

STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter



March 2016



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Cover Story- Foudry Brook Weir Improvements

The fish population in Foudry brook has been much lower than would be expected for a healthy river. As a result the “Action for the River Kennet” group (ARK) arranged for remedial work to be carried out by the weir near St Mary’s church. This was done in January. The work involved creating a series of pools using natural rock to provide watery steps which fish can navigate. The result is that the river is now passable to fish. The project, managed by ARK, was funded by the Environment Agency through the Catchment Partnership Action Fund, with a contribution from Thames Water. (cover photograph James Carter).

Stratfield Mortimer Annual Parish Meeting 2016

This year’s **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held at
St John’s Hall Mortimer
Wednesday 27th April from 7pm

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

It is anticipated that agenda will include a presentation by Thames Valley Police (followed by questions), the presentation of the 2016 Community Award, a report on the Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Chairman’s Annual Report on the Parish Council.

Parish Clerk

The part-time locum Clerk to The Council is Mr Haydn Selwyn-Jones. Haydn normally works in the Parish Council Office on Mondays Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you have specific queries for the Parish Council you are welcome to call in to see him on those days. If the library is shut access is via the metal gate to the left of the library.

Applications for the vacancy for the Clerk have been received and the Council will shortly be interviewing for the post.

Co-option of new Councillor

As we reported in the December 2015 newsletter, Cllr Austin Colaço sadly passed away in November. As a consequence of this, a vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council. As there was no response from the public to the notice of election published in December, the Council must now fill this vacancy by co-option. The notice of co-option has been published on the notice boards, the web site and Facebook page. The closing date for applications was 29th February. Applications will be considered at the Full Council meeting on 10th March.

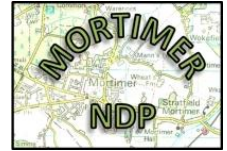
Parish Council Meetings

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. Meetings for 2016 are scheduled for:

10 March	14 April	12 May (Annual meeting)
9 June	14 July	11 August
8 September	13 October	10 November
8 December		

The Annual meeting in May elects the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Committee members for the following twelve months.

Neighbourhood Development Plan update



In the last newsletter mention was made of the first of two rounds of consultation on the proposed NDP. This consultation, which closed on the 21st of December 2015 produced a very worthwhile response from individuals, groups and organisations. As such the NDP has been modified, where appropriate, to reflect the views expressed. The responses and the actions taken as a result can be found at

[http://www.mortimer-ndp.org.uk/assets/Evidence/Detailed Pre-Submission Representations and Responses.pdf](http://www.mortimer-ndp.org.uk/assets/Evidence/Detailed_Pre-Submission_Representations_and_Responses.pdf)

This has not altered the core proposals but now, for instance, there are very many more points about the design of any new developments that have been made into policies.

The revised plan, which can be found at

[http://www.mortimer-ndp.org.uk/assets/NDP Document/NDP for submission.pdf](http://www.mortimer-ndp.org.uk/assets/NDP_Document/NDP_for_submission.pdf)

was approved by the Parish Council at its meeting on the 11th of February and has now been sent to West Berkshire Council (WBC), together with supporting documents, for them to take the process forward.

The next steps are for WBC to organise another round of consultations and to appoint an Examiner to look at the NDP and the consultations and make any recommendations for change to ensure the plan meets the requirements of the relevant legislation. Following this WBC must decide if they will accept the plan and, if so, they will organise a parish referendum, which may well not happen till September. It is only if the NDP passes that referendum that it is then enshrined as part of the planning framework for the parish.

The referendum is the ultimate test of the community's opinion on the NDP and all voters in the Parish will be able to take part. It is important that the turnout is as high as possible so that the result truly reflects the views of the parish. We will, of course, keep you informed of progress on this topic and nearer the time will be advertising the time and location of the referendum.

Parish Council's Responses West Berkshire Council's Budget Proposals 2016/17

The Parish Council has considered and commented on many of these proposals. At its December meeting it decided on its response to the proposals to withdraw the school buses to Willink which it strongly opposed.

SMPC also opposed the proposals to withdraw the 75 bus from Beech Hill to Newbury and the funding for School Crossing Patrols. Unfortunately the Executive of West Berkshire Council has recommended that these proposals go ahead and this will finally be decided by the Full WBC Council on 1st March.

