

Harbury Parish Council

Annual Report 2014



Parish Council Chairman's Report

The year has been really been dominated by planning. In the absence of an adopted Local Plan from Stratford District Council, rural communities are at the mercy of developers. Applications to build homes on green belt land, in unsustainable and unsuitable locations are being approved (either first time around or on appeal) because SDC has not identified locations for sufficient homes over the next fifteen years. The presumption is nearly always in favour of the developers, regardless of the objections of the local residents, or the parishes. In the past year we have seen our neighbouring parish, Bishop's Itchington, unable to prevent a large development of 80+ homes at the end of Plough Lane. It is just luck that Harbury has not yet had to respond to a similar application, but one could come at any time. It will be at least another year before SDC's Local Plan is approved and provides some measure of protection from unscrupulous developers. While we await this, our own progress on the Neighbourhood Plan can only proceed so far.

A major issue this year has been WDC and SDC seeking sites for travellers. They are obliged to do this by the Government, and without sufficient sites in the districts, both authorities would be unable to take enforcement action against sites that are created without planning permission. The issue has inflamed passions in the village, and the PC has objected to the proposal by WDC for sites near the Fosse Way. The final decisions from WDC and SDC will probably come next year.

Not all the planning has been doom and gloom. We have worked with the developers of the former Harbury Cement Works and Bishop's Itchington Parish Council to formulate a plan for the site that will be sensitive to the local environment via the creation of a nature reserve, provide some employment space, a care home and a new surgery for Bishop's Itchington, as well as 200 new homes (35% which will be affordable). We think this is a good scheme for a brownfield site.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the clerk for her tireless hard work, and my fellow councillors, particularly Jenny Patrick who has retired from the council after many years of service.

Dr Tim Lockley
Chairman, Harbury Parish Council

Planning Working Party Report

The Harbury Parish Council website has information about planning applications and we would encourage you to use it. Hard copies of all planning applications are sent to the parish office and available to be viewed by residents.

The second phase of the Bush Heath Lane development, known as Ridgley Way, should be completed by August according to the latest communication from Linfoot Homes. Positive feedback from the residents of the first phase has meant that this estate for people with local connections is heralded as an example of rural housing at its best.

‘Village With A Vision’ continues to make progress with a developer for a retirement complex for the village’s senior citizens and will be putting forward their plans in the near future.

The planning working party meets each month to preview the planning applications before the parish council meeting and its recommendations are taken into account by the rest of the councillors. There are usually 5 or 6 planning applications per month including tree works. When contentious planning issues arise these are debated by the whole council at their meeting. I would like to reiterate that the PC is only able to advise and comment to the planning officers and Stratford District Council. We do not have the authority to approve or prevent developments. We were sorry to see the demise of The Great Western and The Dog Inn. Although there were many objections to the change of use for The Dog Inn, there were many residents who believed that so many pubs in one parish were unsustainable.

The parish council drafted responses **OBJECTING** to the solar farm at Deppers Bridge and the proposed gypsy and traveller sites in Harbury Lane.

New plans have been submitted for the old Dovehouse Autos site which are more in keeping with its surroundings and looked upon more favourably by councillors.

We have **SUPPORTED** the plan for a care home, industrial units, 200 houses and a nature reserve on the site of the former Harbury Cement Works. Harbury and Bishops Itchington Parish Councils have worked together with the land owner’s agent to ensure that the development will be suitable and meet all our requirements.

I personally would like to say a big thank you to Jenny Patrick who chaired the working party until a few months ago and has given me invaluable help and advice. Thanks also to Alan Knowles, Keith Thompson and Steve Ekins for their commitment and support.

Cllr Pat Summers
Chair of Harbury Parish Council Planning Working Party

Environment Working Party Report

2013-14 has seen the removal of all concrete street lighting columns, completing a four year programme to improve safety. It was decided to replace all lighting with LED fittings where the life of LED (Light Emitting Diodes) is up to 100,000 hours (equates to approximately 25 years) and gives a 70% reduction in carbon and in energy consumption.

In an addition to the replacement programme, a new LED street light has been erected in Bush Heath Lane to help extend the lighting further up the road to reach the new development.

As 2015 approaches Harbury will see more LED or “white lights”, in order to comply with new legislation, requiring the phasing out of mercury based lights and replacement with LED or white light. Quotes have already been obtained for the replacement of the mercury lights. It was agreed to start with the pole mounted lanterns, followed by those on steel columns and to leave the Windsor lanterns until last (due to expense and future possibility of obtaining some grant funding). Money has been allocated for the start of this replacement programme in the 2014/15 budget and will continue for the next few years to come.

