

Chairman's Report

This year saw two long-running projects involving the Parish Council approach their conclusions. The provision of more affordable housing has been an aim of the Parish Council ever since the Housing Needs Survey of 2004, and was put in our Parish Plan of 2005. We worked with the Rural Housing Enabler to locate a suitable site, conducted extensive consultation, and this year have worked with the developer on their plans for the site. After many delays and some lively Parish Council meetings, planning permission was finally granted by SDC in January 2010 and work has now begun on site. Phase one will provide a dozen homes for rent for local people, and another ten homes that, in the first instance, will only be available for purchase to those with an existing connection with the village.

The other project nearing completion is the traffic calming in the village, paid for by WCC after we made a strong case for it. We hope it will remind some motorists that they should drive through the village at an appropriate speed and with due regard for those who live here. Thanks must go to our county councillor, Bob Stevens, who worked tirelessly on our behalf to secure the funding from WCC.

The completion of these projects does not mean we can rest on our laurels. We successfully reapplied for Quality Parish Status, though none of us are entirely sure what this status has actually brought us apart from the satisfaction of knowing that the quality of the service we provide has been acknowledged. We are now also beginning the process of updating the Parish Plan, removing aims that we have now achieved, or now recognise are no longer possible, while adding new ones on important matters such as climate change.

The Parish will continue to face new challenges, such as the as yet unspecified changes to the Library system, and the proposed HS2 train line that will run just to the north of the parish and particularly close to Deppers Bridge. It is only possible to tackle such big issues if we work together as a council and as a community. Our clerk is the lynchpin of the council, and without her professionalism and boundless tact I know we would achieve far less. My fellow councillors are a pleasure to work with and I am sorry to lose Ron Grey to retirement after several years serving as the representative for Deppers Bridge. The council is also sorry to see Andrew Patrick standing down as one of our two SDC councillors after eight years of sterling service. We welcome his successor Richard Tonge and look forward to working with him in the future.

Dr Tim Lockley
Chairman, Harbury Parish Council

Deppers Bridge Report May 2009-2010

Little out the ordinary has happened during the first and larger part of the year. The bridge weight restriction continued to benefit us with the reduction in heavy traffic and inconvenience with the withdrawal of a regular bus service. British Telecom decided to end the service to our telephone box due to lack of use and the Parish Council agreed to purchase the box for a nominal sum. When BT gets around to removing their telephone equipment, it is proposed to use the box either as our branch of the free book exchange now operating from the entrance lobby of Harbury Library, or as a replacement for the much decayed notice board currently beside the box.

The first part of 2010 saw the big event of the year for us with the announcement of the preferred route, HS2 route 3, for the proposed high-speed rail link between London and Birmingham. For Deppers Bridge this is very serious as it promises us trains travelling at 400km per hour (270 miles per hour) with the capacity for trains every 10 minutes day and night along a line on a reinforced concrete viaduct, in all nearly 40ft high, running from Southam Rugby Club ground to the back end of Ufton Landfill, i.e along the far side of the pretty little valley which forms the view to the rear of the main line of houses. Since the trains are to be hoisted up into the air on a viaduct, visual and audible intrusion will be inescapable. So is the planning blight on our property now and probably for the next ten years while the route is argued over, fixed and construction begun.

Ron Grey
16/5/10

Planning Group Report 2010

As we now have an excellent link on our Parish Council website to any planning applications that come from SDC I will not be making this a long report. 28 plans were dealt with over the last 6 months. As a Parish Council we can only make comments that refer specifically to planning matters. This means the size of the development relevant to the plot, the effect on the street scene as outlined in the Harbury design statement and to make sure that it fits with the SDC current planning policy. Some of the plans we have to look at are about the removal or trimming of trees and hedges as permission is required for this type of action as well as buildings. An enforcement officer can be contacted by any member of the public regarding a building that is being altered or a tree or hedge being cut down without our knowledge as their work is confidential between all parties. So if you want to complain about anything going on that you think is not right then contact Stratford District Council and speak with them and they will look into the matter.

