



Annual Report 2008/9

We are told (by government) that a modern Parish Council should be proactive, communicative, involve the community and take responsibility for the well-being of its residents. This is a tall order for a small group of volunteers, but we hope that you will agree that we try hard to fulfil this role as well as possible.

This report will give you an overview of what Purley on Thames Parish Council has done on your behalf over the last year, and an idea of our priorities for the near future. Hopefully, reading it will give you a good view of what the Parish Council (PC) does, how money is spent, who to contact and where to get more information if needed.

This is necessarily a brief summary. For more details, please see our comprehensive website at www.purleyonthames.net, which is updated regularly. We also place a column of information and comment in each Parish News.

Rick Jones
Chairman
Purley on Thames Parish Council

Summary of 2008/9

To describe 2008/9, we will divide the work into those that are continuous responsibilities year-in, year-out, and those special projects achieved within the year.

Included in the ongoing responsibilities are: -

- ❖ Maintenance and improvement of:
 - Goosecroft and Bucknell's Meadow Recreation grounds and support of sports clubs
 - The Barn community centre
 - Allotments and Burial Ground
 - Some footpaths and common ground
 - Pikeshaw woodland
 - Street furniture – Noticeboards, bins, lights, bus shelters, etc.
- ❖ Working with West Berkshire Council (WBC) to deliver high quality local services into the village including highways, waste collection, education, emergency services.
- ❖ Working with NAG (Neighbourhood Action Group) partners to keep Community Safety as a high focus. Partners include Wardens, Police, WBC and neighbouring parish councils.
- ❖ Managing the Flood Warden scheme and liaising with the Environment Agency to protect Purley residents
- ❖ Providing information to residents through communications channels, and upon request for individual needs
- ❖ Managing the finances and parish assets appropriately. We are especially mindful of protecting the Parish's financial reserves in the current economic crisis.

In addition, the following projects were actioned:

Highways and transport



Our Highways and Footpaths Committee have been working hard this year with WBC on a number of road improvements projects, the latest of which is the **A329 Safety Programme**, which included:

- ❖ Clearing of vegetation to make walkways maximum width;
- ❖ Creation of safe pedestrian crossing points at key points through the village;
- ❖ Installation of VAS (Vehicle-activated signs) at either end of the village to control traffic speeds.

In the year, we also oversaw the **Safer Parking project**, and the **re-surfacing of New Hill**. We are still pressing for surfacing improvements on the A329 (Knowlsey Road roundabout to Roebuck Hotel), a safe Cycle Path from Pangbourne to Tilehurst Station, and better traffic calming and surfacing in Long Lane. We find WBC Highways department increasingly responsive to Purley's needs, and we are pleased with progress in a budget which is always stretched.

Having in the previous year achieved a significant improvement in the bus routes serving Purley, last year saw a disappointment as one of the new routes was curtailed slightly and reduced the service for the western end of the village. This was in spite of a vigorous campaign to retain the ground won earlier. We will continue to look for opportunities to improve public transport links if they arise.

The Highways and Footpaths Committee also manage the Allotments with great help from Alex Stott, the Burial Ground at Goosecroft, and Pikeshaw woodland, as well as maintaining a number of footpaths. They and their contractors do a great job, and I know that you would like me to thank them on your behalf.

Recreation and Youth



The Youth club is held at Purley Park Social Club

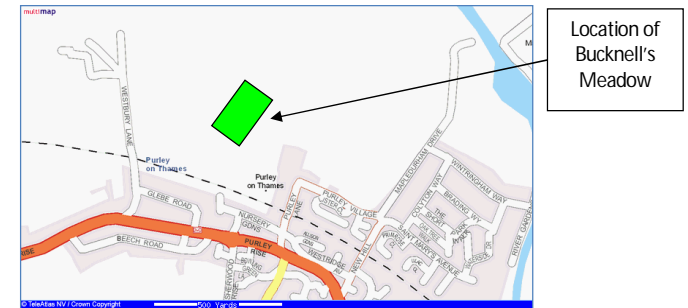


Our Recreation Committee this year sponsored a Youth Forum, a regular meeting of all the agencies that have an interest and offer services relating to youth. These include our Neighbourhood Wardens, WBC Youth Service, Extended Schools Manager Sue Hale, Community Council for Berkshire, and others. The main achievement last year was to start the **Purley Youth Club** in conjunction with the Purley Park Social Club. The Social Club provides the premises and many of the leaders, although the original initiative was taken by the Wardens team. Now running fortnightly on Mondays from 4.00-6.00pm for children between 8-14 years, it has a regular attendance of up to 20 children who rate it very highly. Supporting this club will be a high priority for the Council in 2009/10.

