



Annual Report 2015/16

This is the Parish Council's (PC) report containing a brief summary of some of the PC's projects over the past year. It also explains how we have managed the Council's finances and assets. There is information about Councillors and a list of useful local contacts. You can find out more of village interest on the PC website www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk.



Our Allotments

The Council's continuing aims are

- To provide a safe environment in which parishioners can live, work and play
- To provide, or help our local authority (West Berkshire) to provide good facilities and services.
- To spend money wisely and provide good value for local people.

In the elections of April 2015 District Councillor Tim Metcalfe stood down from the PC. All the other Parish Councillors stood for re-election but in the absence of any opposition, were re-elected to the Council for another 4 years. Andrew Thompson replaced Tim Metcalfe. The PC's Chairman, Rick Jones became a District Councillor for our ward and decided, whilst staying on the PC to relinquish his chairman's duties. Sue Briscoe was elected as the new Chair, becoming the first woman to chair the PC since 1927. Later in the year one councillor resigned for personal reasons and has recently been replaced by Jane Langford. Over the past year the Parish Council has been affected by change from both central and local government. We are likely to see the effects of these changes increasingly over the coming year, in our responsibilities and therefore in demands on our budget.

Community Facilities

The PC owns a number of facilities around the village including the allotments, Barn and the recreation grounds. Each of these has a core group of regular users but it is good to see a wider section of the community discovering our amenities. This has been the case over the last couple of years when Purley Primary School has held its Tour de Purley cycle 'race' and fete in Bucknell's Meadow recreation area. This event has brought in people from Purley and surrounding areas and will do so again this year. The Farmer's Market on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Barn and the numerous cricket, football and tennis matches held throughout the year on our grounds at Goosecroft introduce people of all ages to Purley's sports facilities, which are the envy of many visiting teams.

• Public Access Defibrillator

This year we have installed a Public Access Defibrillator on the outer wall of the Pavilion at Goosecroft. Should anyone have a heart attack nearby, even an untrained person can dial 999, follow instructions over the phone and use the defibrillator to keep them alive until an ambulance arrives.



Defibrillator

• Housing/Development

This year we have seen a new development of houses on the Milton Park estate on the Oxford Rd. The PC has been consulted for views on this from submission of the original plans. We have been able to influence decisions on the number of properties built, open space and tree protection issues and the decision to create safety crossing islands on the main road. Other sites within Purley's boundary have been identified as suitable for residential development and we continue to have input on development in the Parish. Planning applications can be seen on the West Berkshire Council website or at the Parish Office.

Recreation



New play equipment at Goosecroft

Upkeep of PC grounds has been an ongoing job for our Caretaker and Ground Manager. Major works such as hedge cutting and tree maintenance have been contracted out so that we keep it all looking good and the amenities usable and safe. Tree surveys at Goosecroft and Bucknell's Meadow have identified trees which need to be removed or pruned. The roof of the Pavilion at Goosecroft was stripped and re-felted making it watertight again. All the play equipment

owned by the PC is thoroughly inspected annually by ROSPA. The PC then repairs any worn or dangerous parts. We also check weekly for wear and tear.

Care and maintenance of our assets come out of our budget and have to be carefully planned. The PC receives some money from WBC as a result of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is charged to property developers. This money is ring-fenced to create or improve open space facilities in our area and we are currently considering how to most effectively use a recent allocation.

The Barn Community Centre

This year use of the Barn has again increased for regular classes and groups, as a training venue and for private functions. It is great to see it so well used but this puts a strain on our resources for management, upkeep and maintenance. We currently have a development plan for upgrading the heating and lighting systems and redecoration is an ongoing process.



Large hall of the Barn

Friends of Purley Barn is a recently formed local group aiming to raise the profile of the Barn within the community. It has organised events such as the Christmas Market 2015 which was a great success and there are exciting plans for this year too. Money raised at these functions will either go to kick-start new activities using the Barn or pay for items to improve the facilities such as the newly acquired projection screens.

During the school holidays last year, we opened the doors of the Barn providing a pop-up café several mornings each week. The aim was to offer a meeting place for families using the children's play equipment at Goosecroft. We even provided some indoor play activities for wet days. We hope to do this again over the coming summer.

Recent users of the Barn during rainy periods will have been delighted to find that the Barn carpark no longer floods. Major investigations followed by drainage works seem to have solved the problem.