Recent items to note are:

- a plan for the BMX track on the playing field to go ahead when funds allow
- new residents at Bishop Bowl Lakes who want to work with the local community and to preserve the fishing
- the old Post Office has a new owner who has plans to convert this to a family home
- the start of the building of houses on Bush Heath Lane finally after much discussion
- the plans for the School swimming pool are still to be decided
- the Village Hall renovation plans were agreed and this will be an ongoing project

To maintain our sustainability as a community, the planning group have also been involved in attending training courses again this year and have sent representation to Stratford on their Strategic Plan for the future of the district with regard to homes for people in rural communities.

I am grateful to all members of the planning group for their support throughout the year.

Jenny Patrick
April 2010.

Properties Working Party Report

The Parish Council's properties include the Playing Fields, the Cemetery, and the Village Greens. Most of the maintenance of these is done by a contractor and the three year contract was up for renewal in April. The Working Party reviewed and updated the contract in January and it then went out to tender. As a result, the contract was awarded to Philip Cook Landscapes who has now commenced work.

The play equipment is regularly professionally inspected. It is also checked at frequent intervals by Councillors Thompson and Knowles. We aim to repair any deficiencies as quickly as possible. In the last year as well as numerous minor repairs, there have been major repairs to the aerial runway and the skate park. A new see-saw has been ordered to replace the one that had to be taken out of commission some time ago and it should be installed soon along with an extension to the safety surface.

Thanks to the tenacity of Councillor Thornley, it should not be long before a BMX track is built near the skate park. A grant of £6000 has been obtained from the District Council Community Development Fund which added to the money already raised for the project will enable the work to be done.

The hard play area is now in a poor condition and will be expensive to renew but the Council hopes to be able to undertake this work in the not too distant future.

The Parish Council and the Tennis Club jointly fund the maintenance of the tennis courts which are an excellent facility for the village, and it is good to see the efforts the club makes to encourage youngsters to learn the game.

The issue of safety of memorials in the cemetery is a major and continuing problem. Following guidance then in existence, a large number of memorials were staked. Considerable effort was made by the Clerk to contact relatives and as a result a number of memorials were repaired. In the light of a more relaxed approach to safety being recommended, the Working Party along with a professional contractor reviewed all the remaining staked memorials. As a result, 13 stakes were removed, and 5 extremely dangerous and crumbling stones were laid flat. 27 memorials were restaked and another effort to contact relatives is being made. Where this fails, the Council must either repair the memorial which would be expensive, or apply to lay it flat. It is not an option to leave the stakes indefinitely.

During the fairly severe winter, roads in the village were hazardous and the Council has provided 2 extra grit bins in Honiwell Close and Mill Street which should be helpful if we have similar conditions next winter.

I would like to thank Councillors Thornley, Thompson and Knowles for all their help and support over the last year. I would also like to thank the Parish Clerk, Nicola Thompson for all her excellent work.

Sharon Hancock

Environment Working Party Report

The Environment Working Party's major achievement in 2009-10 has been the traffic calming in the village. This has involved new signage, tarmac and paint in Binswood End and Temple End, bollards in Binswood End and a speed aware sign in Mill St (these last two were both still awaited at the time of writing). There is no magic solution to the problem of speeding cars, but we hope that this might remind some visitors and residents to cut their speed in the village.

We organised a 'Save Money – Save Energy' day at the Village Hall in March which was attended by more than 50 villagers. There were stalls about alternative fuels, solar energy, proper loft insulation, recycling, and a great display by the school on what they have been doing about this topic. This was our first attempt to address the issues of climate change and carbon footprint and, while we could perhaps have hoped for more attendees, no doubt we will continue to think about what we can do in the future.

We have had several discussions about streetlighting, in particular trying to see how we can save money either by turning off some lights between the hours of midnight and 5am, or by switching to lower energy light fittings. These discussions are ongoing and currently we think that switching to new LED lights might be the best way forward. We will need to change our old bulbs soon anyway as they are no longer being manufactured.

