

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter – April 2022



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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**The Annual Parish meeting is back
at St John's Hall on
Tuesday, 26th April 2022 at 7.30pm**

Doors open from 7.00pm

**The agenda, whilst not yet finalised,
is likely to include:**

- **Presentation of Community Awards for 2020 and 2021.**
- **New parish council speed cameras.**
- **Sewerage discharges into Foudry Brook.**
- **The parish council and 'The Greening Campaign'.**
- **Neighbourhood Plan news.**
- **Election of community trustees.**
- **Report of the parish council for 2021/22.**
- **Open Forum.**

**Come along and find out what's happening
in the parish
and ask your questions.**

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY AWARD 2022



We are looking for nominations for

The Stratfield Mortimer Community Award 2022

This annual award is given to a person who has devoted outstanding time and energy for the benefit of the community of Stratfield Mortimer, irrespective of whether they live in the village.

If you know of someone who you think deserves recognition, please nominate them by completing a nomination form available from our web site, under “Announcements”, via email from admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk or in person from Mortimer Library. Please submit your completed form to the Parish Council office.

The closing date for nominations is **13th May 2022.**

JOHN BULL 1949-2022

John Bull, pictured on the front cover, was born in Reading in May 1949 to Ronald and Joan Bull.

He grew up with his older sister Janet and younger sisters Pam and Tina.

After completing his education, he went on to work for a computer engineering company.

His father owned a timber shop called Dads Shop which he joined at the age of 19. In 1970, he bought the business from his father and moved Dads Shop to its current position on West End Road in 1972. He married and had three children, Peter, Elizabeth and Jane from whom gave him four grandchildren.

This was the time he began his 50 years of volunteering in Mortimer and became known as the reliable gentleman who was always happy to help.

John sold Dads Shop to his daughter Elizabeth in 2000. His intention was to retire however, he continued his work for a number of organisations which included governor positions, including St John's School, St Mary's School, the parish council and the dramatic society.

John supported the RNLI and chose to run many charity sales from the village hall, where he also contributed his time.

Thank you to everyone who has sent the family condolences and for continuing to donate to John's RNLI fundraising page www.justgiving.com/fundraising/johnbullrnli.



BUDGET 2022/2023

The parish council set its budget for 2022/23 at its meeting on 13th January 2022. The good news is that the council has maintained the 2022/23 precept (the parish council's share of Council Tax) at the 2021/22 level. This means that because of the small increase in the number of houses in Mortimer, there will be a decrease of 1.75% in the amount each household will pay in Council Tax to the parish council. For Band D properties the parish council element of the Council Tax will be £87.64 compared to last year's figure of £89.21. Hopefully, you have already seen this reduction reflected in your Council Tax bill.

Full details of the budget are available on the parish council website under "The Council/Budget".

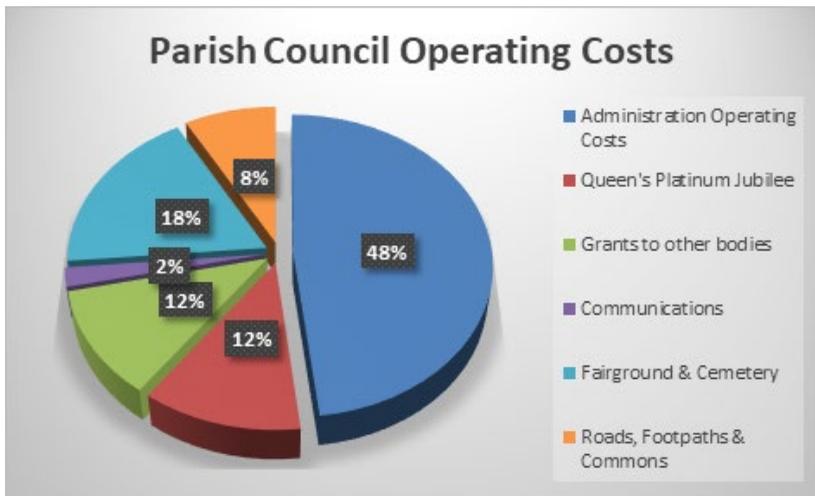
The precept is the council's main source of income, but some additional income is expected from cemetery fees and through hire of the Fairground. The full amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Phase 1 of the new house development behind Tower Gardens, has now been received. More will be due from Phase 2 and 3 but this is not expected to occur in 2022/23. CIL must be spent on infrastructure.

