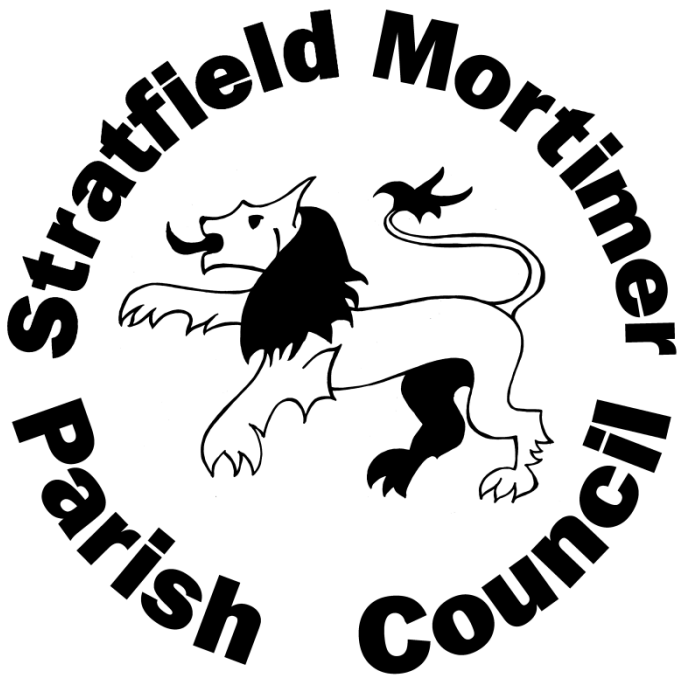


STRATFIELD MORTIMER

**Parish Council
Newsletter**



February 2014

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Stratfield Mortimer Annual Parish Meeting 2014

This year's Annual Parish Meeting will be held on the evening of **Wednesday 16th April in St John's Hall, Mortimer.**

The Agenda and information will be posted on the public notice boards and on the Parish Council website nearer the date. The minutes of last year's meeting are available on the Parish Council website or from the Parish Council Office when it reopens (see back cover for opening hours), but following the rules for this meeting individual copies will not be available at the meeting.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

In the last Newsletter (October 2013), The Parish Council reported that it had made a formal application to West Berkshire Council to designate the entire Civil Parish of Stratfield Mortimer as the area for a **Neighbourhood Development Plan** (NDP). Stratfield Mortimer's application was the first and so far the only, such application in West Berkshire. West Berkshire Council was legally required to have period of consultation on the proposal which finished during December and we will be advised in early February whether the application has been approved.

The Parish Council also reported that it was drawing up some draft Visions and Objectives for the NDP to match the subject areas covered by the West Berkshire Local Plan, with the intention of taking these to a public meeting in early spring as the first stage in the process. Once these have been agreed then policies will be drawn up. That public meeting will be at **7:30 pm on 20th March in St John's Hall**. An information leaflet will be distributed throughout the Parish about two weeks beforehand. Please make a note of the date as the involvement of the local community **is vital to the success** of an NDP and it is hoped to that both residents and local businesses would wish to attend.

If you are a local resident it is still possible to volunteer to work with the Parish Council on the development of your NDP. If you are interested in learning more please contact the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk.

There is a Neighbourhood Development Plan page on the Parish Council website. Please see this for further information or link to <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=26754>.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

West Berkshire District Council has published its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This document lists sites that may have potential for housing development and states: *"Most of the*

*sites have been put forward by landowners and developers for future development potential. It is important to note that they are **NOT sites allocated for development**. The decisions as to which sites will actually be allocated will be made in the Local Plan documents and subject to full public consultation before any decision is made."*

The Neighbourhood Development Plan could play an important role in these allocations. From the submitted sites for Mortimer, there are five potentially developable sites which are either within or adjacent to the present settlement boundary. These sites are shown on the summary map for Stratfield Mortimer available on the Parish Council website. At its January meeting, the Parish Council agreed that its general view was that sustainable development would favour sites that were closer to the village centre. Full details of SHLAA can be seen at: <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=16276>.

West Berkshire Council's Savings Proposals

In November and early December West Berkshire Council held public consultations on savings proposals within its 2014/15 budget. The Parish Council responded to those proposals that particularly affected Mortimer, such as public transport, roads and verge maintenance, libraries, school crossing patrols and planning enforcement. WBC will publish results of the consultations at the end of February.

Public Transport Cuts

One area where the Parish Council has been more directly involved was in West Berkshire Council's proposed cuts to public transport. There were three possible proposals that affected Mortimer.

The first was the 75 /75A Beech Hill to Newbury Service (one return journey on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). All the Parish Councils on the route were asked to cover the full cost of the service. The general consensus of the Parishes was that whilst it was a useful service for a relatively small number of passengers, the funds required

were far more than could be justified. At present WBC are investigating whether changes in the route and the frequency of service are feasible.