Our village improvements have included an extra grit bin in Bull Ring Farm Road and the proposed planting of a tree at Five Ways, where we are proposing to plant three oak saplings (ensuring the survival of one). Also, the reinstatement of double yellow lines at the junction of Church Street with The Bull Ring, has been added to WCC’s “list” and will be considered by the relevant committee in January 2015.

Cllr Amanda Lewis
Chair, Harbury Parish Council Environment Working Party

Properties Working Party Report

The properties working party is responsible for the village greens, the playing field, the cemetery and other village amenities such as benches. The parish council employs a contractor to carry out general maintenance work including mowing.

Last summer, Councillors Thompson and Knowles and I carried out a survey of all the benches in the village after which we were able to give the contractor an order of priorities for repair and maintenance. Two benches were deemed to be beyond repair and removed. One on Chesterton Road was little used but the one in Vicarage Lane has been replaced. This was thanks to a donation to provide a seat in memory of a former resident.

We are fortunate in having such extensive playing fields. Grants enabled us to both install extra equipment in the skateboard park and to renovate and improve the BMX track. It is very disappointing to have to report a recent act of vandalism at the BMX track which will be expensive to repair.

The multiplay unit in the small children's play area has had extensive work including a new bridge and rope ladder. Although this was quite expensive, the cost of a similar item would be prohibitive and the work should provide many years of life for a popular item. Many villagers were upset when the zip wire had to be taken out of action but it was unsafe and could not be repaired. I am pleased to report that with the aid of a grant from Stratford District Council, a new zip wire will be installed soon. Many thanks to those who provided letters of support for the grant application. Our next aim for the playground is to replace the bark pits with a better safety surface.

When the tennis courts were first installed, the parish council set up a sinking fund with annual contributions from the council and the tennis and netball clubs. This has enabled the courts to be properly maintained and this year provided the funds to resurface the dual use court and to put in a higher fence. This is now a really excellent facility.

The extremely wet weather in the winter made football conditions very difficult and sometimes impossible but I am sure that is a common story. The senior pitch goalposts are in a poor state and will be replaced at the end of the season.

Safety is a high priority and the playing fields at Harbury and Deppers Bridge are inspected weekly by one of four councillors - myself and Councillors Thompson, Knowles and Ekins. I am most grateful to them for their commitment. I would also like to thank the working party members for their hard work and support and above all our most excellent clerk, Alison Biddle.

Cllr Sharon Hancock

Chair of Harbury Parish Council Properties Working Party

Working Party Members: Councillors Thompson, Knowles, Mancell and Thornley

Finance & General Purposes Working Party Report

First I would like to thank our clerk, Alison Biddle, for all of the help and support she has given to me and all the councillors in the past year.

The parish precept for this year, 2014/15, has increased from £77,460 to £78,996 (plus £1,506); this conversely gives a small reduction in the charge for a Band 'D' property from £75.53 a year to £74.63. This reduction is due the increased number of properties in Harbury Parish. The F&GP working party recommended to the full parish council that this precept would allow us to fully fund our plans for the year 2014/15. This budget will, in addition to our normal responsibilities allow us to carry out our plans in the following areas;

- **Playing Fields** – Zip-wire replacement, new goal posts and repairs to the safety surfaces.
- **Car park** - Drain repairing.
- **Tree maintenance** - Year 2 (of a 3 year program) contract maintenance of the parish trees and hedge work along the allotments track.

- **Community Buildings** - Continuing support for the library building, village hall improvements and the grants budget.
- **Administration** – A reduction of £2,000 in our administration costs. This is possible due to the renegotiation of our insurance policy.
- **Street Lighting** – The mercury lights have to be phased out from 2015. The high cost of these upgrades is being planned over several years starting in 2014/15 and is in addition to the normal maintenance.

A summary of the accounts for last year (2013-2014) are shown below. These are well in line with our planned budgetary controls.