Apart from the maintenance and improvements costs, planned by the Roads, Footpaths and Commons committee, the council's overall costs are generally forecast to be less for 2022/23.

Work continues on obtaining planning approval for the Mortimer to Burghfield cycleway and footpath and the council remains in consultation with West Berkshire Council regarding The Street footway widening. Both these projects will be partly funded from CIL reserves supplemented by grants and other sources of funding.

Earmarked Reserves (funds set aside for a specific purpose) have been, or will be, set aside for the new Neighbourhood Plan, planned climate and environment work and the funds required to support negotiations with the Royal British Legion about Garth Hall. Thought is also being given to a new Community Grant. In addition, the council is looking at the provision of allotments and other smaller projects in the parish. The cemetery extension is progressing, with a new bridge recently installed to link to the new area. Landscape design is the next stage. Having worked closely with the fairground trustees, a location has been agreed for the fitness equipment and we hope installation will take place in the summer. Watch that space!

The chart below provides a visual representation of the council's budgeted operating costs for 2022/23:



Please note that sponsorship for and income from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event is expected to offset the 12% costs allocation shown above.

GOING GREENER TOGETHER

The parish council is excited to announce that we have signed Stratfield Mortimer up for the Greening Campaign which will be launched within the next few weeks.

The campaign is about working together as a community, to each learn and see how, with simple actions, we can individually and collectively reduce our carbon footprint. You'll be able to find out how much CO₂ you have avoided releasing into the atmosphere, through the actions you have taken; and with your input, the council will be able to calculate the reductions Mortimer has achieved as a whole by tackling this together.

But we will not stop there. This is just Phase 1. We can continue to: learn and act together to protect and nurture our wonderful and precious local environment; retrofit our homes to make them more energy efficient; and build a more sustainable community.

More information will be given at the Annual Parish Meeting on 26th April with an official launch being held shortly afterwards, where every household will learn more about the part they can play.

This campaign is for all of us: all ages, newcomers to Mortimer and those who have lived here all their lives.

Let's join together and make the fight against climate change fun!



THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

At its January meeting, the parish council resolved to adopt the General Power of Competence (GPC).

To adopt the GPC, the parish council had to consider and confirm its eligibility, the criteria for which is having a qualified Clerk and having at least two thirds elected members (not co-opted). The Clerk, Lynn Hannawin, became qualified last December when she successfully passed her Certificate in Local Council Administration and 12 of the council's 15 members are elected, such that eligibility was confirmed.

As the 'power of first resort', the GPC allows a local authority, such as Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, to do anything that an individual may generally do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. In addition, a council must still consider its other duties and the requirements regulating the governance of local councils and should seek the support of the community when acting.

The resolution to use this power lasts until the annual meeting after the next election, namely May 2023. At this meeting, eligibility will need to be considered and reconfirmed if the criteria are still met.





Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee – a village celebration

The Fairground, Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th June 2022.

Preparations continue at pace to create what promises to be a truly memorable celebration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee over the June Bank Holiday weekend.

On **Thursday 2 June**, a beacon will be lit on The Fairground, one of over 1,500 being lit simultaneously, to mark The Queen's long and selfless service.

Free-entry Fairground-focussed celebrations start on **Friday 3rd June** (7.30-11pm), as Mortimer Music Live brings "Moulin Mortimer", a unique cabaret, drag and burlesque spectacle to the stage. On **Saturday 4th June** at 11am, the Reading Scottish Pipe Band lead a procession through Mortimer of scouts, local groups and classic/military vehicles, heralding the start of a fun and entertainment filled day on The Fairground. With planned musical entertainment from The Clive Fortune Big Band, Argo Jazz Project and others, the Fairground hosts stalls, refreshments, a licensed bar, fun fair and a screening of the Epsom Derby. In the evening, tribute bands bring a truly special live stage show that remembers and celebrates the seven decades of Her Majesty's reign. On **Sunday 5th June**, join your friends and neighbours for the nationwide Big Jubilee Lunch, bringing the celebration to the heart of every community. Tips and ideas on organising a street party are available online here: www.bit.ly/thebigjubileelunch.