Many hundreds of people also enjoy the recreation facilities at **Goosecroft, Bucknells Meadow, the Barn and Pikeshaw**. These are kept in good order by a small band of volunteers and contractors, to whom the Council is very grateful and again wish to record thanks to those involved.

Our sports clubs had a very good year. Cricket, football and tennis all performed well in their competitions and leagues, we understand, and made progress in their local area organisations.

We are determined to upgrade the leisure area in Bucknell's Meadow this year, for older youth and adults. A survey of the area around the Church, seeking opinion on recreation facilities required, verified the need for this action, and has given us useful input to the plans. As this report is published, we are developing the plans and seeking funding with some urgency. We will release more details and keep you informed as these develop further, when we are confident that we can deliver them to a committed timescale.



Flood protection and Flood Warden Scheme

Although the response to recent flooding emergencies by the Council. Flood Wardens and our other emergency partners had been good, and in line with our Flood Plan, during the year of this report, we engaged in negotiation with the Environment Agency (EA) regarding three areas of concern which had emerged during 2007/8:

Telephone warning system had been shown to be confusing for resident of Purley – the warning area was too big. I am pleased to report that we now have a dedicated warning area for Purley alone, which proved in January to be much more accurate.

Reports that the EA were selling off lock houses and reducing the number of lock-keepers alarmed us and many other communities around the country. As a result of this reaction, we have been assured that there is no plan to change the status of lock property or lock keeper at Purley.

We raised the old topic of flood protection barriers to safeguard the lower village. A major scheme across the flood meadows was investigated some years ago, but the cost versus benefit calculation put it quite low on the Agency's national priority list. The outlook for this major scheme remains poor. However, the EA are now contemplating some smaller works – building up the bank behind Wintringham Way, and perhaps raising the river bank slightly at the Reading end of River Gardens. These could help with the most frequent water encroachment from the eastern meadow and river.

We have now a full Flood Warden group of volunteers, and have provided them with some additional aids to do their valuable job. Again, thanks are due to them for volunteering.

Also in 2008/9, we:

- ❖ Instituted a youth photo competition to complement the Villager of the Year award. Both of these will continue this year.
 - ❖ A number of internal actions to ensure that the Council is 'fit for purpose' into the future. These include better office staffing and contracts, more use of Information Technology, and implementation of formal risk assessment across all of the Council's activities.
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Priorities for 2009/10:

Going into 2009/10, much of our emphasis, effort and time will again be devoted to managing the parish facilities and assets to enable as many people as possible to use and enjoy them to the full and in safety. We will again put enthusiastic support into our sports clubs, social clubs and youth club, and want to encourage local voluntary organisations and societies.

West Berkshire have now published the highways improvement plans for the next four years, and we are pleased to see the A329 from Knowlsey Road to Reading border in the plan, also Long Lane from Knowlsey Road junction northwards towards the A329 lights.

We will also maintain our progress on gradually improving our own efficiency and effectiveness, which we hope shows in the service that we provide to the community. This involves better use of computer technology, better use of space, secure financial systems and procedures, and a close eye on performance.

We would like to make real recreation enhancements to Bucknell's Meadow in 2009/10, and have started new work to achieve this. Given our recent history in this recreation ground near the river, I hesitate to give promises of timescale or details of what is under consideration, in case we again run into difficulty. However, we believe that lessons have been learned, and that we will be more successful in implementing valuable leisure facilities there quite soon. A lot of our attention will be directed towards this in the year ahead.

Our current Village Plan was published over four years ago, and is due to be updated. As you may remember, producing the plan was a major piece of work involving many volunteers over a period of more than a year. However, the work was worth every ounce of effort expended, because the Plan has been an invaluable source of reference for the Council to make village improvements over all the intervening time. We need therefore, to try and keep it up to date and relevant to Purley's requirements, and the Council will be sponsoring some activities to refresh the Plan starting in the 2009/10 period.