But then came '**Phase 2**'. WBC issued these proposals on Monday 15th March and they are open for consultation for three weeks only, until 7th March. In anticipation, an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting was called on Thursday 18th March to formulate SMPC's response. It was good to see about a dozen members of the public who came at short notice to make comments.

Probably the proposal with most impact is that to close all the branch and mobile libraries in West Berkshire. The Council agreed to strongly oppose the closure of the Mortimer library on a variety of grounds. These include the fact that it will deprive a large proportion of the population from using a library, there will be major effects on the elderly and mothers with young families and people seeking jobs.

Mortimer is designated as a 'Rural Service Centre' providing services for its population and that of the surrounding villages and the library with its services such as computer access and photocopying and printing facilities, newspapers as well as the loan of books is a vital part of the village.

The objection will also include comments that the land was given to Berkshire County Council in 1971 by a local resident with a restrictive covenant which includes the text '*....not to erect any building on the land hereby conveyed other than a public library..*' In view of this and the fact that the Mortimer library has recently been refurbished to a high standard, SMPC will suggest that Mortimer library remains open and can serve a substantial population in the Eastern area of West Berkshire.

SMPC also agreed to respond again against the proposal to completely withdraw the 75 bus service. It will also oppose the much reduced service suggested for the Children's Centre in Burghfield (which also serves Mortimer).

WBC has also proposed to remove its funding from the Smallmead Household Waste Recycling Centre in Reading, with the results that West Berkshire residents will not be able to use it. SMPC will oppose this as one likely effect will be an increase in fly tipping in our area.

SMPC's responses to the consultation will be available on our web site. The Council also agreed that it should encourage individual residents to respond to the proposals. The consultation closes on 7th March and if you receive this newsletter in time and haven't responded please do so by going to:

<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=32040>

Parish Council Adopted Budget and Precept Request 2016/17

The budget for 2016/17 was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 14 January 2016 and is shown in the table below along with the previous budget.

	Budget	Budget	Comments
	2015/16	2016/17	
INCOME			
Cemetery Fees	£6,596	£6,828	burials, cremations, memorials
Fairground Fees	£3,415	£3,580	hire fees and tennis courts
Bank Interest	£350	£750	
Wayleave Rental	£220	£235	
Council Tax Support Grant	£2,722	£1,361	last year of this from WBC
Precept	£112,840	£114,475	our request raised by Council tax
Total Income	£126,143	£127,229	
EXPENDITURE			
Cemetery	£3,400	£3,900	grass cutting, maintenance, rent
Communications	£3,800	£4,225	new sletter, w eb hosting & design
Fairground	£31,048	£29,000	grass cutting, maintenance, rent, sinking funds, Xmas tree, projects
Roads Footpaths Commons	£12,200	£10,775	maintenance and projects
Administration	£52,925	£55,980	personel, insurance, audit fees, office rent, office expenses, utilities hall rental, training, subscriptions
Willink Leisure Centre	£10,100	£10,100	agreed grant
Community Award	£300	£300	
PCSO: Partial Funding	£7,870	£7,949	
NDP / Parish Plan Refresh	£0	£2,000	
Queen's Birthday Event	£0	£3,000	
Election Costs	£4,500	£0	
Total Expenditure	£126,143	£127,229	