Check village notices and the Mortimer Village Partnership website (www.mortimervillage.org.uk) and Facebook page for event news. Meanwhile save the dates!

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN NEWS

The Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan, approved in 2017 made provision for a new doctors' surgery, infant school and associated parking on land set aside behind Tower Gardens.

Under the terms of that Plan, since no progress has been made on creating those new facilities, the use of that land must be reviewed. To that end, discussions are in progress with the school, doctors' surgery, landowner and others.

The discussions so far have established that, whilst there is no longer a requirement for a new school, there is a desire for outdoor play and sports facilities for the existing infant school.

Further information on the other planned uses will be provided when confirmed.



SEWAGE DISCHARGES AT STRATFIELD MORTIMER SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS

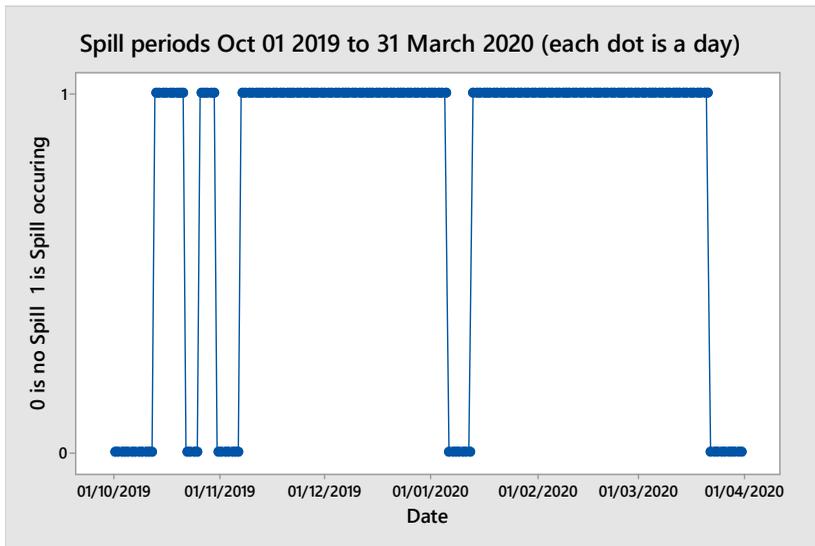
In May 2021 a resident asked whether the parish council received reports on sewage discharges into Foudry Brook. Water companies have permits to release storm discharges of partially treated and untreated sewage into rivers and streams. The parish council does not receive reports but Cllr. Bridgman obtained information from Thames Water under an 'Environmental Information Request'. The data started on 4th Feb 2019.

Records are kept as Event Duration Monitor (EDM) data which gives the timings and duration of discharges but does not record volumes discharged. An example from 2019 is given below.

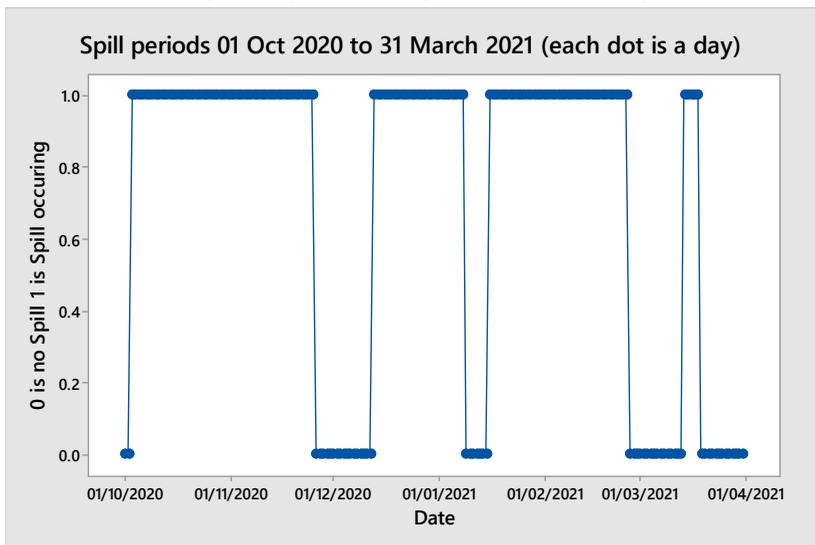
Start time	End time	Duration (hours)
04/02/2019 12:32	08/02/2019 05:10	88.64
08/02/2019 05:18	13/02/2019 13:27	128.1505556
13/02/2019 13:31	17/02/2019 04:30	86.9686111
12/03/2019 13:45	13/03/2019 02:28	12.72722222
13/03/2019 02:32	13/03/2019 03:27	0.914166667
13/03/2019 03:35	13/03/2019 04:25	0.832222217

