

STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter



February 2017



Remembrance Day 2016



Community Carol Singing December 2016



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Cover picture: How long ago was this taken?

Answer at bottom of page 22

Vacancy for Part time Administrative Assistant

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL

Part time Administrative Assistant

The Council wishes to appoint a Part time Administrative Assistant to be based in the Parish Council office in Mortimer.

The role is to provide administrative support to the Clerk. This will involve a variety of tasks such as taking phone calls, logging post received, filing, preparing correspondence, managing bookings for the Fairground and Cemetery and processing purchase orders and invoices in conjunction with the Clerk. The person will also support the Clerk in managing agendas for Full Council and Committee meetings and in collating and distributing papers for these meetings.

The post is for 15 hours per week spread over 3 days, 9:30 am to 3.00 pm (with ½ hour lunch break) on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. There may be some flexibility in these hours for outstanding candidates.

A competitive salary will be paid depending upon experience and will include 12 days annual leave.

Candidates should have excellent communication and computer skills (the Council uses Windows and Microsoft Office), be adaptable and able to work to tight deadlines.

Applications should be made by letter, setting out what you would bring to the post and enclosing a brief cv. Applications should be made to the Clerk using the contact details on page 22 of this newsletter. **The closing date is Saturday 18th February.** Informal enquires can be made to the Clerk using the same contact details.

Update on Mortimer Library

Six members of the library working group, the Clerk and Cllr Graham Bridgman met with Mike Brook (Libraries Manager), Paul James (Culture Manager) and Cllr Dominic Boeck (Executive member for Culture) from WBC on 3rd January 2017. The main conclusions were:

1. The library proposals will be considered at a special WBC Council meeting on 7th February (this has been brought forward from March).
2. As previously stated, it was intended to retain all the branch libraries (except Cold Ash).
3. Preliminary results from the consultation suggested that option A (one member of staff in each branch library aided by volunteers) was perhaps the most likely.
4. WBC were now asking for voluntary contributions from every Parish Council in West Berkshire totaling £150,000. The suggested Mortimer contribution is £3750.
5. If WBC did not receive the £150,000 requested, the library service would have to be pruned back (eg: reduced opening hours) whilst the shortfall continued.
6. WBC appreciated that it may not be possible for some Councils to enter into Service agreements and separate arrangements could be made for each library.
7. WBC would meet with library groups regularly and listen to all ideas about how services, provision, opening hours, business development and other activities could be improved and shape the future of their local branch library.
8. No matter which option was chosen, volunteers would be needed and it was estimated that between 10 and 30 would be needed in Mortimer. WBC would provide training and encourage recruitment, but there needed a considerable local effort in recruiting volunteers.

As a result of these discussions, the following motion was unanimously passed at the January Full Council meeting.

“To approve in principle to make a grant to WBC in 2017/18 of the amount requested provided that (i) the Council has the power to do this and all criteria to ensure this is legal have been met and (ii) that firm criteria are agreed with WBC as to the inputs the library group will have in the development of the library in Mortimer”.

In addition, it agreed that there should be a publicity campaign to recruit potential volunteers for a variety of roles and to establish a community based library group, with some Parish Council representation.

Library Volunteers Needed

As explained in the article above, it is virtually certain that a substantial number of volunteers will be required to help keep Mortimer library functioning. This could be as early as the beginning of April. Please consider whether you have some time to volunteer. Whilst it is thought that most volunteers will assist the library staff and the public during opening hours, there will also other tasks, such as managing rotas for volunteers and helping with the home library service which can be done at other times and may not require much time actually spent at the library.

Please consider volunteering if you can only offer a few hours per month. A large number of volunteers is required so that the load can be spread over many and there is sufficient flexibility to cover unplanned absences etc. Training will be provided by WBC. So please consider contributing to your community in this way. In the first instance contact the clerk in the Parish Council Office (details on page 22) or you can contact WBC directly by competing their volunteer web page at: **<http://tinyurl.com/WBClibraryvolunteers>**

It is also proposed to set up a community library group. If you would like to do more than simply act as a volunteer and pay a bigger role in the management and development of the library, please contact the clerk.

Clarification on NDP and Planning Issues

The Parish Council would like to clarify the current issues in the Parish and how they fit together.

1. NDP

Following the examiner's report on the NDP three actions were taken:

- a) SMPC and West Berkshire Council (WBC) agreed to extend the deadline for making a decision on the NDP until 1st May 2017, to allow time for a full consideration of the recommendations and issues in the report. These comprised the issue of landscape and suggested minor modifications. Without the extension of time we risked losing the current NDP completely.
- b) WBC commissioned a landscape study of the sites within the village and SMPC are awaiting the results of this.
- c) The minor modifications were agreed by the Full Parish Council at its meeting on 12th January. These primarily concerned flooding and local green spaces which are already protected. Full details can be found on of the SMPC web site.

