

# STRATFIELD MORTIMER

## Parish Council Newsletter



**December 2015**

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## **Austin Colaço**

It is with great sadness that the Council informs the Parish of the death of one of our councillors, Austin Colaço, who passed away on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Austin was elected to the Council in May 2007 and apart from a brief absence in 2011 has been a councillor since then. Austin served on various committees during this period, in particular Planning, Roads Footpaths and Commons and Communications.

Austin always took a keen interest in Parish matters and his insights and cheerful manner will be much missed by all fellow councillors. The Council sends their sincere condolences to Bella and their children Danny, Angie and Tilly. The funeral took place at St Oswalds Catholic Church, Burghfield on 1<sup>st</sup> December.



## **Parish Clerk**

The Council received the resignation of Mrs Jayne Kirk from her post as Clerk to the Council shortly after the last newsletter had been published. The Council would like to thank Jayne for all her service as Clerk over the last fifteen years.

As a result the Council has agreed to two actions. First, an advertisement for a new Clerk to the Council has been published (see page 22 of this newsletter). Second, as an interim measure, the part time services of a locum Clerk have been obtained. The locum Clerk will work in the Parish Council Office and members of the public will be welcome during the normal opening hours (10:30 to 12:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays).

## **School Crossing Patrol and Speeding in Mortimer**

There has been a lot of discussion and concern in the village about the lack of a school crossing patrol outside St John's School and speeding there and elsewhere in the village.

The Parish Council and the Roads, Footpaths and Commons Committee have been working on this for some weeks. There was a thorough discussion with members of the public who attended the October Parish Council meeting. A meeting was held on site in Mortimer with the Head of Highways Engineering from West Berkshire Council. Both our District Councillors and several Parish Councillors attended. You will also probably have seen a SID (Speed Indication Device) being used around the village on several days 3-4 weeks ago. West Berkshire Council (WBC) also conducted several speed monitoring exercises outside St John's School early in October 2015. The current position is that:-

- Both the SID recordings and readings taken by WBC outside St John's School show average traffic speeds of around 24 mph. We all know that there will be extreme examples of speed from time to time but traffic control measures are normally aimed at reducing average speeds. Taken together with the survey carried out by WBC of people crossing that road at school times, the results show when national standards are applied that a light controlled crossing is not justified..
- Average speeds on the Street and Hammonds Heath Road are higher but still not normally above the speed limit. Sporadic bad driving can and will happen whatever the speed limit. A detailed report is presented below.
- You will see elsewhere in this magazine we are supporting efforts to recruit a School Crossing Patrol Officer(s) and we are also examining the alternatives and how they might be funded.

- Further work is going on to look at other possible traffic calming measures in other parts of the village. These might include villages “gates” and looking at pavement width on The Street.

A regular update on this subject will be provided in future newsletters.

## **Full Report on Speeding in Mortimer**

### **Terms of reference**

At the October meeting of the Parish Council there was an agenda item entitled:- “To receive an update on road safety within the Parish, including consideration of the School Crossing Patrol Assessment and to decide on future actions” The outcome of that item was, in part, that councillors Blagden and Wingfield would report back on speeding issues in the village.

The two councillors felt that the terms of reference for this report back had to be established to make progress and as such they have adopted the following for the purpose of this report:-

“To list the perceived problems of speeding in the village and discuss, in principle, possible ways forward to address these issues”

### **The Issues**

It would seem that the speeding issues are most often mentioned relative to the three main roads of the village, namely The Street, West End Road and Victoria Road.

The issues with The Street are most often associated with crossing children over outside St John’s school and walking children to and from St Mary’s school.

In West End Road the entrance to the village seems to be where most complaints are based.

For Victoria Road the entrance to the village is again the focus of the complaints.

It should also be noted that there is a general complaint about dangerous driving at high speed randomly spread across the village.

### Evidence

There is much anecdotal evidence but little hard data on which to judge the extent of speeding in the village. One source of information are the statistics collected by the Speed Indication Device (SID) which are deployed by Parish Councillors. The latest occurrence was in the first week in October and example statistics from then are shown in the table below.

**Table of Findings**

Site	Average speed	%> speed limit (30mph)	%> speed limit plus 15mph	85 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Volume
Horse & Groom West bound morning	25.6	12.7	0	30	346
The Street East bound morning	30.0	44.7	0	33	964
Hammonds Heath North bound afternoon	28.6	40.0	1.2	34	170

From the above it can be seen that each site exhibits quite different characteristics. It should also be noted that in terms of pure speed

enforcement it is likely that none of the sites would be considered to warrant urgent action.

### **Possible Measures**

There are many different measures that can be used to slow down traffic. These include:-

- Village gateways
- Speed humps
- Chicanes
- Surface treatments
- Road markings
- Traffic islands
- Controlled crossings
- Warning signs
- Vehicle activated signs
- Speed limits

Clearly each measure has different pros and cons and a different cost. For instance, a village gateway can cost up to £5,500 and a Zebra crossing with high friction surfacing on the approaches up to £25,000. Other costs can be found at:-

<http://tinyurl.com/examplecosts>

### **Discussion**

The major concern at the moment seems to be outside St John's school. There are a range of options for this site which include:-

- Parish Council takes over the provision of a school crossing patrol
- Parish Council agrees to fund a school crossing patrol in the future and talks to the school about managing it
- Provision of part time 20mph speed limit
- Provision of Zebra crossing

It should be noted from the SID operation that this site has the lowest average speed of the three sites. From observation it is apparent that the major problem is not the speed of vehicles but the number of gaps in the traffic allowing parents and children to cross the road. This is markedly worse in the morning compared to the afternoon. As such it is suggested that a zebra crossing is the most appropriate measure in this location. It is likely that West Berkshire will not be willing to fund such a crossing so the Parish Council may have to find some £25,000 to fund such a crossing.

The other major concerns are The Street, especially at school opening and closing times, without physical measures a 20mph speed limit, either permanent or part time, is unlikely to have a great deal of effect. Physical measures could be deployed but they would be costly and inconvenient for the majority of motorists. It should be noted that in recent years the pavement just west of Pitfield Lane has been widened and this has improved the perception of safety over this stretch of road. It is therefore suggested that it would be beneficial to investigate the practicality and cost of widening the pavement from Strawberry Fields to the pelican crossing. It is felt that if this is achievable it may well go a long way to reducing the perceived danger of this stretch of road.

On the other main roads the possibility exists to install 20mph speed limits but these would involve other features such as road humps and signs. All these would go against the community view, expressed in the NDP consultation, that there is a desire to retain the rural feel to Mortimer. As such it is suggested that the most appropriate measure would be the installation of village gateways at the entrances to the village. These features tend to have a slight constriction to the road width which reinforces the message about reducing speed. They can be made to look very attractive and could be said to enhance the rural feel rather than diminishing it.



## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:-

- The provision of a zebra crossing near St John's school be pursued
- An investigation is carried out into the feasibility of widening the pavement between Strawberry Fields and the controlled crossing on The Street
- Consideration be given to the provision of village gateway features at the entrance to the village

These recommendations were all approved at the November SMPC full council meeting.

## **Search for a School Crossing Patrol volunteer**

After Freda Batten, the long-serving stalwart "lollipop lady" for Mortimer retired in July, West Berkshire Council has been unable to find a replacement. Money does still exist to pay a replacement person, although the position is not currently being advertised.

Can you, or anyone you know, commit half an hour twice per day, during school term time to run this service? Training and uniform will be provided and you/they will need to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly CRB).

We understand a job share is possible too, with one person working the morning shift and another the afternoons, provided both are a regular commitment. If you'd like to know more please contact the Clerk (contact details are on the back cover).

## **Feedback on Communications**

The Parish Council would be interested in finding out what you think of this Newsletter and any other communications. There is a reply form at the end of the Newsletter that you can fill in and return to the Parish Council Offices.

# Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council 2015/16 –who's who



**Mike Dennett (Chairman)**



**Julian Earl  
(Vice Chairman)**



**Pat Wingfield  
Cemetery\*;Fairground  
Trees & Amenities**



**Pete Blagden  
Fairground Trees &  
Amenities\*,  
Communications**



**John Bull  
Fairground, Trees &  
Amenities; Cemetery;  
Roads, Footpaths & Commons;**



**Tony Butcher  
Roads Footpaths &  
Commons\*, Planning**



**Nick Carter  
Communications;  
Roads, Footpaths &  
Commons**



**Phil Challis  
Fairground Trees & Amenities;  
Cemetery, Roads Footpaths &  
Commons**



**Dudley Ives  
Planning, Roads,  
Footpaths & Commons**



**Neil Kiley**  
Planning\*; Fairground  
Trees & Amenities;



**Chris Lewis**  
Cemetery; Roads Footpaths &  
Commons; Communications



**Mollie Lock**  
Fairground, Trees &  
Amenities; Roads,  
Footpaths & Commons



**Angie Phillips**  
Roads Footpaths &  
Commons, Planning



**Andrew Richardson**  
Communications\*;  
Fairground Trees & Amenities



**Frank Stansfield**  
(Custodian)

**Note \* denotes chair of committee**

## **Garth Hall Update**

Garth Hall in St John's Road was built by Miss Bertha Capron in 1915 for the 'boys and young men of Mortimer, as shown by the plaque inside the building. It passed to the YMCA and subsequently to the Royal British Legion who ran it until it was closed on safety grounds.



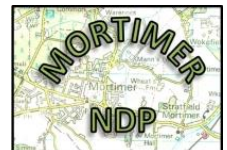
In 2013, SMPC successfully applied to have the building placed on the Community Right to Bid register. If the building is put on the market, this status gives the Parish Council six months to decide whether to make an offer to purchase.

In June 2015 the Charity Commission issued a draft scheme which included the clause that if Garth Hall was sold the proceeds would be split 50:50 between the British Legion and the YMCA. The Parish Council strongly objected to this and the draft scheme was been withdrawn.

The Charity Commission, the Royal British Legion and the Parish Council will be entering further discussions on what can and should be done, either to continue the use of the hall or to deal with the proceeds of any sale in line with the original objectives.

## **Neighbourhood Development Plan update**

In the last newsletter mention was made of a meeting to discuss the formulation of a Site Design Brief for the proposed new residential development behind St John's school. The meeting was well attended and a robust discussion took place about many matters associated with the site.



Following on from that meeting, and picking up points that had been made, adjustments to the Site Design Brief were made and incorporated into the document that was approved for consultation by the Parish Council at its October meeting.

The document was sent to West Berkshire for consultation but they have now informed the Parish Council that there need to be two rounds of consultation. The first consultation has now been organised by the Parish Council and commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November with a closing date of the 21<sup>st</sup> of December.

The results of that consultation will then be considered and a report prepared which details the main themes to emerge from the consultation and how they are dealt with in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. That report together with the Plan itself will go to West Berkshire who in turn will organise their own consultation and examination of the Plan by a government inspector.

Of course all this takes time and, because there now have to be two consultation exercises, the date for the referendum will be pushed back to early summer.

## **Fairground News**

A major project to remove the overgrown areas of **gorse and bramble** on the Fairground is being planned. The works will involve targeting overgrown areas, flailing the gorse and bramble down to ground level and removing all waste from the site. These works will vastly improve many aspects of the Fairground which can then be seen from surrounding roads etc. Additionally, regular flailing on an annual basis will keep our beautiful Fairground looking tended and cared for.

Another project is the planting of several hundred young trees donated by the Woodland Trust. The plan was due to be completed in November and you can see the new trees along the southern side of the grazing area. The objective of this work is to provide a thick hedge

which will improve this environment for birds and other local wildlife. Eventually, the post and rail fence along this boundary can be removed when the hedge has reached maturity in about six years' time. A similar hedge has become well established along the western boundary of the grazing area.

## **Relief In Need**

Stratfield Mortimer Relief In Need is a local charity which benefits the residents of the Parishes of Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. The charity gives money to individuals, organisations and Community Projects within these local communities. The Parish Council has a representative Angela Philips who is one of the Trustees and the Trust have two meetings a year, one in April and one in November.

Villagers or organisations who would like to apply for funds are encouraged to contact the Parish Council Clerk to get contact details.

## **Facebook**



Since the last edition of the Newsletter SMPC have gone live on Facebook. The aim of its Facebook page is to provide information and updates on Parish matters and promote thoughts and comments from parishioners. So far the launch has been successful and we look forward to more interest. To find the Facebook page log into Facebook and search for "Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council SMPC".

## **District Parish Conference 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

The District Parish Conference is held two times per year for Councillors from all parishes in West Berkshire to gain insight to current WBC strategy and activity in topics that impact the councils and their communities. The highlights are provided below and greater detail can be found at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk) .

### **West Berkshire Council Budget 2016/17 - Councillor Gordon Lundie (Leader of Council)**

- £36.5m savings over the last six years with planned £20.3m savings over the next four years
- Medium Term Financial Strategy – Income Assumptions:
  - 0% Council Tax increase in all years
  - Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to result in 25% Grant reductions 25% to Revenue Support
  - Business rates to increase by 1% (2016/17) then 2% pa in line with RPI inflation rate
  - Phase 2 of Care Act postponed
  - New Homes Bonus growth until year 6 of scheme (2016/17)
  - Public Health grant remains ring-fenced £4.8m
- Medium Term Financial Strategy - expenditure assumptions
  - National Insurance increase 2016/17 £800k
  - £500k increase p.a. in revenue cost of capital funding
  - 1% pay increase £500K
  - Pension rate of 17.4%, an increase of 0.6% £500k

### **Superfast Broadband - Kevin Griffin (Head of ICT & Corporate Support) and Councillor Roger Croft**

- West Berkshire Superfast Broadband Coverage
  - £3.7m Investment - Public Subsidy: £1.82m and Supplier Investment: £1.88m
  - Contract signed with BT Group in Autumn 2013

- Technology deployed Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC)
- Superfast uplift 17.2% (11,835 Premises)
- 83.0% (57,109 Premises) have Superfast Broadband - increased from 65.8% (45,274 Premises)
- Phase 2 will focus on the remaining 17% (11,782 West Berkshire premises) without Superfast
  - Public subsidy of £3.73m provided (more than double the phase 1 subsidy)
  - Gigaclear will invest over £16m into this improvement project
  - Technology to be deployed: Fibre to the Premise (FTTP)
  - West Berkshire's superfast coverage expected to reach 99%+ by end of 2017

### **Planning Update - Gary Lugg (Head of Planning and Countryside) and Councillor Alan Law**

- Update – Site Allocations DPD (Development Plan Document)
  - Core Strategy (2006 – 2026) Min of 10,500 houses to be built approx. 3000 in Newbury area
  - Site Allocations Development seeks to allocate 30 sites providing approx 1,500 home
  - Adoption expected (Nov 2016) following consultation and approval with Secretary of State
- Update – Firlands Appeal
  - Appeal for 90 Houses approved by Planning Inspector on basis of “lack of 5 year land supply”
  - West Berkshire Council is challenging the decision 5 year supply
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) replaces majority of S106 (Developer Contributions).
  - Funds infrastructure to support development by standard non-negotiable charge on development
  - Applies to extensions over 100 sq m and new dwellings.



- No charge for most changes of use and affordable housing.
- 15% to Parish Council and 25% to Parish Councils (e.g. Stratfield Mortimer) with a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

## **West Berkshire Council's Budget Proposals 2016/17**

West Berkshire Council has opened consultation on its budget proposals for 2016/17. This runs until 14 December. Results of the consultation will be considered at their Full Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Full details and how to respond can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/WBCbudgetproposals>

Obviously the proposal which has caused greatest concern in Stratfield Mortimer is the proposal under 'Home to School Transport ' which proposes *"The four routes between Mortimer and the Willink School. Transport for 233 pupils would be removed. We would reorganise the transport provision for the remaining 103 students that are entitled to free transport under other rules to minimise costs"* (see next article for more information).

Some other proposals that specifically affect Mortimer are: the proposal to *"...merge Burghfield Common Library with Mortimer Library into one building located in Mortimer."*

the proposal *"to withdraw entirely the 75 bus service from Beech Hill to Newbury"*

the proposal *to no longer fund or manage school crossing patrols at six sites including Mortimer St John's*

proposals for reductions in rural grass cutting. *We will remove one cutting cycle from the rural verge cutting regime and so the number of cuts will reduce from three to two annually. This will save approximately £10,000 per annum. There will also be reduced*

*strimming and blowing after grass cutting and reduced small area cutting eg around the base of signage and other highway structures.*

proposals in highway maintenance *The 40% reduction in maintenance budget will mean that only essential signs (eg signs giving orders and warning signs) and road markings will be replaced and refurbished . Many signs will remain dirty or damaged and road markings will become faded.*

There are a wide range of proposals covering 46 topics including many of the social services provided by the Council.

The Parish Council is putting together its response to these proposals and these will be taken to the next Full Parish Council meeting on 10th December at 7:30 pm in the Methodist Church. Comments on any of these proposals can be sent to the Clerk (details on back cover).

## **Save our Buses Campaign**

WBC deems it “safe” and “reasonable” for children from Mortimer to walk through the woods linking Mortimer and Burghfield to school, crossing the dangerous Goring Road. An assumption is that there is adult accompaniment.

This matter has resulted in vigorous community response. SMPC were informed of the issue at the November Full Council meeting and preliminary comments were made. Individual councillors were on the walk to Willink and will probably have attended other meetings (taking place after press date of this newsletter) to inform the Council’s response. As stated above, the Council’s response to WBC budget proposals, including this particular issue, will be considered at the next Full Parish Council meeting on 10th December at 7:30 pm in the Methodist Church

## Update on Superfast Broadband

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Mortimer will be included in "Phase 2" of Superfast Berkshire - a program to deliver superfast broadband to rural areas.

Gigaclear, the appointed service provider of superfast Berkshire Phase 2, told the Parish Council recently that the relevant work for Mortimer is expected to take place between September 2016 and Feb 2017. They go on to say that you can check if your address is part of their plan via this link

<http://www.gigaclear.com/superfastberkshire>

If your address is part of their current plan, you'll be able to place an order for the service or register interest.

If your address is not included in their plan you will only be able register your interest.

Properties that were included in the Phase 1 of Superfast Berkshire, carried out by BT OpenReach and therefore already 'superfast ready' are not part of Gigaclear's current planned works. Such households may register interest with Gigaclear who will look at the possibility of making them a separate 'commercial offer', which will depend on location and demand.

Gigaclear advise that their web page [www.gigaclear.com](http://www.gigaclear.com) will also contain details about local Q&A events.

Feel free to ask us any Mortimer-specific questions you have and we'll try to obtain answers.

## **Street lighting in Mortimer**

West Berkshire Council (WBC) upgraded the existing street lighting in Mortimer to LED on 31st October, ahead of plan. The locations affected are:

WOODSIDE CLOSE, WINDMILL ROAD, THE STREET, GROVES LEA, DAMSON DRIVE, BILBERRY GARDENS and ASPARAGUS CLOSE.

The LED lights give out a white rather than yellow light and consume much less energy than the old sodium lights. The LED lights are more controllable and accurately directed, allowing the light output to be lower. Their output during the daytime is about 54% of the level of the old sodium lights. They are also dimmed automatically a further 20% between midnight and 5.30am.

West Berkshire Council, have offered to lower the light level further overnight to 53% of the daytime level. SMPC proposes to request this change to be made, which is done by a simple 'flick of a switch'. The NPD confirms a clear majority do not want street lighting at all, therefore dimming lights in existing developments as much as possible looks to be widely supported. This will be an agenda item for the Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

## **Community Award 2016**

Nominations are sought for the 2016 Stratfield Mortimer 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 the Parish Council website.

The deadline for nominations is 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

**5<sup>th</sup> COMMUNITY  
CAROL SINGING  
AROUND  
THE CHRISTMAS TREE**



**SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

**5:00 PM**

**Mortimer Fairground**

**With South Berks Concert Band**

**Together in Mission and Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council**

# Advertisement for Parish Clerk

## STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL

The Council wishes to appoint a  
**Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer**

The position will be largely based in the Parish Council Office with some home working. The contracted hours will be 30 hours per week, including evening meetings.

The Council currently has a precept of £112,000 and serves a population of 3900. The Council strives to deliver the best possible service to parishioners.

The successful candidate will have the skills to manage the Council's financial records and budgets and the ability to understand the legal framework in which the Parish Council operates. Excellent communication and IT skills are required to work successfully with our fifteen Councillors, our residents, West Berkshire Council, neighbouring Parish Councils and our contractors and suppliers. Previous local government experience and qualifications or the commitment to achieve qualifications in this sector are essential.

Salary will be pro rate on the SCP scale points SCP 29 to 34 (currently £20,627 to £23,996 for 30 hours per week (£25,440 to £29,558 Full Time)), depending upon qualifications and experience.

Please contact the Acting Clerk by email at [the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk) or on 0118 9331955 for further information and a detailed job description.

Applications should include a cv and a statement as to what you can bring to this post.

Closing date is Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

## Useful Contacts

### **Fairground Emergency**

**0709 2310325**

To report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground. For non-emergencies please contact Parish Council Office.

### **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 42400**

### **WBC Out of Hours Emergency Contact**

**01635 42161**

To report major incidents out of hours.

### **West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team**

**01635 519080**

**[streetcare@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@westberks.gov.uk)**

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

### **West Berkshire District Councillors for the Mortimer Ward**

Cllr Mollie Lock

0118 9332858

Cllr Graham Bridgman

0118 9331707

### **Mortimer Village Partnership**

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

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

## **Feedback form**

We'd like your feedback and comments on the Parish Council Newsletter and communications. Contact details are on the back cover or simply just write a note below and cut this form out and post through the Mortimer library letterbox in Victoria Road

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Name and contact details:

Comment:

## **PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION**

The Acting Clerk  
Parish Council Office  
The Library  
27 Victoria Road  
Mortimer  
RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955 – Fax: 0709 2310443

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

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

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 Post Office and the Library.

The Parish Council Office is open:  
Tuesdays & Thursdays,  
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Communication Feedback

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council