INCOME	
Precepts	77,460.00
Council Tax Reduction Grant	4,070.00
Interest Received	159.64
Allotment Rents	1,152.50
Burial Ground Fees	892.00
Playing Field Hire	200.00
Wayleave	34.58
Grass Verge Contribution - SDC	993.02
Grant Funding	7,799.00
Sports Club Contribution	23,851.98
Other contributions	1,753.71
TOTAL INCOME	118,366.43

EXPENDITURE	
General Administration	16,093.47
Training	292.00
Purchase of Office Equipment	282.74
Parish Office	3,741.06
Grants	3,475.00
Running Costs:	
Allotments	944.71
Burial	5,165.22
Open Spaces	4,841.69
Playing Fields & Car Park	17,088.98
Tennis & Netball Court works	23,731.98
Non-Estate Roads	1,884.96
Street Lighting	14,210.37
BMX Track	5,505.00
Purchase of Village Assets	1,071.43
Contribution to Sports Clubs Fund	1870.00
Councillors Allowances	2,500.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	102,698.61

The parish office is open four mornings a week; this gives access to the parish council, the clerk and to minutes, reports, planning applications etc. Our website gives the village another way to keep in touch with the parish council, giving online access to the minutes, meeting schedules, quarterly reports and the contact details for the council. Recent Harbury Parish planning applications can also be viewed via our website, along with the information from many of the other Harbury village groups. Please go to: <http://www.harbury-pc.gov.uk/>

My thanks go to my colleagues on the F&GP Working Party, Councillors Tim Lockley, Sharon Hancock, Amanda Lewis and Steve Ekins for their help, contributions and commitment throughout the year.

Cllr Tony Mancell
Chair, Harbury Parish Council Finance & General Purposes Working Party

Deppers Bridge Report

Highfield Cottages

This year we have managed a successful conclusion to the foul water situation at Highfield Cottages in Station Road. Thanks to Seven Trent, they now have a connection to the mains system and don't have to rely on storage tanks any more.

The Solar Farm

After meetings with residents, the applicant and SDC ward members, objections were raised to the application. The application was referred to SDC Area Planning Committee for determination. Representation at the meeting was made by the both Harbury and Bishops Itchington Parish Councils, the residents and SDC Ward members who were all against the proposal.

After a long debate, the planning committee voted 6 – 3 to refuse permission on the grounds that the development was unsuitable for the area, providing little or no economic benefit and would have a major impact on the countryside, the residents and the current farmer of the field. But I feel we are not out of the woods yet, as I'm sure the developer will appeal.

Cllr Steve Ekins
Parish Council Ward Member for Deppers Bridge

Neighbourhood Development Plan

In **1998** Harbury residents produced The Village Design Statement. It was seen as a tool to help manage long term change in the village.

In **2005** Harbury Parish Plan was published which set out where development was needed, defined design criteria and identified suitable sites for local needs housing, industry and recreation.

In **2012** there was an update to Harbury Parish Plan in order to get residents' feedback on a number of important issues. In particular, the objective was to receive residents' views on current facilities and services in Harbury, and to ensure the requirements of the village as a whole were identified.

Now in **2014** we need the support of all residents in **Harbury Parish** to prepare **Harbury Neighbourhood Development Plan** for publication in 2015.

A neighbourhood development plan is a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of our parish. It will be part of the statutory development plan for the area, if successful at referendum. This statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some other local documents, such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements.

The parish council sent a questionnaire out to households last year and the results were displayed at an open afternoon in the village hall in December 2013. A small group of volunteers now meets once a month in order to take the plan forward through approaches to businesses, farms and community groups for their views. The younger generation's opinions are particularly important if Harbury Parish is to prosper as a socially active community. With that in mind, we will have a stand at Harbury Carnival so that questions and maps can be given out. We will be encouraging as many people as possible to give their opinions via www.surveymonkey.com

Volunteers are needed and always welcomed. Please feel free to call and talk to us at the carnival.

Councillor Pat Summers
Harbury NDP Group

Parish Council Attendance Record April 2013 to March 2014 (maximum 10)

Cllr Tim Lockley, Chairman	9
Cllr Keith Thompson, Vice-chairman	9
Cllr Jenny Patrick	6
Cllr Sharon Hancock	9
Cllr Pat Summers	8
Cllr Amanda Lewis	8
Cllr Alan Knowles	9
Cllr Tony Mancell	8
Cllr Steve Ekins	9
Cllr Janet Thornley	8

Reports from Village Groups & Organisations

Harbury School PTA

Harbury School PTA received two grants from the parish council which enabled the 2013 Victorian Street Fayre to put on a fantastic array of entertainment/rides and also allowed local groups and charities to benefit from subsidised market stalls.