Barn decked out for a Wedding Reception

Highways and Footpaths

Preservation of the wooded area at Pikeshaw has been a project over the past year. After a tree survey, several trees were identified as unsafe and these have been removed and the area cleared of excessive undergrowth. Purley, Long Lane and Brookfield's School all use this area for woodland study. It is also popular with walkers, with or without dogs. We are fitting a new gate to enable easy access for wheelchair and pushchair users.

As part of WBC's cost-cutting measures, the PC has found itself responsible for re-filling grit bins at the roadsides in Purley. The recent mild winter has been welcome but we have had to plan for grit costs in the budget 2016/17 along with such issues as hedge and verge trimming along our roads.

The Future

We enter the financial year 2016/17 with several unanswered questions about the impact of cuts to some services by West Berkshire. Whilst cuts have been announced, it remains to be decided whether these services can continue with funding from elsewhere. When budget planning for the coming year, the Parish Council allocated a contingency sum for this purpose but there are already several demands on this and hard decisions will have to be made. The future of the Neighbourhood Wardens and the libraries are just two examples. The Government talks of encouraging 'resilient communities' and indeed this is what we will have to see if we can make happen. The Parish Council's financial resources are limited and finite but we will do what we can. People is the resource in which we are rich. We are hoping that the community of Purley will respond to needs in the future by giving of their time and energy to maintain all that is important to us.

New projects for the coming year –

- Various 'open space' projects using CIL money
- The Village Plan
- Reorganisation of Parish Council staffing
- Resilience measures following West Berkshire budget restrictions

We wish to thank the PC Clerks and Caretaker, the Councillors, many volunteers and contractors, West Berkshire Council, Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police. All these people provided services or have maintained village facilities and assets.

Finance - how we use 'your' money

• Income & Expenditure

The Council is conscious that we are spending your money, and that we have a responsibility to spend it wisely, and carefully. Non-capital spending has increased from £131,000 last year, to around £145,000 in 2014/15. This has, in the main, been brought about by the need to introduce pension arrangements for our staff as a consequence of the Government's introduction of workplace pensions together with an increase in the prices we are charged.

These figures are provisional, as our accounts are not finalised until later in the year.

Figure 1: Operating Income:

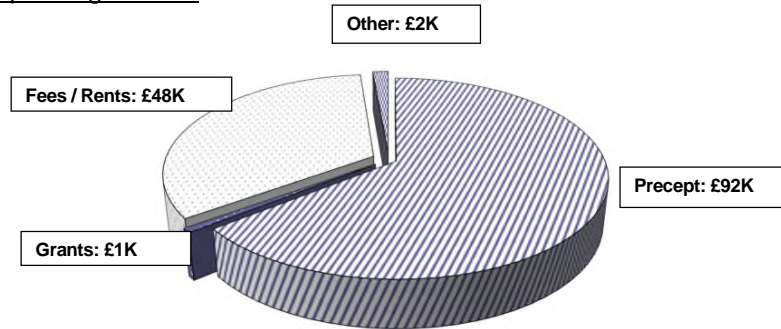
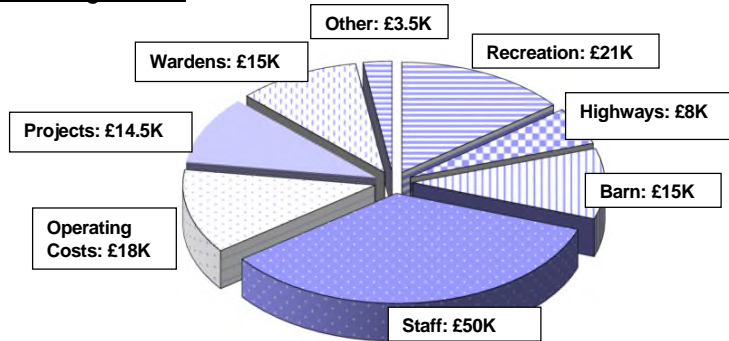


Figure 2: Running Costs:



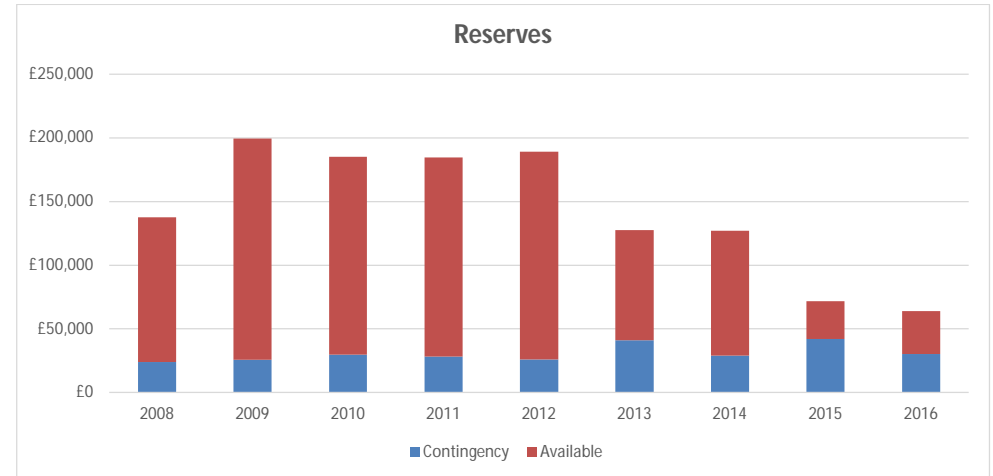
We produce some income from hires and grants but our main source of funding comes from the Precept. This is a very small element of Council Tax charged to householders in the Parish, which this year equated to around £48 per household.

Full accounts can be viewed at the Parish Office, or on the web site when published.

• Reserves

The following chart shows how our reserves have moved over the past years. Our reserves are made up of two components:

- Contingency – reserves we need to keep as a cushion against our spending which we set at about 2 ½ times our monthly average spending for the year.
- Available – this is reserves that we have available to spend.



As you can see our available reserves have fallen quite considerably since 2008. This is brought about by the auditor not wishing to see Parish Councils with overly large reserve and our wish to enhance and protect the facilities that the Parish enjoys.

Several large capital projects have been undertaken over the past years. While for some of these we have been able to obtain some grant funding the Parish Council has still been required to use some of its reserves.

Projects undertaken are:

- Outdoor Gym at Bucknell's Meadow
- Recladding the Barn
- Ball Area at Bucknell's Meadow
- New chairs for the Barn
- New play equipment at Goosecroft
- Replacement flooring for Barn
- Purchase of Allotments
- Reroofing the Pavilion
- New soakaway

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
Assistant Clerk: Christine Lamb

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 and Staff

 Sue Briscoe Chairman 0118 945 6085	 Graham Rolfe Vice Chairman & Planning 0118 941 7247	 Rick Farrow Recreation 0118 962 4577	 Bernard Nix Barn 0118 348 5867	 Bill Ayling Highways 0118 941 9437
 Pamela Beddoes 0118 941 4186	 Rick Jones* 0118 962 3793	 John Chapman 0118 942 6999	 Christine Collier 0118 942 2951	 Martin Bishop 0118 945 3117
 Neil Haughton via office	 Stuart Chester 0118 942 2951	 Jane Langford via office	 Janet Field Parish Clerk 0118 984 4507	 Christine Lamb Asst Clerk 0118 984 4507

* Also our District Councillor. Our other District Councillor is Tim Metcalfe.

Our Caretaker at Goosecroft is Joe Nash.

Useful Numbers

Community Safety:

Police Non-Emergency 101
Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 42400
WBC emergency out of hours 01635 42161
Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn

Via Parish Office 0118 984 4507

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
Theale Green School 0118 930 2741
Westwood Farm Junior School 0118 942 5182
Westwood Farm Infant School 0118 942 6113

Hospitals

Royal Berkshire 0118 322 5111
West Berkshire Community 01635 273 300

Doctors

The Boathouse Surgery, Pangbourne 0118 984 2234
Westwood Road Health Centre, Tilehurst 0118 942 7421
Tilehurst Village Surgery 0118 945 2612
Tilehurst Surgery Partnership, Tyler's Place 0118 942 7528

Travel

Reading Buses www.reading-buses.co.uk 0118 959 4000
ReadiBus www.readibus.co.uk 0118 931 0000
First GW Trains www.gwr.com 0345 7000 125
Thames Travel www.thames-travel.co.uk 01865 785 400
Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre 0118 984 4586