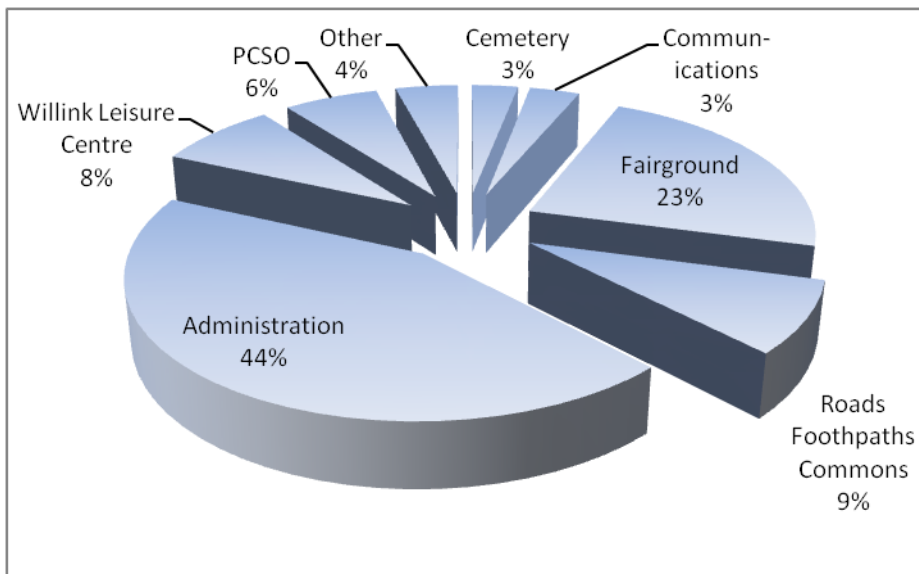
Income

The main source of income is the precept which is the Parish Council's share of Council Tax. The Council decided to freeze its Council Tax at the same level as last year which is £69.70 for a Band D household (the standard measure of Council Tax). The slight increase in precept income occurs because the number of chargeable properties in the Parish has risen slightly since last year. This is known as the Council

Tax base (the equivalent of Band D properties) and rose from 1619 in 2015/16 to 1642 in 2016/17.

The projected income from the Cemetery and the Fairground reflect increases in charges of 3% and 5% respectively which were also agreed by the Council.

The pie chart shows the planned breakdown of expenditure.



Expenditure - Fairground

The expenditure for the Fairground is the direct costs of the maintenance and upkeep, such as grass and hedge cutting, maintenance of trees, emptying of dog bins as well as maintenance and repair of play equipment and the provision of the Christmas tree. There is also an annual contribution to longer term projects such as the management of the vegetation. The Fairground expenditure includes two 'sinking funds'. These have allocations of £6,000 for play equipment and £2,500 for the tennis courts. These allocations can be kept from year to year so that substantial repairs of play equipment

can be achieved when necessary. It was condition of the grant for resurfacing the tennis court that we created such a fund for the long term maintenance of the courts.

Expenditure - Cemetery and Roads, Footpaths and Commons

The expenditure for the Cemetery and for Roads Footpaths and Commons also include the direct maintenance of these facilities including Windmill Common and the West End Road car park. There are also ongoing projects regarding footpaths and notice boards within the village.

Community contributions

The Council has a long standing agreement, along with other Parishes to contribute to the Willink Leisure Centre and has recently agreed to continue to contribute to the funding of the PCSO for another year (see article on page 14).

Expenditure - Administration

The Administration allocation covers a wide range of costs. It includes all the office expenses, such as rent for the Parish office, utilities, telephone, printing and photocopying and computing support. It also includes the costs of insurance, audit fees, training for staff and councillors, necessary annual subscriptions and hall rental for meetings.

It also includes the costs of the two part time staff. The Custodian is responsible for aspects such as the emptying of the litter bins on the Fairground, a weekly safety inspection of play equipment, looking after the village notice boards as well as the smaller aspects of maintenance throughout the Parish. The Clerk is the 'Proper Officer' of the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer and as such has many responsibilities. These include the calling of meetings, producing the necessary supporting documents for agenda items and taking the minutes. The Clerk obtains quotations for work to be done and places orders when the Council has made decisions and is also responsible for

the Council's accounts. The Clerk is also the person who deals with communications, both with the public and with other bodies such as West Berkshire Council, as well as dealing with bookings of the Fairground and Cemetery. The administration function enables the Council to perform effectively its public duties by serving the community and maintaining and developing its facilities.

Fairground News

A phased series of clearance works will start soon on the Fairground. The various works will aim to remove unwanted gorse, brambles etc and make the Fairground more open in aspect. It is planned to remove all waste materials from site.

