

# STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter Spring 2018



Remembrance Parade

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council



## Superfast Broadband Update

Gigaclear is West Berkshire Council's appointed supplier of "Phase 2" of Superfast Berkshire, a central and local government backed programme to extend wired broadband coverage to rural areas and deliver a download speed at least 24MB/second. This



Phase 2 scheme aims to serve as many of the properties not covered, or provided with a lower download speed, following the Phase 1 installation, by BT Openreach. As an example, Strawberry Fields' original broadband service deliver downloads of only about 17MB/second, so that estate qualified for the Superfast Phase 2 installation.

Following concerns expressed by some residents' over the availability date of Phase 2, Cllr Nick Carter worked with Gigaclear to obtain details of status and a coverage map. Mortimer's first connections went live on Monday 27th November, making 150 or so properties 'ready for service' (orderable), including the whole of the Strawberry Fields estate. At the time of writing 215 properties are ready for service and a further 198 of the total 496 properties have a connection point outside their house. Gigaclear told us they now aim to have all properties in the coverage area "ready for service" by the end of February 2018. The total Gigaclear coverage area for Mortimer ranges from Goring Lane in the North, Great Park Farm in the east, Critchon Court to the west and Butlers Land farm to the south.

To check if and when your property will be served you can enter your postcode at this web page: [www.gigaclear.com/postcode-checker](http://www.gigaclear.com/postcode-checker) or if you would like a copy of the coverage map contact the Parish council office (see back page). If you are in a served area you will not be obliged to take the broadband service itself from Gigaclear.

Gigaclear advise that if you have specific questions on installations, packages, and costs during the Mortimer deployment, you can contact

[martin.vile@gigaclear.com](mailto:martin.vile@gigaclear.com)

or [sean.graham@gigaclear.com](mailto:sean.graham@gigaclear.com).

The Council noticed that Gigaclear's contractor has laid a cable around the memorial pond and along the southern edge of the fairground, instead of taking a route along the road. The Clerk discussed and is agreeing a making good of the ground and ensuring it causes no future problems, following this work.

## **Hedge Maintenance on The Street**

The Roads, Footpaths and Commons Committee was aware that the mature hedge that runs along the southern side of The Street between the smaller Avenue entrance and Kiln Lane had not been cut for some years and now overhangs the road. We felt it important for it to be cut back to make the road clearer and improve visibility. Since such maintenance responsibility belongs to the land owner, we contacted him to point it out. The land owner, who lives in Scotland, was grateful for our drawing it to his attention and more than happy to arrange for a contractor to cut back the hedge in both height and thickness. As a result the road is now much clearer and the whole section tidier than it has been for a while.



## **Mortimer is awarded funding for three new sports and leisure projects.**

We are delighted to have been awarded a grant of almost £8,000 through the West Berkshire Members' Community Bids scheme to help us deliver three exciting community-led village projects:

- An on line system to make tennis court booking simpler and more reliable. This will also enable us to look at broader range of activities on this "all weather play area" and to further promote its use.

- Low-energy portable lighting units, that cut the light impact on neighbouring properties during floodlit football activity on the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field and can be moved for use at other village events.
- A power supply to the tennis court area, to run the access system and also to enable the potential use of ball serving machines and provide power for events such as the 10k race.

These projects arose through the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Community Projects committee, comprising of Councillors and volunteers, that works to implement ideas identified through the 2015 NDP public



questionnaire and subsequent public engagement. A number of proposals were identified at a public Sports and Leisure meeting in October 2017, and put forward to the Parish Council meeting later that month for consideration. The three listed above were proposed to our local West Berkshire Councillors, Graham Bridgman and Mollie Lock, to consider bidding for under the Members' Community Bids scheme. Under the scheme, they can bid to WBC's Building Communities Together panel for part of a pot of money set aside to provide capital spending to develop local projects (but not running costs – the Parish Council will need to deal with these). The funding has to be 'match funded', meaning the Parish Council agrees to put up the balance of the project costs needed by using contributions made by housing developers that we are holding for just such a purpose but also the Parish Council is seeking other grants.

As the projects develop we will keep you informed, and if you would like to know more about this or other projects that the Parish Council is working on, including if you would like to help out, please contact [admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)



## BBC Radio Berkshire Walks the Mortimer Heritage Trail

BBC Radio Berkshire's Bridgitte Tetteh visited Mortimer just before Christmas, to experience first-hand the Mortimer Heritage Trail.



The trail offers the public the chance to both see local countryside and learn about the people and places that shaped the village's past. Reporting live, Cllr Nick Carter acted as her guide and Carolyn Owen of the Mortimer Local History Group explained the background to the "old" and "new" settlements, the significance of the

Brunel designed railway station and the significant of Dr Crichton, two Dr Hills and Alfred Palmer. The visit even included a look at the Saxon Tomb inside St Mary's church and a chat with the current owner of the Old Methodist Chapel in Drury Lane about how it felt to live there. Our thanks to Carolyn for being a mine of information, Irene for granting access to St. Mary's Church, Robert for letting us into his home and Sue for seeking permissions for a highly informative impromptu event.

If you missed the programme you can catch up with it on the internet here <https://tinyurl.com/BBCBerksMortimer>

The walks themselves are available to pick up free from the library, The Baobab or can be downloaded from the internet here:

<http://tinyurl.com/HeritageTrail1>

<http://tinyurl.com/HeritageTrail2>

An updated version of the walks is in development and will be out in about a month.

## **Parking Outside Mortimer Café and David Cliff Estate Agents**

The area that is road side of the bollards, outside Mortimer Café and David Cliff Estate agents, is widely treated as a parking layby but this is, in fact, a dropped kerb pavement.

Whilst motorists find it convenient to park here, this does at time cause congestion and can be an inconvenience to pedestrians.

This issue has been raised with West Berkshire District Council in the past and it has recently been drawn to their attention again. However, there are several reasons why it is not deemed to take any necessary actions. Amongst the reasons are: the off-highway paved area to the front of the businesses is generally available for pedestrians to get around any obstruction; congestion is only an intermittent problem and this site is not considered to have a poor history of accidents.

Whilst this is not an ideal situation, members of the public can help by being aware that this is a dropped kerb pavement and not a layby and by using the available parking to the rear of the businesses.

## **Christmas Tree**

This year's Christmas tree was a resounding success even though we had to secure the boundary with heras fencing to protect it. Thanks to all who helped collect, erect and decorate it.

## **Remembrance Parade**

This year saw a good turnout of people to support the parade. Do remember that next year will be the 100th anniversary since the original armistice day

# Parish Council Adopted Budget and Precept Request 2018-2019

The budget for 2018 -2019 was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and is shown in the table below along with the previous budget.

	Budget 2017/18	Budget 2018/19	Comments
<b>INCOME</b>			
Cemetery Fees	£7,805	£8,345	Burials, cremations, memorials
Fairground Fees	£3,690	£3,065	Hire fees & tennis courts
Bank Interest	£500	£350	
Wayleave Rental	£245	£245	
Public Works Loan Board	£50,000	£0	Loan for community projects
Council Tax Support Grant	£0	£0	None paid 2017 - 2018
Precept	£137,370	£142,329	Our request raised by Council Tax
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)		£70,000	Money received from developers as a result of the NDP
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£199,610</b>	<b>£224,334</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
SMPC Administration:	£53,400	£70,517	Personnel, utilities, office rent & expenses, insurance, audit fees, hall rental, training, subscriptions
Cemetery	£4,900	£4,032	Grass cutting, maintenance, rent
Fairground	£28,835	£33,148	Grass cutting, maintenance, rent, Xmas tree, projects, sinking funds
Roads Footpaths Commons	£10,775	£22,000	Maintenance, projects
Communications	£3,725	£9,625	Newsletter, web hosting, design
Willink Leisure Centre	£10,700	£11,000	Agreed annual grant
Community Award	£300	£300	
NDP	£0	£1,000	Contingency to make minor amendments
S137 Grants	£23,000	£3,735	Library
NDP Community Projects	£58,500	£68,977	Community projects
PWLB Loan Repayments	£5,475	£0	Annual cost for 10 year loan
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£199,610</b>	<b>£224,334</b>	

## Strategy

The Parish Council continues to seek to develop more community projects for the residents of Mortimer, reflecting views expressed through the NDP. 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. We plan to keep the Parish Precept (the element of Council Tax which specifically goes to the Parish) at about the same level as last year, after allowing for increased costs. This means a 3.6% increase, an increase of £3 for a Band D property.

The larger part of non-day to day costs included in the budget are projects that are identified in the NDP. The first project to be delivered was the Heritage Trail around the village. Other projects we are working on are the enhancement of sporting facilities for the village, a restored footpath/cycleway between Mortimer and Burghfield, maintenance and improvements to biodiversity and an extension to the station car park. Most of these are substantial projects and are likely to require additional sources of funds.

Thus, our strategy is to carefully fund expenditure to maintain and improve the life of our village. The spending plans proposed are largely covered by contributions from developers when they start to build houses. This money is called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The amount of CIL that the Parish Council receives has increased dramatically from last year because we now have an NDP in place.

We are not yet certain of the exact timescale for the projects being progressed and if necessary can access further funds by dipping into reserves for the short term or by taking out a Public Works Loan Board loan, which would be repaid over 10 years. The loan would not be taken out unless the projects are ready for investment and other sources of grant funding are not available, and so it is not included in the budget

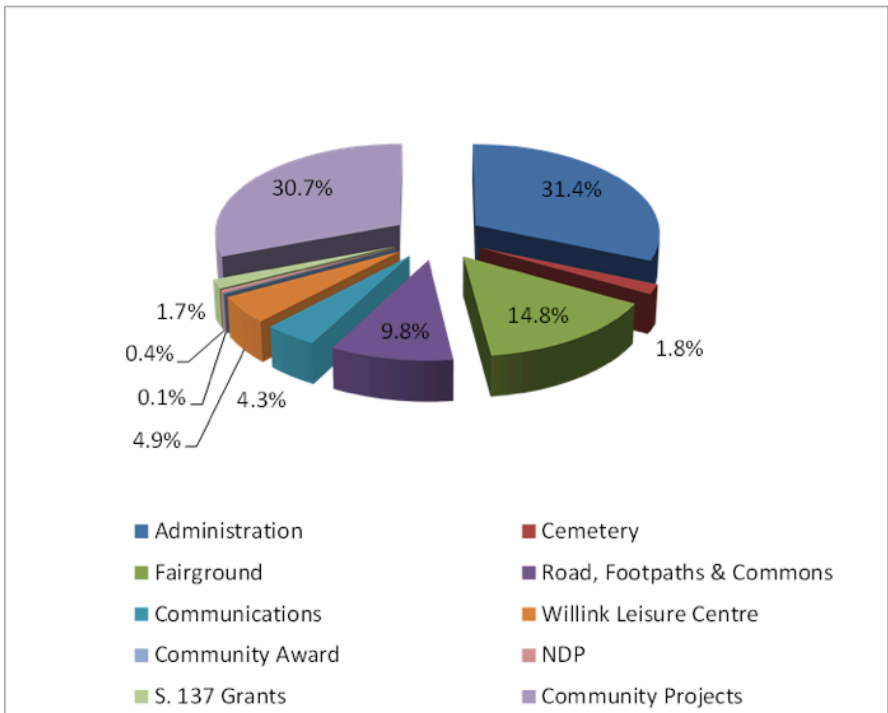
## Income

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 £5000 for the year 2018-2019. This is effectively to cover the increased costs of day to day expenditure.

The projected income from the Parish Cemetery reflects increases of 3% on charges. The Fairground charges are not being increased.

## Expenditure

The planned breakdown of expenditure is shown below:



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. Without that support it is likely that the Library would close.

Administration costs have increased, reflecting the cost of recruitment, training and handover, as our Clerk will be leaving in May. Expenditure on other items is in line with last year. Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Office on 018 933 1955.

## Development behind St John's

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December the Planning Committee met to discuss the outline application to build 110 homes on the site behind the houses which are being built at present which are in turn behind the Horse and Groom. This was the site that was identified in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to take Mortimer's allocation of housing.





The plan shows the housing as well as the area, in the top left corner, where any new school and medical facilities would go. It should be emphasised that the outline application only shows these facilities to demonstrate how the roads on the site would allow access. It is not intended to show what such facilities would actually look like.

It can be seen that the site has a large area of green space at the bottom and quite a lot of landscaping within and around the site.

The application is for 50, 1 or 2 bed homes, 14, 2 or 3 bed bungalows, 42, 3 or 4 bed houses and 4, 5 bed houses. 40% or 44 homes would be affordable housing to meet West Berkshire's requirements.

