provide an opportunity for new projects and the survey in the centre of this newsletter gives space for your suggestions for other projects, as does the online version. Please remember that any new project should ideally tie in with the vision and strategy outlined in the first part of this article. Any information to indicate how it does so would be an excellent recommendation to get it included in a future consultation.

The Exhibition

There will be a manned exhibition in the library on:

- Tuesday 28th January 2pm – 4pm
- Friday 31st January 5:30pm – 7:30pm
- Saturday 1st February 10am – 12:30pm

where there will be more information on the individual projects and the process. Please come and talk to individuals who are involved in the process and know more about how it is all intended to work.

On-Line

The exhibition is available on-line if you want more detail. The link is https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/projects_consultation-3866.aspx

The Possible Projects

The projects on which you are being asked to give your views in the survey are:

Pavement down The Street

Minor changes to the verges, pavement and roadway to ensure a 1.5m wide pavement is available from the War Memorial to St. Mary's School.

This will widen the pavement where it is too narrow at present and give a safer route to school for pupils and parents

SMPC owning the Library

SMPC taking on the leasehold ownership & running of the Library building, setting up a trust to do so.

This will enable changes to be made to the Library such as enlarging it and allowing it to be used for a wider range of events

Electric vehicle (EV) charging points

Provision of two EV charging points in both the Community Centre carpark and the St. John's church car park. Ascertaining demand for roadside EV charging points near properties with no off-street parking.

With climate change a major issue, this could be the start of a programme of initiatives to help Mortimer become carbon neutral, promoting EV adoption and serving residents and visitors, and benefitting the environment.

Footpath to Burghfield

Provision of a footpath/cycleway between Mortimer and Burghfield (east side of Burghfield Road from College Piece corner to roundabout with Padworth Road). This is subject to agreement by several landowners.

Since WBC removed the free school bus there has been no free way for pupils to travel to and from Willink without using the paths through the woods or using the main road. This would allow walking and cycling along a relatively safe route.

Extending Use of the Tennis Courts

A feasibility study into: firstly, the provision of floodlights on the Fairground to allow the tennis courts to be used during the evenings throughout the year; secondly, to consider if it would be feasible to alter the tennis courts to allow other sports to be played on the hard surface.

This proposal is just for a feasibility study for both the provision of floodlights and any other alterations to the tennis courts to allow other sports to be played on the hard surface as well as tennis. As such the feasibility study would be in two parts and the conclusions on the two parts would be independent of each other.

Permanent Cricket Nets

A permanent compound to hold cricket nets for cricket practise.

Mortimer Cricket Club wish to erect a secure compound 32m x 4m with a wicket practice ground surface and nets alongside the northern side of the tennis courts to hold and protect its cricket nets and provide an enhanced facility for coaching, training and warm up. The Cricket Club would find other funds to provide the surface and nets and this project is only for the fencing and costs involved with the installation of it.

Public Toilet on the Fairground

A feasibility study into the provision of a public toilet on the Fairground.

There have been frequent requests to provide a public toilet on the Fairground. There are various options for this and the issues as to what type, which site and the technicalities of the required services have proved difficult for the Council to work out, although it seems likely that no solution will cost less than £50,000. This project proposes a professional feasibility study to provide the necessary information for an informed decision. It should be noted that the annual cost of maintenance and cleaning of the toilets is likely to be quite substantial compared to other projects; perhaps up to £10 per annum per Band D property.

Fitness Equipment on the Fairground

The provision of adult fitness equipment on the Fairground.

A group of outdoor exercise machines would provide a free gym area for all and could be used by fitness training classes as well as individuals.

It should be noted that all the costs are very broad estimates at this stage. It is not until individual projects are worked on in more detail that accurate costings will emerge.





CHRISTMAS CAROLS...

On Saturday, 21st December, the Community Carol service was held in the community centre on the Fairground. As in past years, this event was organised by the team at Together in Mission with music provided by members from South Berks Concert Band. A large number of residents attended and joined together in singing some Christmas favourites.



AND A CHRISTMAS TREE

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council hopes you enjoyed the Christmas tree with its full complement of lights - while it lasted! Sadly, the lights were vandalised beyond repair on Christmas Eve.



UPDATES FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

Proposal for St John's Car Park: with the assistance of West Berkshire Council, speed cushions are shortly due to be installed in the car park beside St. John's Church and the gates to St. John's Infant School to enforce a speed limit on vehicles accessing the area.

Stephens Close/APMF footpath hedge maintenance: the Parish Council recently arranged for the overgrown vegetation to be cut back to clear the footpath.