This is an automatic system and there are often short breaks between spills. The first three lines illustrate this; there is a break of 8 minutes between 05:10 and 05:18 on 8th February and a break of 4 minutes on 13th February. Thus, effectively the discharge starts on 4th February and finishes on 17th February and discharge occurred 99.9% of the time.

We joined together discharges that had very short breaks between them (full details on the parish council website). During summer there was one spill period of three days in 2019 and one of two days in 2020. However, between October and March periods can be much longer.



The figure above shows spill periods in 2019/20. Each blue dot represents a day and spills occurred when the dot has the value 1. There was a period of 8 days from 13th October. The spell from 7th November to 5th January 2020 is 59 days. There is then a break of 8 days but another long period of 67 days from 13th January 2020 to 21st March 2020. Thus, between 7th November 2019 and 21st March 2020 there is only one spell of 8 days without discharge.



In 2020/21 there was a spill of 52 days in October and November, a spell of 26 days from 13th December and a spell of 40 days from 16 January. Thus, between 3rd October and 25th February there were only 24 days without a spill.

It should be noted that 2019/20 was a relatively wet winter, about 45% above the long-term average and 2020/21 was about 25% above the average.

All water companies now must make annual returns on EDM data to the Environmental Agency. One measure is the total duration of spills. For 2020, out of 466 sewer treatment plants operated by Thames Water, Mortimer has the 5th largest duration and Burghfield has the 4th largest.

The parish council has been in correspondence with Thames Water.

Extracts from their replies are shown below:

“Storm flows at Reading sewage treatment works (STW) are screened before discharges can occur, and at Mortimer STW it is possible for storm flows to bypass initial screening. However, at both sites the storm flows will first fill storm tanks where settlement of debris and particles may take place before the storm tanks overflow. When overflowing, the flows discharge at the storm outfall to the Foudry Brook. At Mortimer STW, the overflows pass through a CopaSac chamber, so the flows from both sites are ultimately screened before discharging to the environment.”

“We have not specifically examined the effectiveness of the CopaSacs at Mortimer – which will be of 6mm mesh. A mesh of this size should be effective in capturing the majority of the larger litter, but it will not collect all.”

Richard Aylard (Sustainability Director at Thames Water) stated:

“The sewerage network serving Mortimer suffers from the same issues as neighbouring Burghfield. These include a combination of incorrect cross-connections, the ingress of ground and sub-soil water into both our sewers and private drainage, and inundation from surface water. These issues are set out in the ‘groundwater impacted system management plan’ for Burghfield, as is our proposed response, which can be found here: www.bit.ly/gimpburghfield”

“Burghfield has been prioritised due to the surcharging of sewer manholes and the more immediate impact on customers’ toilet use. The net result, however, is the same for both sites – flows exceeding the works’ full treatment ability may arrive at the works for long periods following rainfall. As explained below, we do not regard this as acceptable.”

“Your assessment of the data we have provided appears entirely reasonable. There may be detail such as the caveats that accompany the data, but the broad interpretation is accepted, save the presumption that these discharges should only take place under exceptional conditions – that has never been specified as a requirement either in permits or in guidance, though I accept that this has been widely quoted as a fact in the media. The point is now also somewhat academic as our clear public position is that any discharge of untreated sewage, whether permitted or not, is unacceptable. We are working hard to get to a position where such discharges are no longer necessary. It will take a long time to achieve this, requiring collaboration with Government, our regulators, Local Authorities and customers, together with sustained levels of investment, but the ambition is clear and has the full support of our Board.”

Richard Aylard has offered to come to a parish council meeting to answer questions and expects to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on 26th April.