The Parish Council had been in consultation with the developers to produce a site design brief for this development. As such it was no surprise that in general terms the Planning Committee supported



the outline application. It should be emphasised that the outline application is really only about the layout of the site and how it will be accessed. Things such as what bricks will be used and the internal layout of the houses will be dealt with at the detailed planning application stage.

At the meeting there were some 25 members of the public who asked questions and raised various issues about the development. Having listened to these concerns the Committee then went through the policies of the NDP to determine where there were still concerns about the development. The full results of the meeting can be found in the minutes of the meeting on the Parish web site. However, the major areas of concern can be summarised as:-

- The completeness of the landscaping, especially on the eastern boundary of the site
- The arrangements for storm water run off
- The arrangements of some parking areas
- Too much traditional road construction e.g. asphalt and kerbs rather than block paving
- The plan for construction traffic

The full list of concerns will go to West Berkshire to help inform their deliberations as to whether to give this site outline planning approval. It is understood that the target date for such a decision is before the 8<sup>th</sup> of February.

## **New Chairman**

Further to the Full Parish Council meeting on the 14th December, we are sad to announce the resignation of Cllr. Julian Earl from both the post of Parish Council Chair and Councillor. Julian has been a very active member of the SMPC and we would like to thank him for all of his hard work over the past years. Best wishes to him and his family for their new venture.

On a more positive note, we are delighted to announce that Cllr. Pat Wingfield has been voted in as Chair. Pat has been a Councillor for 8 years and in that time has sat on every committee, has taken on the role of both Chair and Vice-Chair and over the past four years, has been Chair of the NDP Steering Committee. He is now looking forward to ensuring the NDP is carried forward into practice.



## **Annual Parish Meeting**

This year the meeting is going to be held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April at 7:30 in St John's Hall. As this event is for the whole Parish it is hoped to discuss a current topic as well as holding the formal meeting.

The idea is that the Parish Council will produce information on what ever topic is chosen. This information and any ideas that flowed from it, will be presented on boards around the hall rather in the same way that various NDP events were held. There would be time before the meeting to have a look at the boards and discuss them with the people who had prepared them.



The formal part of the meeting would then take place along with the presentation of the Community Award. This would be followed by an open discussion on the chosen topic.

It should be emphasised that this proposal is at an early stage of development at the moment so things might change so please keep an eye out for other announcements, especially what the topic might be.

## **Fairground Play Equipment Update**

The broken play equipment in the fairground has been investigated. Companies have been contacted to quote for the repair and quotes have just been recieved.

## **The Street Resurfacing**

The resurfacing in October appeared to go smoothly without too much disruption, but two issues then arose.

First, there was a BT manhole cover that had sunk but (although BT were made aware of this in July) had not been repaired. To ensure that the level of the new road surface was not compromised, it was laid over the cover. The West Berkshire Council Highways Department are waiting to hear from BT when the cover is likely to be replaced, and have assured us that as to the area around the cover will be reinstated to a high standard.

Secondly, road users will also have noted that originally there was an anti-skid surface on the uphill section before the pedestrian crossing, but not on the downhill. The downhill section was due to be installed in December, but poor weather caused delays in a number of projects but has now been completed.

## **Pot Hole Reporting**

During the winter period pot holes tend to worsen. If you find any then please use the pot hole reporting. The best place to report this is to use the scheme. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/report-pothole> where you simply enter your postcode and this links you to the West Berkshire pot hole reporting service.

## **Hammonds Heath Fencing**

It has been proposed to replace the fencing along Hammonds Heath and on the south side of the conservation area. Quotations are being sought at present. We hope the work will commence early this spring.

## Co-option of Councillor

**STOP PRESS**

Due to Councillor Earl moving away from the area there is a vacancy for a councillor. If interested please contact The Clerk (details below).

## Other 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 55111 NOTE THIS NUMBER REPLACES THE OLD ONE 0165 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

Cllr Graham Bridgman

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.

## PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Council Office

The Library

27 Victoria Road

Mortimer

RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955

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

Email Lynn: [admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

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

Facebook: [facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil](https://facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil)

Minutes and Agendas of Council meetings, as well as other Council information, can be viewed on the above website or on the Parish Council notice boards which are located outside The Baobab (the old Post Office) and the library.

The Parish Council Office is normally open:

Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays,

09:30 to 17:00

If the office is closed, correspondence can be left with the library staff or put in the library letter box.