The first grant of £1200 was used to hire Mr Alexander (£800) who for many was the highlight of the fayre with his display of illusionary and balancing tricks and the remaining money (£400) was used to pay for the Street Trading License and subsidise the cost of renting a market stall for 15 local groups and also the PTA themselves which enabled many groups and charities to maximise their fundraising potential at the fayre. The groups benefiting from the subsidised stall fee of £10 each reported back profits of £100-£300. The second grant of £600 from Harbury Parish Council enabled fairground rides to be hired including a helter skelter, a children's carousel, a test of strength and Victorian swing rides; the grant also allowed the first two rides to be subsidised to the general public at £1 a go and we received good feedback from children who went on the rides.

The fayre attracted visitors not just from Harbury but from further afield and showed Harbury at its best with the community spirit of everyone who participated contributing to its success. It was a huge event to plan and the PTA would like to thank Harbury PC for its monetary support which allowed the event to be even bigger and better. The PTA themselves raised over £3000 from the raffle, barbeque and other PTA stalls which has added to our ambitious fundraising project to develop the outdoor space at Harbury Primary School.

Katharine Giblin Chair PTA

Harbury Village Hall

The main priority the last few years has been on improving and developing the hall. The last year has been quiet on this front but behind the scenes the fund raising has been progressing and I am confident that we will reach our target to provide a permanent stage and new changing rooms. The work we have done refurbishing the kitchen and toilets, amongst other things, has borne fruit. In the twelve months to January 2013 hiring income rose by nearly 14% whilst the hire fees remained unchanged. A very satisfactory state of affairs.

None of this happens without a lot of hard work and I must thank the members of both the management and fundraising committees. Special thanks should go to Julie Linforth our new secretary, Sue Littlewood our new treasurer and to Celia Neill the booking secretary. Their hard work is essential to the running of the hall. Thanks also to Janet Thornley and Lyn Edwards, the previous secretary and treasurer, for doing such sterling work and leaving things in good shape. Keith Thompson has also been invaluable in looking after health and safety and Chris Finch for all her support as vice chairman.

The hall is also grateful for the help and backing of many others. Namely the parish council, Lana Long and her family for their hard work running the successful village cinema, Martin Cosgriff for keeping the building clean and tidy and Flo and Tom Marsh for stepping in to Martin's shoes during his illness and to Flo for looking after the kitchen. I regularly receive compliments about the tidiness of the grass and hedges around the hall and thanks here are due to Mark Easton. Last but not least to CANA, the Darlison family, for keeping us refreshed at many events and for their generosity.

I feel I must mention the Photovoltaic panels installed with the help of a Lottery grant in 2011. Not every one's cup of tea! In 2013 the return from the so called Feed In Tariff and payment for electricity generated was very nearly double the hall's expenditure on electricity. Night storage heaters provide the hall's principal source of heat and are, to say the least, not wonderfully efficient. Thank you very much to the Lottery.

We look forward to further progress in the future.

Geoff Thorpe
Chairman of Harbury Village Hall Committee

Harbury Energy Initiative

HEI welcomed two new members to the steering group during the year: Janet Thornley, as parish council member, in October, and Derek Price in March 2014. The steering group now consists of: Bob Sherman (chair), David Bristow (vice chair), Steve Dolley (treasurer), Karen Bristow, Ted Dowdeswell, Chris Finch, Paul Quinney, Linda Ridgley, Alan Guy, Hugh Tottle and Derek Price.

Harbury Energy Day, 20th April 2013, attracted around 40 people to hear talks on energy efficiency improvements. In preparation for the event we worked with Year 5 of the school, two of us visiting the class in school to lead a session on energy saving. The children prepared a short survey and applied their enthusiasm amongst family and neighbours to return over 70 completed forms. On the day, they presented their findings and read out their Earth Poems to a rapt audience. Two leaflets were distributed to all households on the Harbury and Ladbroke News distribution list in advance, inviting people to take advantage of a prize draw for a free Green Deal assessment, funded by HEI. The guest speakers for the day were Susan Juned for Stratford District Council, Keith Budden from e.on, Bill Hawthorne, independent assessor and Paul Foulkes of the Energy Saving Cooperative.

The event started a relationship with the Energy Saving Cooperative (ESC) and home improvements were done on 3 houses with 2 more in planning. In December 2013 HEI introduced the Energy Saving Cooperative and HEI to some of the shareholder committee of Ladbroke Hall. Unfortunately ESC went into voluntary liquidation in January. Any deposits paid by householders were refunded in full.