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME

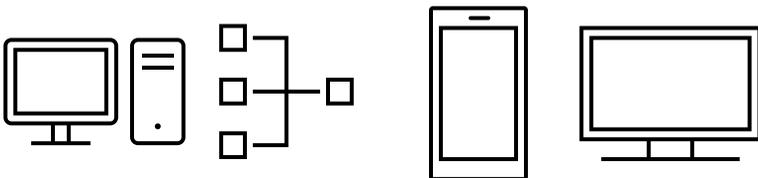
Neighbourhood Watch schemes are a valuable tool to help combat crime and create safer local communities. With all the community spirit around, and neighbours getting to know one another, this could be an ideal time to keep this going by setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in part or all your road.

If you would like details of how to set up a scheme, or have any queries, please contact Angela Money on 01635 40866 or by emailing her at ajmy5m7@gmail.com. Angela voluntarily supports Neighbourhood Watch for West Berkshire and is an administrator of the Thames Valley Police and Neighbourhood Watch database.

To initiate a scheme on your road, you will need to agree to receive the Police/Neighbourhood Watch/Action Fraud email alerts and forward them to your neighbours. Neighbourhood Watch signs, stickers and leaflets are free, and neighbours receive various local discounts for example at Jewson, A-Plan (*via the Thatcham branch*), Co-op, Yale, Ring SelectaDNA, and Newbury Locks.

COMMUNITY FIBRE PARTNERSHIP

About 410 residents and businesses signed up to the Mortimer Community Fibre initiative. Although BT Openreach have recently put the community fibre partnership scheme on hold, they confirm that the Mortimer scheme is now with their costing team who are calculating if and where in the village the system can be installed, based on the take-up level.



CYCLEWAY AND FOOTPATH BETWEEN MORTIMER AND BURGHEFIELD

The parish council continues to progress the plans for a safe Mortimer to Burghfield footpath and cycleway. A successful “pre app.” process has been concluded with West Berkshire Council. The next phase is preparing the planning application. The first steps of this are the commissioning of various surveys and reports which are required for the planning application: topological, ecological, arboricultural, road safety and utilities search. All these will be taking place over the next few weeks and all the landowners are being informed.

The route starts at the corner of College Piece and Victoria Road, follows the existing path around the outside of College Piece and then joins the informal path which runs parallel to the road, just east of the ditch and bank. After crossing Longmoor Lane, the path will be created in a similar way through Five Oaken Common; as it passes Five Oaken Cottage it will, for a short distance be adjacent to the highway before again being just inside the woods along the edge of Wokefield Common. A new crossing will be created near the double roundabouts. The section in Englefield Estate is already part of their permissive horse-riding routes and it is likely that the whole route will become useable by horse riders. The exact design will be dictated by the findings of the reports and surveys mentioned above.

COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

The Police have a new initiative in respect of Community Speedwatch (CSW).

In essence registered keepers of vehicles exceeding the speed limit are contacted - initially with a letter explaining the potential risks and consequences of their dangerous behaviour. Repeat offenders may receive a visit from the local police, irrespective of where they live. Beyond these friendly gestures, focused enforcement and criminal prosecution follow based on the collated evidence.

CSW Online, which is the system used, operates nationally on behalf of the police and communities to organise and join up Speedwatch activity. The organisation coordinates responses based on the collated data from all groups involved.

Details can be viewed at: www.bit.ly/communityspeedwatch.

Speeding is not just a local phenomenon - and neither is Speedwatch.

After various delays, the parish council has taken delivery of an appropriate camera and are currently agreeing the location of siting places with the police. The plan is to carry out some trials within the parish and then to ask for volunteers to man the camera. In order to operate the camera, the volunteers will be required to pass a simple multiple-choice test. Details can be seen on the above web site.

WHAT DOES THE PLANNING COMMITTEE DO?



Every parish and town council are sent, by its local authority, details of all planning applications that are submitted for properties or land within its boundaries. For Mortimer, applications are received from West Berkshire Council (WBC) and are considered by the Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) Planning Committee. The committee is invited to submit its comments to help the WBC case officer examining the case come to a decision. Members of the public can also submit comments. Each application has an associated Standard Consultation Expiry Date which is the date by which such comments must be received at WBC.

To alert the public to a new planning application, the case officer erects an orange site notice outside the property in a place visible to the public.