The others concerned route 2 /2a (Mortimer to Reading) with removal of subsidies resulting in reductions in late night weekday buses and a possible cessation of Sunday services. The Parish Council urged WBC to continue to negotiate with Reading Transport to continue these services on a commercial basis. This has been done successfully by WBC and it is understood that these services will continue. The Parish Council thanks WBC for this.

Bus Stop Improvements

Following on from the item above, West Berkshire Council will now upgrade those bus stops (7 within the parish) that are regularly served by the Vitality 2, 2A and X2 services. These capital works will be funded by WBC earmarked S106 monies and will compliment further planned investment during 2014 by the operator Reading Transport Ltd, including new vehicles and the availability of the 'NextBuses Real Time Passenger Information'. This will enable passengers to use mobile phones to be able to obtain real time bus arrival timings at individual stops. The objectives are also to make boarding and alighting easier (by providing raised kerbs), to encourage further use of these high quality frequent services and to improve the look of the village. There will also be minor works and improved signage on the other fourteen stops that are served by limited/school services. It was agreed that this was a positive input and that the Clerk would respond to WBC advising that SMPC support and welcome these proposals.

Christmas Tree and Carol Service

The Parish Council would like to thank The Englefield Estate for donating and erecting the Christmas Tree on the Fairground and Bob Armstrong and John Bull for putting the lights using the Cherry Picker, kindly provided free of charge by David McAteer of Fenton Plant Hire.

The Community Carol Service, traditionally held around the tree took, place at 6pm on Saturday 14th December. The Council gives sincere thanks to the musicians and to 'Together in Mission' for all their efforts resulting in superb music and excellent singing.



Unfortunately the very strong winds during December caused the upper part of the tree to be permanently bent, as the photograph taken in calm conditions on 24th December shows. Though the tree was firmly in the ground and the lower part of the trunk was vertical, in view of the forecast strong winds for the days after Christmas, the Parish Council decided on Christmas Eve it would be prudent to fell it. This was properly and safely accomplished by Frank Stansfield, the village custodian and volunteers disposed of the remains.



Parish Council Facebook Coming Soon



The Parish Council has resolved to set up its own Facebook page and this will be available shortly.

Listed Building Consent for Mortimer Station

Mortimer Station is probably the least altered of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's country stations and the best surviving example in this Italianate style. The main station building and the waiting room on the other platform are both listed as Grade II* by English Heritage. Thus, Mortimer Station is a very important heritage asset.

First Great Western have submitted an application to West Berkshire Council for listed building consent for alterations to the station and the Parish Council has **strongly objected** to these works. The proposal is to

introduce an accessible WC into the main building which would be accessed directly from the booking hall. Whilst the introduction of such a WC would in theory provide some benefit to the public, the Parish Council's view is that the consequent changes would significantly harm the fabric of the Grade II* station whilst achieving little benefit, especially given that the station building has limited hours of opening. The proposed changes include modifying the existing entrance doors so that they would open outwards and be power operated with glazed upper panels, creating a new entrance to the accessible WC immediately to the left on entering the booking hall and covering the original Victorian wooden flooring with vinyl.



There are also proposals to improve the handrails and surfacing on the foot bridge to which the Parish Council has not objected. However, there are no plans to improve the accessibility to the Basingstoke bound platform.

Change of Village Custodian

Mark Bradberry resigned from his post as Village Custodian during November. The Parish Council sincerely thanks Mark for all his time and effort during the last two years, particularly in keeping the Fairground and Cemetery tidy, safe and in good order, and wishes him well in his retirement.



The post was advertised and the Parish Council has appointed Frank Stansfield as the New Custodian. Frank has always lived in Mortimer and you will doubtless see him at work on The Fairground and throughout the village.

Parish Office and Library Closure

As you will be aware, Mortimer Library closed for extensive refurbishment in December and as a consequence the Parish Office was also closed. It is thought that the work is still on schedule with both facilities reopening in mid to end February. Contact details for the Parish Council are on our web site and the back cover of this newsletter. During the closure, a mobile library is outside St John's Hall from 2 pm to 4:30 pm on Mondays.

Update on Superfast Broadband Project

The Parish Council has received the following information from the Superfast Berkshire Project Team.

“Based on the data we have received from British Telecommunication Plc (BT) it is anticipated that Stratfield Mortimer will benefit from 15 basic upgrades and 1261 superfast upgrades. The average cost of an

upgrade (basic or superfast) is £214 calculated across all Berkshire premises. In actuality the costs in many rural communities of West Berkshire will be much higher but we won't know the actual expenditure until the end of the project. We have therefore calculated that your parish will receive a benefit of £273,064 (total number of upgrades x £214). We believe this compares favourably with your contribution of £19,626."

A basic upgrade is up to 2 Mbits/second and a superfast upgrade up to 24 Mbits/second. Most of Stratfield Mortimer will be upgraded in phases 2 and 3 which are scheduled to provide the upgrades between October this year and July 2015.