What next?

The findings of the landscape assessment will be taken to a Full Parish Council meeting which will consider whether these, and any other factors, are sufficient to overcome the examiner's objections. The Council's views will be sent to WBC to inform their decision as to whether the NDP proceeds to a referendum.

If WBC agree to proceed to a referendum this would be held some weeks later (probably late June/July). If 50% of those who vote vote in favour the NDP immediately becomes part of WBC planning policy.

If the NDP does not go to referendum, or the outcome is to reject it, then the location of housing in Mortimer becomes a WBC decision,

unless there is a reworking of the NDP based on a new set of consultations.

2. Planning Appeal regarding 50 dwellings at Monkey Puzzle Field Mortimer

The original application was considered by SMPC planning committee on 9th November 2015 and the Council objected on six grounds. WBC refused the application on 11th May 2016. The applicant has appealed and the provisional start date for the inquiry is 25th April 2017.

At the Full Parish Council meeting on 12th January the Council passed a motion stating that its original objections remain valid, it wished to raise some additional comments and that it wished to speak and give evidence at the inquiry (see a full paper on the SMPC website).

3. Community Consultation Event -T A Fisher in conjunction with Englefield Estate 26 January

The first information the Parish Council received on this was by phone calls on the evening of 12th and morning of 13th January. A meeting was held on 19th January between a consultant for T A Fisher and two councillors and the Clerk so that the former could explain the proposals. At the meeting the consultant stated:

- The driver for the outline application at this time was to strengthen the case against the Monkey Puzzle Field appeal
- There would be separate applications for the two sites, this would make it easier to withdraw / modify either / both if desired.
- The applications would be reviewed following the results of the WBC landscape study for the NDP coming available
- The proposed plans have 75 units on 'The Site' (MOR06 behind the Horse and Groom) and 35 units on MOR05 (off West End Road).
- These outline plans were in conformity with the NDP's policies on the mix of dwellings and the provision of affordable housing

- The land for the school / doctors surgery is maintained as in the NDP
- All the land to the south of the dwellings on 'The Site' (MOR06) down to the edge of the field will be maintained as public open space.
- The design would conform to the NDP's design brief.

4. Tower House Site

TA Fisher have planning permission for 17 dwellings on this site. WBC imposed a condition that 5 units of affordable housing must be provided.

SMPC Planning Committee objected to the removal of this condition on 13th October 2016 and recommended that there should be three or more units of affordable housing on this site. The decision was taken at the Eastern Area Planning Committee in December 2016 to uphold the affordable housing requirement.

How do these fit together?

- a) If the Monkey Puzzle field appeal succeeds it would threaten the integrity of the NDP and could add **50 additional** house in the village
- b) Because of the hiatus with the NDP, T A Fisher are putting forward proposals which would meet the requirements of 110 house requested by WBC. This is entirely their own initiative and neither the Parish Council or NDP Steering Group have had any part in this.
- c) At present the Parish Council is focusing on resolving the NDP issues and opposing the Monkey Puzzle appeal. It can only comment on the latest proposals from TA Fisher / Englefield when the actual planning applications have been submitted and received by the Council.

Termination of PCSO Contract

In 2007 the Parish Councils of Stratfield Mortimer, Burghfield and Sulhamstead entered a contract with Thames Valley Police to partially fund a Police Community Support Officer to work entirely in the three Parishes. The basic aim was to provide a visible preventative police presence in the villages to deter crime and support the community. The Parishes between them funded half the salary and TVP provided the other half. This was a great success and many of the community will remember particular PCSO's patrolling the village and engaging with the community. Some may remember that at that time they were mainly on foot or bicycle and often used the bus to travel between Mortimer and Burghfield.

Over time, the role of the PCSO has changed and become much more of an integrated support role within the police force. A reinterpretation of the contract also reduced the contractual time spent in the Parishes to half time. A major concern of the council over the last two years was whether it was getting value for money and in January 2016 it agreed to continue the contract until 31st March 2017 with any further extension dependent on clear evidence the cost was justified (see article in March 2016 newsletter). This was not forthcoming and therefore at the December 2016 meeting the Council agreed not to renew the contract after March 2017. This is not a reflection on service and abilities of Thames Valley Police but is a consequence of changing role that made the concept behind the contract of 2007 unworkable in 2017.