This notice gives:

- The location the application applies to
- A very brief description of the proposal
- The date by which comments must be received at WBC offices (by email or post)
- The reference number for the application

The parish council Planning Committee meets twice monthly in the Methodist Church Hall to discuss the applications notified to it and to agree and formulate comments. The committee members use their local knowledge to point out any possible issues and to arrive at a consensus. The formulated comments are based on national policies, WBC policies or our additional Neighbourhood Plan policies. If the committee wishes to object, the policies thought to have been contravened are quoted. Sometimes, while not objecting to the proposal, the committee chooses to add comments requesting that WBC put certain conditions on the application if approved.

The meetings are advertised on the parish council website and are open to the public; the agenda is posted on the parish council websites, normally on the Friday before a meeting. Meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of each month, immediately before the full council meeting, and on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm.

At the start of a meeting, members of the public make speak in favour of or against a particular application (that is on the agenda). In general, a total of 10 minutes is allowed for this; each person may speak up to 3 minutes.

To view a planning application, including officers' comments and letters of objection or support, there is a handy link halfway down the WBC home page www.westberks.gov.uk/home. Enter the reference number into the Search box, for example, 17/03004/OUTMAJ – the first part is the year, the second the specific reference and the final part is the type of application. You can search by address or postcode, but this is slower.

Every application has a Determination Deadline; this is the date by which the case officer will make a decision to approve or refuse the application. Occasionally an application is sent to the Eastern Area Planning Committee (formed of district councillors) for decision; why and how this happens will be covered in a future article.

WINDMILL COURT

Following a recent announcement by Sovereign Housing Association that its Windmill Court residents will need to find alternative accommodation, the parish council is in touch with the Association and others to fully understand the situation and formulate a response.

HOME SECURITY

As the clocks go forward and we enjoy the longer days it is important to remain mindful of our home security. In warmer weather, more people leave windows open and doors unlocked whilst out in their gardens, putting them at a higher risk of being burgled. There are a number of simple steps that can be taken to minimise the risk to your home:

- Lock your doors while working in the garden.
- Close windows in areas accessible to a thief, such as a flat roof or rear window next to garden furniture that can be used as a climbing aid.
- Close downstairs windows or doors left open in hot weather.
- Keep an eye on neighbours' homes when they are on holiday. Consider opening and closing their blinds/curtains and collecting their post.

For more suggestions on keeping your property safe, visit the Home Security Guide section of the Police website www.thamesvalley.police.uk.



CEMETERY UPDATE

Work on the extension to the cemetery is moving ahead and in March, Sarum Hardwood Structures installed the new wooden footbridge that will link the existing cemetery to the extension in the field beyond.



Unfortunately, over the past few months there has been some damage to the trees in the cemetery due to vandalism and the recent Storm Eunice. This resulted in the removal of several of them which has changed the landscape within the cemetery. It is intended that replacement trees will be planted and work on the landscaping of the cemetery extension will begin later this year.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Fairground Emergency - report any emergencies and dangerous situations on The Fairground: 0743 6807543

For **non-emergencies** 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 551111

WBC Out of Hours Emergency Contact: 01635 42161

To report major incidents out of hours.

West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team: 01635 519080

Email: streetcare@westberks.gov.uk

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

West Berkshire District Councillors for the Burghfield & Mortimer Ward:

Cllr Graham Bridgman - Graham.Bridgman@westberks.gov.uk

Cllr Royce Longton - Royce.Longton1@westberks.gov.uk

Cllr Geoff Mayes - Geoffrey.Mayes1@westberks.gov.uk

Mortimer Village Partnership - For village news and information on events, including a directory of local clubs and businesses:

www.mortimervillage.org.uk

CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Council Office
The Library
27 Victoria Road
Mortimer RG7 3SH
Tel: 0118 933 1955

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

Email Bernise: admin@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

The office is currently closed to the public, but the Clerk and Assistant may be contacted by telephone and email. Correspondence can be left with the library staff or dropped through the library letter box.

Parish Council office working hours:
Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays
09:30 to 17:00

Website: www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil

The website provides announcements and information on meetings, policies, councillors and committees. Council notices are also published on Facebook, the Parish Council notice boards outside The Baobab (the former Post Office) and the library.



Jacob King/PA Wire/PA Images