As in the previous year we funded the purchase of 500 native daffodil bulbs that were planted around the village last autumn. Our thanks to the scouts who actually planted them; I for one think that they have looked lovely this spring.

Dr Tim Lockley
Chair, Environment Working Party.

Finance and General Purposes Working Party (F&GP) Annual Report for 2009 - 2010

The current year's precept, 2010/11 has been increased by £3,115 (4.9%) to £66,252; this gives an increase of £3.24 per year on a Band 'D' property, these increases are slightly lower than last year's increase.

The F&GP working party recommended to the full Parish Council that a 4.9% increase in the Parish Precept would enable the Parish to fully fund its plans for the year 2010/11.

This level of Precept will allow the additional spending in the following areas;

- **Play areas** – Some of the existing equipment has already been replaced and this process is ongoing. The replacement of the see-saw and resurfacing of the basketball courts are now in the plan. The proposed setting up of a fund to gradually build up sufficient funds to replace play equipment and carry out maintenance is underway.
- **£137** – We have set our budget at £5,000 for this year and the Council intends to spend these funds by targeting, not just local groups, but with priority for the local youth groups. In the last year donations were made to All Saints Church Youth Group, Harbury Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, Harbury Junior Rugby Club and Harbury Choir School, along with other groups – Twinning Association, Harbury News, Heritage Group, Village with a Vision and the British Legion.
- **Village Maintenance** – The contract for maintenance has been awarded to a new supplier, we believe this will give the Village better value for our money.
- **Village Hall Car Park** – We have carried over this budget to cover maintenance and repairs, due to the start of the Bush Heath Lane building works which will involve excavations through the car park.

- **Village Hall Development** – Again this year we have set aside funds to directly support the development plans for the Village Hall, this amount is set at £5,000.
- **Cemetery** – The risk assessment is still ongoing and £1500 is available to cover the works required to make the headstones safe.
- **Street Lighting** – £4000 to cover new and replacement columns with an additional £4000 for maintenance, with the budget for electricity being increased to £4000 in anticipation of the rises that may be imposed by our supplier, E-On.

A summary of the past years (2009-2010) accounts are shown below. These are well in line with our planned budgetary controls. Copies of the full accounts are included in the Parish Council Annual Report.

INCOME	
Precepts	63137.00
Interest Received	193.73
Allotment Rents	765.00
Burial Ground Fees	1798.00
Playing Field Hire	200.00
Wayleave	33.86
Grass Verge Contribution - SDC	1251.20
Grant Funding	-
Sports Club Additional Contribution	-
TOTAL INCOME	67378.79

EXPENDITURE	
General Administration	15547.77
Training	300.00

Purchase of Office Equipment	152.95
Parish Office	3963.71
Section 137	3033.34
Contribution to Village Hall	5000.00
Concessionary Travel	31.50
Running Costs:	
Allotments	1152.92
Burial	3165.20
Open Spaces	5121.67
Playing Fields & Car Park	9056.87
Non-Estate Roads	1638.04
Street Lighting	9194.99
BMX Track	540.00
Xmas Lights	155.00
Contribution to Sports Clubs Fund	2100.52
Councillors Allowances	2000.00
Election Expenses	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	62154.48

The Parish Office, which is open four mornings a week, gives us all access to the Parish Council, via the Clerk, to minutes, reports planning application etc.

The Harbury Parish Council website provides yet another means to keep in touch with the Parish Council, with online viewing of the minutes, meeting schedules, quarterly reports and the contact details for the all of the Council.

Current Harbury Parish planning applications can be viewed via our website, along with the details of other village groups. Please note the web address, <http://www.harbury-pc.gov.uk/>

On a personal note I would like to thank our Clerk, Nicola Thompson, for all of the help and support she has given to me and all of the Parish Councillors in the last year.

My thanks also go to my colleagues on the F&GP Working Party, Councillors Tim Lockley, Sharon Hancock and Ron Grey for their help, contributions and commitment throughout the past year.

Tony Mancell

Chair, Finance & General Purposes Working Party

May 2010