Access to the Community Centre

As you will have no doubt noticed the Community Centre is having a small extension (new storage area and new porch) built to the front of the building which has necessitated the temporary closure of the main entrance. In order that the building can continue to be used during the building works the Community Interest Company, who manage the building, are using the side entrance near the cricket outfield as a temporary entrance for all users.



Due to the recent very inclement weather and the knock on effect the extra foot traffic is having on the deteriorating surface their contractor has laid wood chippings over the surface to try to alleviate the problem. Please can we ask that you take extra care when using this

temporary route to the side of the building, especially during the hours of darkness.

New Seat Outside St John's School

The bench seat outside St John's School, damaged by being hit by a car in July, has finally been replaced by West Berkshire Council, following persistent reminders from the Parish Council and a District Councillor.



Parking on The Street

The parking restrictions at the Lower end of The Street were put in place in early November. West Berkshire Council and the Parish Council then received several letters regarding these restrictions. The official response from West Berkshire was as follows:

‘As with all of our parking schemes, once the parking restrictions are in place there follows a period of monitoring to ensure they are providing effective and have not created additional problems elsewhere. Once the restrictions have ‘bedded in’ and a new parking pattern has been established by the regular commuters we can consider whether additional measures may be required and propose them at the next formal parking review of the area. Until that time it would be a matter for the Police to consider whether vehicles are parking in a dangerous position or causing an obstruction.’

Tennis Courts

The tennis courts have been in place for over twenty years and have been cleaned regularly during that period. The playing surface is now showing signs of deterioration. Whilst the courts remain playable we ask all users to take care during inclement weather as the surface may be slippery in places.



The Parish Council, with the support of the Tennis Club, has applied to the Inspired Facilities Programme of Sport England for a substantial grant (over £40,000) to relay the playing surface and update the facilities. We hope to hear whether we have been successful within a few months.

Casual bookings of the courts can be made **in person only** at Budgens. Please do not telephone to enquire. From 1st January the court fees have been increased to £5 per court per hour for adults and £2 per court per hour for juniors (under 16).

SID Results

The last newsletter reported that a Speed Indicator Device (SID) had been deployed throughout the village at the end of September but the recorded data were not available at that time. The SID that the Parish Council borrows from West Berkshire Council displays and records the speeds of approaching vehicles.

The overall data suggest that for many of the sites, all of which were within 30 mph zones, about 12% of vehicles were exceeding 35mph. This relatively low percentage is probably due to the deterrent effect; one purpose of using SID is to make people respond and slow down. However there were two sites where about 27% of vehicles were exceeding 35 mph. These were West End Road going westwards out of the village between 9 and 10 am (the maximum speed was 49mph) and in The Street approaching the Horse Groom coming into the village between 6 and 7 pm (maximum speed 46 mph)

West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is an important new document that will help individuals and communities understand and manage flood risk within our district. Its primary focus is on local flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses such as streams and ditches, but it also considers flooding from main rivers. The scope of the strategy can be viewed on the Parish Council website.

The draft Strategy is open to consultation until 28th February 2014. The consultation can be found at: www.westberks.gov.uk/LFRMS.

The Pond Near the War Memorial

At least the rain has refilled the ponds in the village! The photographs show the pond near the war memorial last August, when it was completely empty, and this January.





Report for Mortimer January 2014 by PCSO Robert Hubbard-Clark.

Well what an end to 2013 we have had within the area of Mortimer with the local floods and storms. We have been very busy at Mortimer assisting with local residents with trees down and flooding. Apart from the damage and destruction it has brought I hope you all had a very pleasant Christmas. We have a new member to your team at Mortimer Police Station; Police Community Support Officer Joe Hare C7355.

So far 2014 has got off to a good start with crime over the last six weeks seeing a drop in Burglary dwelling and Burglary non dwelling within Mortimer. However with this good news I still would remind all to review your home security. If you would like a survey completed please contact me on the Thames Valley Police 101 number. We have had a report that within the late evening of the 18th of January 2014 three young persons were seen acting in a cruel manner towards a cat within the area of Groves Lea Mortimer. If you have any information please contact TVP on the non emergency number of 101 or email me please on Robert.hubbard-clark@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.

Please keep an eye on the Thames Valley Police website under your Neighbourhood section of Burghfield and Mortimer to see my monthly crime report and notice of public 'Have Your Say Meetings' (we had 20 of these in the village last year) These dates and times are placed with the monthly update on the board outside the local Police Station.

Mortimer Police Station is still open on Fridays. As local officers we work out of this station most days, so if you see a police vehicle outside we are more than likely in unless we are on foot in the village. We are very proud that we have this station open and we would encourage you to use your local station. For those mad about history we have a display board within the front counter area with the history of local policing in Mortimer so please pop down and have a look.

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Mrs. Jayne Kirk, Parish Clerk
Parish Council Office
The Library
27 Victoria Road
Mortimer
RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955 – Fax: 0709 2310443

(Please note that during the current closure of the library, postage and telephone to the above address are being redirected. However, it is not possible to leave hand correspondence in the Library post box during the closure. You can always email the Clerk at the address below)

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

Website: 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.