

Harbury Parish Council

Annual Report 2011/12



Chairman's Report

The past year has created new challenges for the parish council. As national budgets are squeezed local councils are facing a particularly difficult time. While the parish council is not facing quite the same pressure to freeze its budget, the freezes at both district and county level are having an impact at parish level. As budgets are tightened then services currently provided are inevitably changed, and usually this has meant a reduction. The bus service has been affected with the withdrawal of subsidies meaning fewer buses in the parish, particularly in the evening. In a rural area this has a real impact on those who lack their own transport. The changes to the library service have meant that 16 libraries in Warwickshire are no longer operated by the county council.

The parish council has had to make a choice whether to step in to support those services that are being cut, and I am very pleased that there are two notable instances of this happening. Harbury is one of several parish councils that will be contributing a relatively modest sum to maintain a community links bus service for the least mobile members of the parish. The parish council also took a firm decision to support the new Harbury Village Library group in their efforts to maintain library provision in the village. The parish council has underwritten the running costs for a period of three years and is in the process of taking on the lease for the Wight School. Such commitments are not without cost, and in a period of national austerity it takes courage to raise the parish precept, but we agreed that important village services should be preserved if at all possible. The additional cost is roughly equivalent to £5 per household per year.

No doubt other similar decisions will need to be made in the next few years. The Localism Act that was passed in late 2011 has indicated that more decision making will be devolved to a local level. A new general power of 'competence' has been granted to parish councils giving us more freedom in how we spend money.

A new 'Core Strategy' is currently being debated at SDC that will determine housing in the district over the next few years. We do not yet have a clear idea of how this will affect us. The second phase of development at Bush Heath Lane looks likely to proceed over the next year which will provide a mixture of rented and market housing, but all will be for local people with a strong existing connection to the village.

Nicola Thompson, our clerk for the past nine years, moved to a new job and fresh challenges in March 2012. We thank her warmly for all her hard work for the parish council. We are very pleased to welcome our new clerk, Alison Biddle, who is very experienced and keeping us in line!

Finally, thanks to all my fellow councillors for all their dedicated efforts over the past year.

**Dr Tim Lockley
Chairman, Harbury Parish Council**

Planning Working Party Report

The Harbury website has a lot of information about planning applications and you are able to look at them from the last 6 months via the SDC web site which has a live link.

The biggest application has been for the Bush Heath Lane development. The second phase should be started and completed within the next 12 months. The parish council has had some very positive feedback from the residents of the first phase which was opened in 2011. It has been held up to be a good example of mixed housing for both rented and owner occupied. The houses have a good standard of energy efficiency which the Harbury Energy Initiative is pleased to see.

Of the 23 planning applications in the last 6 months 9 were for tree works. It should be noted that work on hedges or trees should be referred to the planning authority. The reason for this is that we try to protect all trees and hedgerows to promote and sustain our population of birds and insects. Where trees are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) we do ask - if it really is necessary to remove it - can a replacement tree be planted? It will be noted at Five Ways that the tree has had to be removed and we hope to replace that in the next planting season, likewise the one outside the village hall.

We are all asked to be the ears and eyes of the planning authority, constantly watching for unauthorised building work. Usually these come to the clerk at the parish council office who passes on any concerns to the planning department at Stratford, which looks into the matter. Anyone can speak to SDC directly or go via the district councillors. This is the best way we have to protect our local environment. Further advice is produced by the Campaign to Protect Rural England which has a web site www.planninghelp.org.uk

Some of you may know that the planning laws are in the process of changing but we will still work hard to maintain a sustainable plan for the village within the powers that we have. Our power as a parish council is one of advice and comments to the planners. We do not ourselves have the authority to allow or prevent development.

I would like to thank all those on the planning working group for their support and attendance at training sessions for "Enforcement", "Core Strategy" and "Provision for Travellers" during the course of the last year.

Jenny Patrick
Chair of Harbury Parish Council Planning Working Party

Deppers Bridge Report

In the recreation area, bird fowling of the swing seats has been overcome, by the installation of pin guards to stop birds roosting on the frames.

The old dilapidated parish notice board has been removed and now parish notices will be posted in the 'phone box. The disused phone box has had shelves installed and a supply of paperbacks, so it can also be used as a book exchange "Book in a Box" for use of the residents of Depper's Bridge.

Heavy goods vehicles using the weak railway bridge are still causing a problem; I have spoken to the manager at Tesco in Southam as some of their vehicles were using this as a short cut to the M40. If HGV vehicles are seen using the railway bridge, a note of the registrations, company name and fleet number would be helpful. We still need to record instances of all large vehicles over 7.5 tonne using the bridge. I will continue to work to get improvements to the signs warning vehicles leaving Southam and Bishops Itchington of the 7.5T weight limit.

Highfield Cottages in Station Road have been suffering with the problem of a broken sewage pipe leaking as it crosses the railway bridge. With the helpful assistance from Cllr Richard Hamburger from SDC, we have been able to get WCC and Seven Trent to work together towards a solution.

Steve Ekins
Parish Council Member for Deppers Bridge

Properties Working Party Report

The Properties Working Party is responsible for the cemetery, the recreation ground and the village greens.