Phases will include:

- cut down brambles and brush at either end of the conservation area
- Trim back the gorse and holly along the boundary with Badger's Croft.
- Prune back to the front of the trees the shrubs etc that border the path between Victoria Road and Windmill Road
- Trim back the gorse to generate healthy new growth, cut down the brambles and unwanted small trees between the cricket pitch outfield and Hammonds Heath Road over a phased period.
- Remove dead branches etc from trees around the Fairground pond
- These works were scheduled to start in February 2015 and will take place over the next year or eighteen months.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council February 2016



Mike Dennett (Chairman)



**Julian Earl
(Vice Chairman)**



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



**Pete Blagden
Fairground Trees &
Amenities***



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



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



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



**Phil Challis
Planning; 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

Notes:

There is currently one vacancy to be filled by co-option (see page 4)

The part time Locum Clerk is Mr Haydn Selwyn-Jones (see page 4)

PCSO Contract

In 2007 the parish councils of Burghfield, Stratfield Mortimer and Sulhamstead entered into an agreement with Thames Valley Police whereby the police would provide a Police Community Support Officer ('PCSO') in exchange for the parishes paying half the cost. The cost was split 47%, 47% and 6% between the Parishes and in the coming year our contribution will amount to just under £8k.

In 2007 the aim with PCSO's was that they would spend 80% of their time on the beat; the phrase used was primarily visibility preventative policing. The three participating parishes had the exclusive use of a named partially funded PCSO. This PCSO was expected to *'provide a service consisting primarily of visible patrol in local communities with designated powers to address local crime and disorder'*.

By 2015 the role of a PCSO changed so that time spent on the beat is negligible and the PCSO attends low level crimes, updates crime reports, conducts house to house enquires and provides visibility in the vicinity of a crime with the aim of preventing repeat offences at neighbouring properties. There is greater amount of associated paperwork than previously. In addition the police now say that as the parishes only pay 50% of the cost that is all that they are entitled to; however the police intend to provide more. The overarching principle is that *'the PCSO should spend not less than 50% of their time focusing on police and crime prevention work and supporting residents, businesses and victims with the Parish Council foot prints'*.

The issue before the Council was whether to continue with the arrangement. We do get additional police time to that which we would otherwise have and we do get additional high level police contact. The cost is only about £2 per head of population. Against this we get less benefit than we did previously and £8k is still a significant sum.

At the February meeting of the full Council it was agreed that the Council would not continue with the current arrangement beyond the coming year, unless solid evidence of value for money could be communicated to the public.

If any member of the public living within the parish has views on whether the arrangement should continue into 2017/8 they should make their view known by contacting the Clerk before the end of August 2016.

Street lighting in Mortimer

West Berkshire Council (WBC) recently upgraded the existing street lights in Mortimer to low energy "LED". Compared to the old sodium lamps, the new lights give off a whiter more directed light and are automatically dimmed by 20% between midnight and 5.30am.

As the intensity of the new lights can be controlled from Newbury, the Parish Council asked WBC to look into the possibility of reducing the overnight light level in the Strawberry Fields estate. The discussion was initiated because of a resident asked whether this was possible and because the recent Neighbourhood Development Plan questionnaire found a clear preference in the village for no or minimal low level street lighting.

WBC have proposed that the lights in the Strawberry Fields estate could be dimmed over night by 47% (instead of the 20%). At the January Parish Council meeting, it was agreed that in principle this reduction be requested from early March but this should be subject to consultation with the residents of the Strawberry Fields development.

The Parish Council has sought the views of the residents of Strawberry Fields on this proposal by delivering a notice to each home on the development asking for comments or questions on the proposal.

No changes are current planned for streetlights elsewhere in Mortimer, in Woodside Close, Windmill Road, The Street or Groves Lea.

Upcoming events

As spring and summer approaches there is much too look forward to in the village and in particular the celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday.

The following events are booked for The Fairground:

Thursday 21st April from about 6:30 pm – **Beacon lighting** to celebrate Queen's 90th birthday (see page 17 for more information)

Burnett's Fun Fair, Mortimer Fairground, 5th to 7th May. We welcome the return of the Funfair which we expect to be open from Thursday 5th to Saturday 7th May

Picnic in the Park to celebrate Queen's 90th Saturday 4th June (see page 18 and back cover)

Mortimer Fun Day Saturday 2nd July and concert on Sunday 3rd July

Village cricket match for the Alan Thorpe Trophy Sunday 10th July

Mortimer 10k and Fun Walk Sunday 25th September

Celebration of the Queens 90th Birthday

Beacon lighting

Her Majesty's 90th birthday is on Thursday 21st April. The Parish Council has agreed to take part in a national initiative, coordinated by her Majesty's Pageantmaster, of lighting a birthday beacon on the Fairground.