Finance - how your money is used

The Council managed a budget of just over £130,000 in the last year, still representing a contribution of less than £40 per household. Full accounts for the year are not available until

finalised and audited in the summer. Amounts mentioned here are therefore always provisional. The income sources are illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 2 looks at expenditure in the same way.

Figure 1. Income (£000s)

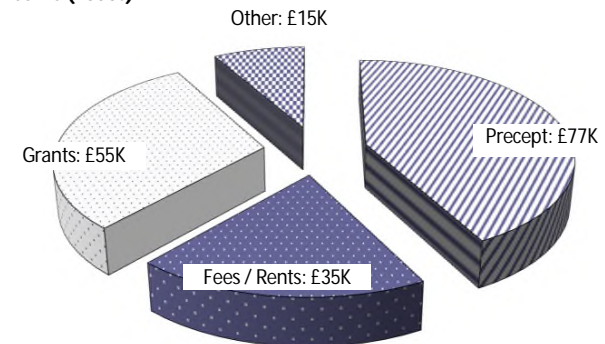
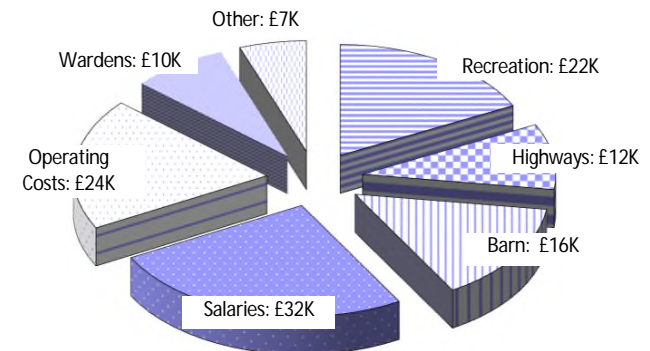


Figure 2. Expenditure (£000s)



Expenditure by the committees is all directed towards the day-to-day maintenance and management of Parish assets and provision of services. We use reserves to fund capital spending on improvement projects, and these reserves are built up where we can create income beyond our annual expenditure. This is often through applying for grants from other funding bodies, which helps to supplement money collected from the precept (householders). In this way, and by placing competitive contracts, we aim to ensure that your money is used to provide the greatest value for the village.

How to contact us

Parish Office:

Telephone: 0118 984 4507
Email: clerk@purleyonthames.net
Write: Parish Office, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech

Road, Purley on Thames, RG8 8DR

Website: www.purleyonthames.net (lots of contacts and information)

Clerk: Janet Field
Assistant Clerk: Jean Chudleigh

Neighbourhood Wardens 0118 945 5286
Police Non-Emergency 0845 8 505 505
Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 424000
WBC emergency out of hours 01635 41261
Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn

Barn Manager 07917 453187

Social Clubs

Purley Sports & Social Club 0118 984 3061
Purley Park Social Club 0118 942 7047

Schools

Purley C.E. School 0118 984 2384
Long Lane Primary School 0118 942 7187
Denefield School 0118 941 3458
Westwood Farm School 0118 942 5182
Westwood Farm County School 0118 942 6113

Doctors

Pangbourne Medical Practice 0118 984 2234
Tilehurst, Overdown Rd 0118 942 5432

Travel

Reading Buses 0118 959 4000
Great Western Trains 08457 000 125

Your useful numbers:

Opening hours

The Parish Office is open to the public during the following hours:

Monday (except bank Holidays) 2.00pm to 7.30pm

Thursday 9.00am to 2.00pm

Councillors are available for consultation on Monday evening 'surgery' between 6.30 – 7.30pm

Members

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Chairman | Rick Jones | 0118 962 3793 |
| Vice-Chair | Rick Farrow | 0118 962 4577 |
| Highways | Paul Coombes | 0118 961 3462 |
| Recreation | Graham Rolfe | 0118 941 7247 |
| Barn | Roger Woodward | 0118 984 2112 |
| Member | Bill Ayling | 0118 941 9437 |
| Member | Anne Bolland | 0118 941 3259 |
| Member* | David Betts | 07917 697933 |
| Member | Christine Collier | 0118 942 2951 |
| Member | John Chapman | 0118 942 6999 |
| Member | John Devine | 0118 962 5818 |
| Member* | Tim Metcalfe | 0118 942 8001 |
| Member | Bernard Nix | 0118 942 1067 |

* Also our District Councillors.

Useful Numbers

Community Safety: