



Annual Report 2013/14



The Barn

This is our report of Parish Council activities over the past year, highlighting where we spent time and money, hopefully giving a sense of the Council's contribution to village life.

The report contains a summary of Council finances for the year, and the usual information about Councillors, the Council's operations, and other useful contacts.

We also include a special item concerned with the Flooding events of the winter, summarising who did what, and what we expect to happen as a result through the rest of this year and beyond.

At most times but especially in times of emergency, Purley's community spirit is on show, and it is that that we are most proud of. In all surveys, the villagers also like the location that we are lucky enough to occupy, but it is the community feeling that shines through, both for support in times of emergency, and for celebration, as in the Jubilee celebrations of 2012.

The Council strives hard to maintain and improve facilities and community safety for Purley on Thames. Although government seems to want us to spend more and more time dealing with regulation, we all want to spend the time and your money and what really makes a difference to the village – a constant balancing act for Councillors and especially, our staff.

Find out more of what's happening and what's new on the website:
www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk .

We would like to take the opportunity yet again to thank our staff, especially our Clerks, the Councillors, many volunteers and contractors, and also West Berkshire Council, Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police. All these people help to provide services for us, or help to maintain the village facilities and assets in good order. Also to thank our retiring Assistant Clerk Jean Chudleigh for all her work for the village, and welcome our new Assistant Clerk, Christine Lamb.

Recreation and Youth



Ball Play Area in Bucknells Meadow

The Recreation Committee manage the two recreation grounds, Goosecroft and Bucknells Meadow, and they support youth initiatives in the village. The grounds are used for both formal sports and casual recreation, and enjoyed by hundreds of people each year.

Over the past few years, the Committee have introduced new facilities in both recreation grounds, especially Bucknells Meadow, the Boules Piste near the lock. In the past year, they have concentrated on ensuring that all Council grounds and equipment is being maintained to the highest possible standard, and that the sports clubs are given every assistance to enjoy their sport in Purley at a reasonable cost.

Our caretaker, volunteers, contractors and administration staff work together to keep all the facilities in good order. The formal sports areas are further protected by a trust agreement enacted by the Council with Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association), which ensure that the village has the benefit of these areas in perpetuity.

In 2014, the Committee hope to upgrade the Goosecroft play area with a major new piece of play equipment, to keep that area vibrant for young children.

The Barn Community Centre

The Barn, too, has had major works performed and upgraded furniture and fittings over the last 2-3 years. This year and next therefore, the Barn Committee have also concentrated on the management and maintenance of the centre.

The Barn has become a very popular venue for community events, local clubs and societies meetings, education, local businesses, and locals who want to hire the Barn for parties or weddings.

This increase in popular usage is excellent for the community at large, and the revenue helps to maintain and continually improve the spaces. However, it does bring with it



The lovely Barn interior

pressure on our hard-pressed staff to manage it, and the need to be constantly aware of neighbours, and keep the activity as low-key as possible.

It is the Barn Committee's intention over the next year, to:

- Install a public address system for use in both halls
- Redecorate the interior – this work has already started
- Install a heat distribution system to improve the heating in the small hall kitchen and toilets
- Create a 3-year strategic plan for the Barn, which will cover marketing, facility improvements, administration and finance.

Highways and Transport

In the past year, there have been school safety projects applied to both schools in the village.

- Purley CoE have opened the entrance at the rear of the school in Lister Close to make a safer entry and exit for children and families. There is also excellent car parking in the close, which has made the village street much safer to negotiate.
- Long Lane has recently seen improvements to their school entrance and the pavement and road around it. Again, this is to reduce the congestion around the school gate, and make the final part of the journey to school much safer.

The Highways and Footpaths committee are responsible for monitoring roads and footpaths, working with West Berkshire (WBC) Highways department for roads improvements, maintaining the main footpaths in the village, and also looking after the allotments, the burial ground and the Pikeslaw woodland.

We have been pressing for re-surfacing through the old village, trying to work a solution for speeding along the Oxford Road, and working on at parking issues in parts of the village, as well as looking at the consequences of the new, New Hill railway bridge.

We are pleased to report that the road through the village will be re-surfaced in the 2014/15 WBC road programme, hopefully not too far into 2014. We have made progress on the main parking issues, though some are very difficult to solve without creating another problem elsewhere!

Our allotments continue to flourish, and the plotters are forming a positive horticultural community of their own, it seems. As a Council we have to manage the Burial Ground as a 'Lawn Cemetery'. This means, after typically five years, when graves have settled, then each grave will be returned to a lawn surface. This is so that we can maintain it properly according to cemetery legislation. We are working with those who tend graves at the cemetery to, sensitively, remove plants and structures that prevent this.

Flooding

Parts of lower Purley experience flooding. Prior to 2003, it seemed that serious flooding was rare, but since the major inundation of that winter, Purley has seen properties affected many times. In 2012, flooding caused concern and some damage. This winter there were two flooding events, and they were worse, causing serious disruption to life in the lower village.

The good things were the way in which the community reacted, the help that we received from our support organisations, especially WBC's emergency response team, our own Flood Warden volunteers, the Neighbourhood Wardens, and the on-the-ground staff of the Environment Agency. Many people worked tirelessly on behalf of others to provide help and advice, transport around the village, protection for household goods, and so on.

Although we learn things at every event, we found that the responses all around were effective and very helpful to the affected residents. This time, with the help of our MP, Purley got plenty of publicity and we gained attention at high levels in the Environment Agency (EA) for action to be taken.

As a result of these serious incidents, several things emerged which will hopefully reduce the impacts of future floods – be assured they will happen again, and it seems, with increasing frequency:

1. Our flood plan processes proved resilient to the task, but a number of improvements will be made to make things even more helpful – communications, dealing with waste, positioning of pumps and lights, etc.
2. The EA have committed to build the bund behind Wintringham Way in 2014. We know that was also promised in 2013, but we believe that it will happen this year;
3. A Flood Defence Group has been proposed, comprised of interested residents supported by the Parish Council. This group is being formed now under a chairman proposed at the public meeting held by our MP at the end of February. This group will attempt to work with the EA, Thames Water and others to find and press for implementation of some further infrastructure solutions to reduce the impacts of flooding in Purley;
4. There has been talk of some government funding to communities, to help individual house owners to improve the flood resilience of the most vulnerable properties. We have yet to verify this, but are seeking clarification.

General:

• Community Safety

The village has felt relatively quiet and safe over the past year. We regularly attend the NAG (Neighbourhood Action Group) meetings with other parishes and the Police and Wardens, and have been working on quite minor issues recently.

• Communications

- We have tested a new form of noticeboard at Mapledurham Drive and found it to be a good investment. We have therefore agreed to slowly rollout noticeboards of this type to replace those that are now looking tired.
- We will also dedicate some of our existing noticeboards to Flood information and guidance during flood events, to help the vital communications needed at these times.



Parish Website

- Our 'new' parish website is now well established and is a good place to find much local information as well as Council business, events and news. The site is accessible at www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk/.
- Council business is now more accessible and transparent to residents through published material and much more available at the Parish Office. The office also has copies of many information leaflets that can inform both new and established parishioners.

• Housing / Development issues

The Council's Planning Committee meets twice per month (1st & 3rd Mondays at 6:00pm) to consider planning applications. The last year has been a busy one for this aspect of our business, with a number of complex and controversial applications to consider.

We still have the intention of preparing a Design Statement for the village, which will act as guide to developers, residents and councillors on how we as a community want to see the village develop in future. This should help to protect that which we wish to protect, whilst encouraging the right sort of residential and commercial development that the village would find beneficial.

Finance - how your money is used

Costs rose again in 2013/14, and the general expenditure therefore rose to around £131,000. Although we strive to keep spending within a reasonable budget, our prime purpose is to provide and maintain good services to the village, which can only be done at a cost. We produce income from hires and grants and in other ways, but our main source of funding comes from the Precept, the very small element of Council Tax charged to householders for the Parish Council, which this year equated to around £43 per household.

These figures are provisional, as our accounts are not finalised until the summer.

Figure 1: Income:

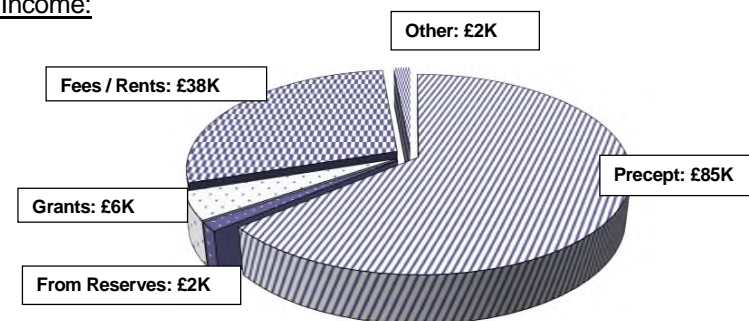
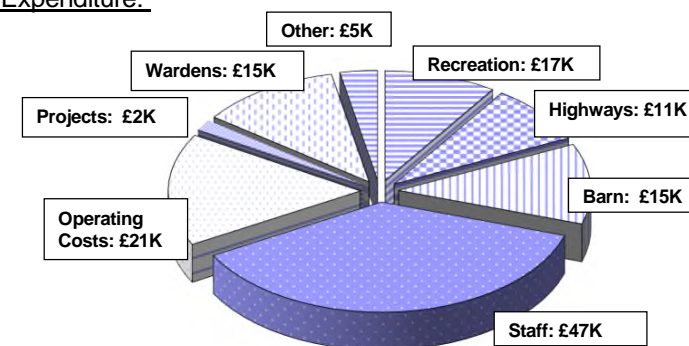


Figure 2: Expenditure:



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, which we kept light this year. Full accounts can be viewed at the Parish Office, or on the web site when published.

How to contact us

Parish Office: Telephone: 0118 984 4507
Email: clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk
Write: Parish Office, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road, Purley on Thames, RG8 8DR
Website: www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk (lots of contacts and information)
Clerk: Janet Field (Mrs)
Assistant Clerk: Christine Lamb (Mrs)

Opening hours

The Parish Office is open to the public during the following hours:
Monday (except bank Holidays) 2.00pm to 6.30pm
Thursday 9.30am to 2.30pm
Councillors are available for consultation on Monday evenings, between 5.30 – 6.30pm, or other times by appointment.

Members

 Rick Jones Chairman & Highways 0118 962 3793	 Bernard Nix Vice Chairman & Barn 0118 348 5867	 Rick Farrow Recreation 0118 962 4577	 Graham Rolfe Planning 0118 941 7247	 Bill Ayling 0118 941 9437
 Pamela Beddoes 0118 941 4186	 Sue Briscoe 0118 945 6085	 John Chapman 0118 942 6999	 Christine Collier 0118 942 2951	 Gill Goodchild 0118 984 1248
 Neil Haughton via office	 Jim Lemin 0118 976 3364	 Tim Metcalfe* 0118 942 8001	 Janet Field Parish Clerk 0118 984 4507	 Christine Lamb Asst Clerk 0118 984 4507

* Also our District Councillor, along with David Betts (07917 697933).

Useful Numbers

Community Safety:

Neighbourhood Wardens 0118 945 5286
Police Non-Emergency 101
Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 42400
WBC emergency out of hours 01635 41261
Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn

Via Parish Office 0118 984 4507

Goosecroft Caretaker

07901 640517

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
ReadiBus 0118 931 0000
Great Western Trains 08457 000 125
Thames Travel 01491 837 988
Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre 0118 984 4586