The Council is investigating whether there is any alternative service that could be of value to the community. The Council would like to receive the community's response to this decision.

It is noted that Burghfield Parish Council, unaware of our decision, independently made a similar decision at their January meeting.

Parish Council Meetings

Full meetings of the Parish Council are normally held on the second Thursday of each month in the Methodist Church West End Road, Mortimer at 7:30 pm. There is a ten minute slot at the start of each meeting for members of the public to raise concerns and comment on items on the agenda. SMPC would like to encourage members of the public to attend meetings. The next meetings for 2017 are:

9 th February	9 th March	13 th April	11 th May
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Membership of Parish Council Committees

Members of Committees are shown in the table below and below the photographs of Councillors. The Chairman of each Committee is indicated by *. The Chairman (Cllr M Dennett) and Vice Chairman (Cllr J Earl) are *ex officio* members of each committee. These appointments last until the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council (11th May 2017) when the Council elects all positions for the following year.

Committee	Members September 2016
Cemetery	Kiley* , Bull, Challis, Johnson, Lewis, Wingfield
Communications	Richardson* , Carter, Jones, Lewis, co-opted Mr D Kilshaw
Fairground, Trees and Amenities	Blagden* , Bull, Challis, Johnson, Kiley, Lock, Richardson
NDP Implementation	Wingfield* , Carter, Ives, Jones, Kiley, Richardson, co-opted Mr T Barber, Mrs S Carter and Mrs D Morsley
Planning	Butcher* , Challis, Ives, Jones, Kiley
Roads Footpaths and Commons	Ives* , Bull, Butcher, Johnson, Lewis, Lock
Finance and General Purposes	Dennett* , Earl, Blagden, Butcher, Ives, Kiley, Richardson, Wingfield

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council January 2017



Mike Dennett (Chairman)



Haydn Selywn-Jones (Clerk)



**Julian Earl
(Vice Chairman)**



**Pete Blagden
Fairground***



**John Bull
Cemetery; Fairground; Roads**



**Tony Butcher
Planning*; Roads**



**Nick Carter
Communications;
NDP Implementation**



**Phil Challis
Cemetery, Fairground;
Planning**



**Dudley Ives
NDP Implementation;
Planning Roads***



Mick Johnson
Cemetery; Fairground;
Roads



Lucy Jones
Communications; NDP
Implementation; Planning;



Neil Kiley
Cemetery*; Fairground;
NDP Implementation;
Planning



Chris Lewis
Cemetery;
Communications; Roads



Mollie Lock
Fairground; Roads



Andrew Richardson
Communications*;
Fairground; NDP
Implementation



Pat Wingfield
Cemetery;
NDP Implementation*



Frank Stansfield
Custodian

*** denotes Chairman of that committee**

Finance and General Purposes Committee comprises the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the six committee Chairmen

Parish Council adopted Budget and Precept Request 2017-2018

The budget for 2017 -2018 was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 12th January 2017 and is shown in the table below along with the previous budget.

	Budget 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Comments
INCOME			
Cemetery Fees	£6,828	£7,805	Burials, cremations, memorials
Fairground Fees	£3,580	£3,690	Hire fees & tennis courts
Bank Interest	£750	£500	
Wayleave Rental	£235	£245	
Public Works Loan Board	£0	£50,000	Loan for community projects
Council Tax Support Grant	£1,361	£0	None paid 2017 - 2018
Precept	£114,475	£137,370	Our request raised by Council Tax
Total Income	£127,229	£199,610	
EXPENDITURE			
SMPC Administration:	£55,980	£53,400	Personnel, utilities, office rent & expenses, insurance, audit fees, hall rental, training, subscriptions
Cemetery	£3,900	£4,900	Grass cutting, maintenance, rent
Fairground	£32,000	£28,835	Grass cutting, maintenance, rent, Xmas tree, projects, sinking funds
Roads Footpaths Commons	£10,775	£10,775	Maintenance, projects
Communications	£4,225	£3,725	Newsletter, web hosting, design
Willink Leisure Centre	£10,100	£10,700	Agreed annual grant
Community Award	£300	£300	
PCSO - Partial Funding	£7,949	£0	
NDP - Parish Plan Refresh	£2,000	£0	
S137 Grants	£0	£23,000	Library, community projects
NDP Community Projects	£0	£58,500	Community projects
PWLB Loan Repayments	£0	£5,475	Annual cost for 10 year loan
Total Expenditure	£127,229	£199,610	

Strategy

The Finance and General Purposes Committee feel the time is right to attempt to develop more community projects for the residents of Mortimer. Some projects, now or in the future, may be funded by West Berkshire (increasingly unlikely) or by receiving full or partial grants from other organisations. However, as a Parish Council with a relatively low precept (the element of Council Tax which specifically goes to the Parish) compared to other equivalent large villages we do consider the strategy to increase Parish Precept Tax is the correct one to follow. The proposed increase to the Parish Precept Tax amounts to £12.49 for the year 2017 - 2018 on a Band D property.

There are two main ways we propose to use the increased income to invest in the village.

There are limitations on what grants a Parish Council may make, particularly in connection with services like libraries. However, Section 137 grants enable us to make contributions, under strict conditions, to projects for the good of the local community such as maintaining the library. The total amount that can be used in this manner is capped at about £7.40 per elector. Our council has not used this power for some years.

The larger part of what is included in the budget is in connection with the development of some community projects which have grown out of work on the NDP. First, work has already started in conjunction with GWR to consider more fully than previously the provision of additional car parking at the station in a way that could overcome previous objections. Further projects, such as creating a Heritage Trail around the village, the extension of sporting facilities for the village and a restored footpath/cycleway between Mortimer and Burghfield are being discussed in detail.

Thus, our strategy is to fund, carefully, expenditure to maintain and improve the life of our village. The funding proposed is partly by way

of a loan from the Treasury funded Public Works Loan Board and partly by a higher precept.

The Financial Entries

We are not yet certain of the exact timescale for the projects being examined and have allowed for taking out a PWLB loan which would be repaid on an interest and capital basis over 10 years.

A big problem with Parish Council budgets is the difficulty of legally spending on anything which is not in the budget.

The loan will, however, not be taken out unless the projects are feasible and are ready for potential investment to proceed and other sources of grant funding are not available.

Expenditure under the Section 137 rules enables the Parish to act more promptly, where it meets the necessary criteria.

Income

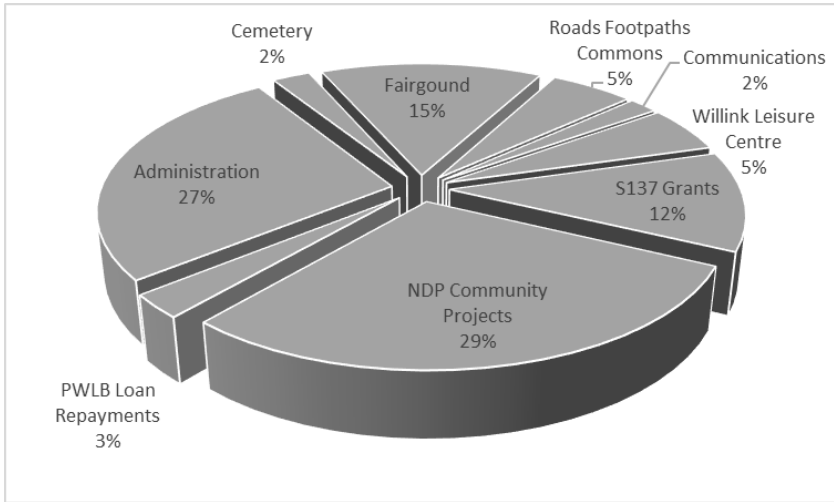
Our main source of income is from the Precept, paid from the Council Tax received by West Berkshire Council. The increase in the Parish Precept Tax for Band D properties is £12.49 for the year 2017-2018. This equates to an 18% rise, but gives us a 20% rise in total Precept due to the rise in the Tax Base of Band D houses in Mortimer from 1642 to 1671.

To supplement this, it is proposed that a Treasury funded Public Works Loan Board loan of up to £50,000, paid back over 10 years, to fund any shortfall for feasible projects that are ready for potential investment where other sources of grants or funding are not sufficient to meet the costs.

The projected income from the Parish Cemetery and The Fairground reflects increases in charges of 3% and 5%, which were also agreed by Council in agreeing the budget.

Expenditure

The planned breakdown of expenditure is shown:



Our highest area of planned expenditure is the capital expenditure on Community Projects and S137 grants for the benefit of the Community, such as the support of Mortimer Library, which we are in discussions with West Berkshire Council over, and other projects that meet the criteria for giving S137 Grants. These are being carefully considered at this present time, but work is progressing on the possible enlargement of the Station Car Park in conjunction of GWR, and the development of Heritage Trails within Stratfield Mortimer. Work is beginning on a number of other Community based projects such as improving sporting facilities on The Fairground and other open spaces in the village.

Expenditure on other items is in-line with our regular expenditure and will benefit from our not continuing with the contract for a part funded PCSO (see article on page 10).