The beacon for this event will be a gas powered beacon on a stand, not quite as large as the Diamond Jubilee bonfire beacon!

It is hoped that local musicians will lead the singing of suitable hymns and suitable patriotic and nostalgic songs. The beacon will be lit between 7.15 and 8.30pm. The exact time will be known nearer the event and will be widely publicised in the Parish. It is understood that, as for the Diamond Jubilee event, the lighting of beacons spreads across the country in a coordinated manner.

Picnic in the Park

Her Majesty's official birthday is celebrated in June. The national celebrations will culminate in a Service of Thanksgiving and the Queen's Birthday Parade in London on 10th and 11th June.

The Parish Council has decided to celebrate the event in Mortimer by having a "Party in the Park" with support by Mortimer Music live. This free event will take place on the Fairground on Saturday 4th June from 4 pm until about 10.30pm.

The planned music line-up will aim to span the Queen's life and include live performances by the South Berks Concert Band, State 51 (a band comprising of sixth formers from the Willink School) and Nicolette Street and the Revs.

There will be entertainment by the All Stars dance troupe, children's entertainment and a bouncy castle. A licensed bar and food will be on site. Please save the date for what promises to be an enjoyable day for all ages.

PLEASE SEE BACK COVER FOR A REMINDER!

Footpaths on the Fairground

The Parish Council is aware of the muddy conditions where the public footpaths cross the conservation strip on the Fairground. As these are designated public footpaths, the responsibility for their condition is that of West Berkshire Council. WBC had made two site visits and remedial work has now been approved.

Feedback on Communications

The Parish Council would be interested in finding out what you think of this Newsletter and any other communications. The best way to provide feedback is by contacting the locum Clerk to the Council using the contact details at the end of this newsletter.

You can also contact us through Facebook.

facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil

There is also a reply slip at the end of the Newsletter which you can also use to provide comments.



Update

As you may be aware the SMPC Facebook page is running on a six month trial period and is about 5 months old. To date The Council think has proved useful in communicating:

- messages to the community on Parish Council matters including:
- communications from West Berkshire Council on matters that affect the community
- notification of Parish Council meetings and decisions
- and notifications of community events such as the Queens 90th Birthday Celebration

At the March meeting of the SMPC a decision is to be made on whether to continue the SMPC Facebook page. Please give us your views by responding on whether or not this is a worthwhile activity for the Parish Council.

Website

It is planned to give the SMPC website a makeover in the coming months. The website is an important focal point for all the activities of the Council and we are aiming to improve the look and feel of the website and also advance its functionality. Please give us your views on how the website can be improved. At the front of the Newsletter is a scan image which takes you to the website and you can access a soft copy of the Newsletter by clicking on 'SMPC Newsletters' and downloading 'March 2016'.

Thanks to Councillor Peter Blagden

Councillor Peter Blagden has retired from the Communications Committee after many years of service. Peter has been a major force in supporting the communications of the Council over the years and the Council wishes to thank him for his dedication and diligence over the years. Peter will carry on behind the scenes with assistance on distribution.

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.

Feedback form

We'd like your feedback and comments on the Parish Council Newsletter and communications. Contact details are on page 23 or simply just write a note below and overleaf, cut this form out and post through the Mortimer library letterbox in Victoria Road.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council – Communication Feedback

Name and contact details:

Comments: Please comment on any of the Council's media, the Newsletter, Notice Boards , Website and Facebook page (continue overleaf if needed).

War Memorial Book

Major John Kemp MBE carried out research on the servicemen named on the Parish War Memorial. He compiled short notes on each casualty and obtained the details of the grave and cemetery for each one. He presented this to the Parish Council in 2004 in the form of a loose leaf folder. There is a copy available for reference in Mortimer Library.



To mark the anniversary of the First World War, the Parish Council decided to make this available on line with links to details of the graves and cemeteries. This is almost ready and will appear on the website shortly.

SMPC Communications Feedback
Please put in the Library post box in Victoria Road

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

The Locum 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

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.



STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL
SUPPORTED BY MORTIMER MUSIC LIVE

PRESENT:

A **CELEBRATION** OF
THE QUEEN'S

90TH BIRTHDAY

RG7 3RG

SAT. 4TH JUNE FROM 4PM

**MORTIMER
FAIRGROUND**