Greenwatt Technology approached HEI in August looking for businesses in rural Warwickshire interested in applying to take part in a study of the benefits of electric vehicles to their business. Following approaches by HEI, The Bull Ring Garage and the Tawneys'

Greenfingers business put their names forward. We also referred Greenwatt to Martin Shepherd at the Fosse Garage. The Bull Ring Garage completed the trial but did not find electric vehicles suitable for their business.

Community Energy has become a focus of interest for us. We sought the help of the European Biomass Research Institute at Aston University, Birmingham, on possibilities for one or more community energy generation projects in Harbury. They subsequently produced a detailed useful report. We are now in discussions with Community Energy Warwickshire (CEW) and Farm Renewables to see if we can progress this idea.

In January 2014 we succeeded in winning £2000 from E.ON Energy Action Fund to insulate the library ceiling and produce information literature for public engagement in energy saving. Technical difficulties made it uneconomic to complete the library project but E.ON have allowed us to transfer the grant to a project at Harbury Rugby Club.

HEI negotiated two discount schemes for the village which are still current. One is for the installation of Immersun to existing PV systems and the other is for thermal image surveys by Act on Energy.

Bob Sherman
Chairman of Harbury Energy Initiative

The Heart of Harbury Games

This year will be the third bi-annual Heart of Harbury Games and takes place on 28 June 2014. Previous Games have been a great success in both providing a fun day for the whole village and raising funds for Harbury Village Hall. Circa £3,000 pounds has been raised by the previous two events. The day is not only about making profits, with over two hundred participants, engagement with the local junior and senior schools and spectators on the day a broad involvement of the community will be achieved.

The Heart of Harbury Games Committee is a diverse group of village people who are interested and willing to devote their time to put on the games. However as a group we do not hold any cash reserves and all profits generated go straight to the village hall. Therefore, the grant we have received from the parish council will provide the seed corn that will enable the event to take place. The grant will be used to cover some of the set up and advance costs such as insurance, medical support, amplified sound, medals etc.

Brian Wade
Heart of Harbury Games Committee

Tom Hauley Room

The Tom Hauley Room is an adjunct to the village church and comprises two good-sized rooms, toilets and a kitchen. It is widely used by village groups, from Bumps and Bundles for mums and toddlers, through a youth club and Duke of Edinburgh Awards group to social

meetings for all ages. It is widely used for private parties and community events, all at a very low rent. Since it was built, 25 years ago, the room has hosted over 1200 Saturday coffee mornings, raising over a quarter of a million pounds for charities.

A programme of overhaul has begun, with a complete interior redecoration by volunteers and newly fitted toilets to the highest standards for disabled use. The grant from Harbury Parish Council, together with a grant from the Harbury Society and a substantial gift from an individual, will be used to overhaul the kitchen and make it more accessible to the elderly and disabled. This work will take place in July 2014, and, together with a fitted PA system and hearing loop, will complete the refit.

The Tom Hauley Room Committee is hugely grateful for the parish council grant which, had we turned to other grant agencies, would have confirmed the commitment of the local community to this valuable facility.

John Stringer
Chairman, Tom Hauley Room Committee

Harbury Village Library

Harbury Village Library has continued to flourish in the past twelve months and both the library and café clearly continue to be highly valued by the community. The income from the café has not only enabled us to keep the lights on the temperature bearable, it has funded new initiatives and improvements such as the new railings (which were planned even before their failure prompted swift action). We have plans for the future including a new library front desk, some better bookshelves, and roof insulation. Some of this will, with luck, be funded by grants. The saga with the lease has persisted throughout the year. The parish council continues to await the final version from the solicitors for the Church Commissioners, and once this is complete they will issue us with a sub-lease. I am grateful for the forbearance of the parish council and the parochial church council who have permitted us to continue operating without a formal lease in place.

We continue to be a model community run library and have attracted attention not only from other libraries in the WCC network who want to pick our brains about best practice, but also from libraries elsewhere in the country who are facing similar changes to their service. We have demonstrated that changes in funding can actually result in an improved service.

HVL is only possible because of the hard work of all the volunteers. I wish to express thanks to the committee who ensure that both library and café operate smoothly, and to all those who give up a morning or an afternoon to provide this excellent facility for the village. After two-years as vice-chairman John Eld is standing down from the committee. I would like to express my sincere thanks for all that he has done for the library in that time.

Tim Lockley
Chairman, Harbury Village Library



Contact Your Council

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All parish councillors can be contacted via the website or by telephoning the clerk. The website can also be used to access current and previous planning applications, check on local events and download minutes and agendas.

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