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk/RFO – Haydn Selwyn-Jones on 0118 933 1955.

Zebra Crossing at St John's School

The last newsletter reported that design stage planning was now in place at West Berkshire Council for a zebra crossing at St John's School and that the Parish Council were in discussion with WBC regarding the level of street lighting required.

WBC have firmly stuck to the original design for lighting which has four new 6m high LED street light columns in the surrounding area. Whilst the Parish Council is of the opinion that this lighting exceeds the required relevant British standards, it has decided that to press this issue further may jeopardise the installation of the crossing which is of great importance to the School, parents, children and residents of the village. It has therefore confirmed to WBC, that though it has reservations, it accepts their plan.

The actual crossing will be slightly to the east of the school gate. The work also includes new tactile paving and dropped kerbs at the crossing and the addition of 30 m of high friction road surface on the approaches on both sides of the crossing. The work will take up to 14 days to complete and WBC's current intention is to do the work in the school holidays, starting on 10th April.

Update on Padworth Recycling Centre

The planning applications by Veolia Waste Management to take general waste and to extend the opening hours were due to be considered by WBC's Eastern Area Planning Authority on 18th January. They have been put off to a future date. The issues seem to be concerns with traffic to and from the site.

Upcoming events on the Fairground

Burnett's Fun Fair	4 th to 7 th May
MVP Fun Day Saturday	1 st July
Village cricket match for the Alan Thorpe Trophy	Sunday 16 th July

M4 Bridge Works Junctions 12 to 13:

Two bridges which carry the M4 over Ashampstead Road and Dark Lane, near Bradfield in West Berkshire, require extensive repair. The works are scheduled to **start in mid-February 2017** and are expected to take **seven months** to complete. The following traffic management restrictions will be in place:

- 24 hour narrow lane running in contraflow on both carriageways with a 50mph speed limit
- Overnight lane closures (Monday to Friday, 9pm to 6am)
- Overnight closures of the M4 between junctions 12 and 13 (Monday to Friday, 9pm to 6am)
- Daytime lane closures over weekend periods (9pm Friday through to 5am Sunday)
- Closure of Dark Lane beneath the bridge – Monday 6 March to Thursday 4 May
- Closure of Ashampstead Road beneath the bridge – Monday 13 March to Friday 26 May

During work to demolish and install the bridge deck beams, specialist working methods and equipment will be required which will include large cranes that'll sit across all lanes of the motorway. Due to this there will be a requirement to **close the M4 east and westbound carriageways between junctions 12 and 13 for entire weekend periods (9pm Friday through to 5am Monday).**

The weekend closures are currently scheduled for:

- Friday 31 March to Monday 3 April
- Friday 7 April to Monday 10 April
- Friday 5 May to Monday 8 May

During these closures a clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A4 (through Newbury, Thatcham and Woolhampton).

Confirmed dates for all closures will be displayed on signs on the M4.

Significant delays are expected during these weekend closure periods, and it is advised that you plan ahead of your journey to allow for extra time or avoid this route where possible.

If you have any questions or if you'd like you know about the work please contact Highways England's customer control centre:

Phone: 0300 123 5000, **Email:** info@highwaysengland.co.uk,

Web: <http://www.highways.gov.uk>

Christmas Tree

The Parish Council hope you enjoyed the Christmas tree (see back cover). The installation and management of the tree was carried out by Councillors Julian Earl and John Bull ably helped by Will and James Strang. The Council apologises that it was taken down earlier than planned. Sadly, on Boxing Day evening, person(s) unknown pulled most of the lights from the tree and then cut the strands of lights into small strips making them completely unrepairable and a complete new set of lights will have to be purchased.

Stratfield Mortimer Community Award 2017

STRATFIELD MORTIMER COMMUNITY AWARD 2017

Nominations are sought for this award which is intended to recognise outstanding service to the community of Stratfield Mortimer over many years.

Nomination forms are available from the Parish Council Office, the Library, the Parish Council website or by contacting the Clerk. The closing date for nominations is 28 February 2017.

Useful Contacts

Fairground Emergency

0743 6807543

To report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground.

For non-emergencies please 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 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

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

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

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Tel: 0118 933 1955

Email: the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Website: www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Facebook: 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 Boabab (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 library staff or put in the Library letter box

Date of cover photo: – 7 years ago - 21 December 2009

Two reminders of The Queen's 90th in 2016:



Beacon lighting 21st April (above)



Party in the Park 4th June (courtesy Sue Totham www.esti.co.uk)



SMPC Christmas Tree 2016 Photo: James Carter