Summerlug and Brewery Common tree survey: this survey will be taking place during January to review the condition of trees on the commons. Recent surveys have been completed on Windmill Common and Brewery Common, as well as The Fairground and cemetery, and the Parish Council will be looking at the recommendations made.

Annual Library Contribution: in November, the Full Council approved a payment of £3,735.00 as Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council's Library contribution for 2019/2020.

Conservation Path on the Fairground: work on refurbishing the conservation path across the Fairground has begun, although the recent wet weather has slowed down progress, this should be completed early in the New Year.



STRATFIELD MORTIMER COMMUNITY AWARD 2020



We are looking for nominations for

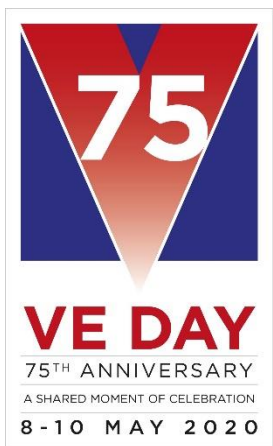
the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award 2020

This is an annual award given to a person who has devoted outstanding time and energy for the benefit of the community of Stratfield Mortimer, irrespective of whether or not they live in the village.

If you know of someone who you think deserves recognition, please nominate them by completing a nomination form available at <https://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk/Stratfield-Mortimer-PC/Default.aspx> or from the Parish Council office and Mortimer Library.

The closing date for nominations is **17th February 2020**.

75th ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY



On Friday, 8th May 2020, it will be 75 years since Victory in Europe (VE) Day – the day the guns fell silent at the end of the second World War in Europe. Years of death and destruction had come to an end, and millions of people took to the streets to celebrate peace, mourn their loved ones and to hope for the future.

The Parish Council, supported by local businesses, groups, organisations and volunteers, is arranging a packed programme of activities and events on **Bank Holiday Friday, 8th May and Saturday, 9th May 2020.**

The two days serve to remember and reflect on the sacrifice, courage and determination of the people from all walks of life who saw us through this dark and terrifying period, and help us celebrate the arrival of peace in Europe as the country did 75 years ago.

The programme includes a wartime vehicle display, a free-entry Fairground celebration, with live music and a float (lorry) procession from Burghfield to Mortimer. Local groups/businesses wishing to decorate and ride on a provided float, in wartime attire, and anyone with photographs or memorabilia suitable for sharing online, are invited to contact us to discuss. (Email: admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk or call 0118 933 1955)



Look out for further updates on this not-to-be-missed weekend on the Parish Council website, MVP Facebook, and in the Village Eye.

DATE FOR THE DAIRY

This year's **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** will be held on Monday, 27th April at 7.30pm in St. John's Hall. As in previous years, the event is open to the whole parish, and we hope to discuss a current topic as well as holding the formal meeting.

Please keep an eye out for future announcements about the meeting and the topic chosen for public discussion.

PROPERTY OCCUPIERS WITH HEDGES OR TREES NEXT TO A FOOTPATH OR ROAD – DON'T LET YOUR HEDGE BE A HAZARD!

Owners, or tenants, have a responsibility to keep their hedges trimmed back to their boundary, clear of any roads or footpaths running alongside their property.

The problems with the footpaths going down The Street to St Mary's school are well known and the Parish Council have recently had a survey carried out as a first step to improving the route.

West Berkshire Council (WBC) have a duty, under the Highways Act 1980, to ensure the highway is not obstructed. It is an offence under the Act to allow trees, hedges, shrubs, etc. to obstruct the highway. If an obstruction comes to the notice of WBC, they will make an initial request to you to cut back the vegetation. If the request is not complied with, WBC will then serve a 21 Day Notice. If you do not comply with this Notice, WBC may carry out the work themselves and recover the costs of the work directly from you.

If you would like further information, please call into the Parish office behind the Library, where you can pick up a leaflet produced by West Berkshire Council or go to:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=34807&p=0>

to download a copy.

Useful Contacts

Fairground Emergency - report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground: 0743 6807543
For **non-emergencies** contact the Parish Council Office: 0118 9331955

Police Non-Emergency: 101

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

NHS non-Emergency: 111

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

West Berks Council (WBC): 01635 551111

WBC Out of Hours Emergency Contact: 01635 42161

To report major incidents out of hours.

West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team: 01635 519080

Email: streetcare@westberks.gov.uk

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

West Berkshire District Councillors for the Burghfield & Mortimer Ward:

Cllr Graham Bridgman

Cllr Royce Longton

Cllr Geoff Mayes

Mortimer Village Partnership - For village news and information on events, including a directory of local clubs and businesses:
www.mortimervillage.org.uk

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

Email Bernise: admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Website: www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Facebook: www.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.