Members of the working party carry out weekly inspections of the play equipment. This is in addition to the regular professional inspections. It is disappointing that occasional vandalism, dropped litter and above all dog excrement are a problem. Last summer, a brand new picnic table was damaged by fire but fortunately did not have to be replaced. Recently a litter bin was severely damaged by fire and will be very expensive to replace.

The football clubs complain that they regularly have to clean the pitches of dog mess before games can be played. It is extremely irresponsible of dog owners who take advantage of being able to exercise their dogs on our extensive playing fields and then fail to clear up their excreta. The council has provided an additional bin at the top of the field but as yet there is no improvement in this problem.

The multi-play unit in the small children's' area is showing signs of wear and tear and we are in the process of getting estimates to re-surface it and replace the rope ladder. We are also looking to put grass matting under the aerial runway to try to prevent it becoming so muddy.

Following some expert advice, a quotation has been accepted to improve the BMX track and the work should be done in the near future. We are also looking into the possibility of extending the car park in order to stop the inconvenience caused to residents of Constance Drive at busy times.

We are also responsible for the playground at Deppers Bridge and this is inspected in the same way as Harbury. Both sets of swings have been rendered unusable by accumulated bird droppings on the seats. This problem has now been solved by the installation of plastic pin guards on the frames.

The issue of unsafe memorials in the cemetery has proved difficult to resolve. Following new health and safety advice, members of the working party carried out a risk assessment in November. All stakes were removed and some memorials were laid flat. Three memorials were re-checked recently and deemed to be safe.

The parish council provides the three village notice boards. We would like to point out that these are for the use of village organisations and not for commercial advertisements. It is in order to remove these when putting up an appropriate notice.

I would like to thank the members of the Properties Working Party, namely Councillors Thompson, Ekins, Knowles, Summers and Thornley for all their willing hard work, the former Clerk, Nicola Thompson, and our new Clerk, Alison Biddle.

Sharon Hancock
Chair of Harbury Parish Council Properties Working Party

Environment Working Party Report

During 2011/2012 we have been able to contribute further to our goal of reducing Harbury's energy consumption with the targeted replacement of street lighting using LED technology. Working with Linfoot Homes, the new Bush Heath Lane development was the first in Harbury to have 100% street lighting from LED sources, with Leycester Close being a close second!

In recognising the new development we managed to join the pavement between Hereburgh Way and Manor Road and extend the 30 mph village speed limit further along Bush Heath Lane. The speed limit now aligns with the village boundary and pushes the national speed limit further away from the expansion of homes. Obviously, additional housing attracts more traffic with more pedestrians, so can I take this opportunity to ask all drivers to respect our village and villagers by ensuring they are well within the legal speed limit on entering our rural community.

This year has produced an update to the parish plan; a thank you to all the villagers who participated in the survey and a special thank you to two of the Environment Working Party, Pat Summers and Jenny Patrick, and the former parish clerk, Nicola Thompson, for the all the hard work that was associated with this update.

Harbury Energy Initiative (HEI) formally agreed its Articles of Association and the parish council was happy to sign onto these, providing a council representative on the committee. A summary of the excellent achievements and hard work that the group accomplished on behalf of the village is included elsewhere in this booklet, courtesy of the HEI Chairman, Bob Sherman.

Amanda Lewis
Chair, Harbury Parish Council Environment Working Party

Finance & General Purposes Working Party Report

First I would like to thank our previous clerk, Nicola Thompson, for all of her help and the support she has given to me and to all of the parish councillors in the last years. Nicola has moved on to a new position in a local company and we all wish her well in the future. Our new clerk is Alison Biddle, and has only been with us for just a few weeks; Alison is a very experienced parish clerk and is quickly getting to grips with our quaint Harbury ways.

The current year's precept, 2012/13 has been increased by £4369 to £71,625; this gives an increase of around £4.34 per year on a Band 'D' property within Harbury. This increase is to provide funds to support Harbury Library's running costs through the start-up period. Without this additional requirement the precept would have decreased by £643 in total.

The F&GP working party recommended to the full parish council that this increase in the parish precept would enable the parish council to fully fund its plans for the year 2012/13. A budget of this level will allow our plans to be carried out in the following areas;

- **Play Areas** – While some of the existing equipment has already been replaced and this is on-going, there are several repairs due to take place. Also work on the multi-play unit and the aerial runway is expected during the next year.
- **The Power Of Wellbeing** – We have reduced this budget for this year to £3750 and the Council intends, as in previous years, to spend these funds by targeting, not just local groups, but with priority for the local youth groups.
- **Community Buildings** – While this year we have again set aside funds to directly support the development plans for the village hall, these funds are set at £5,000. We have now included support to a similar level for the Harbury Library Group, who are setting up and running our village library.
- **Street Lighting** – The budget for street lighting is being kept the same as last year, with £4000 to cover new and replacement columns with an additional £4000 for maintenance, with the budget for electricity also being set at £4000 in anticipation of any future rises that may be imposed by our supplier, E-On.

- **Village Maintenance** - The contract for village maintenance will increase by 2% in April 2012. The contract is for three years and will finish at the end of March 2013, when we will re-negotiate it after taking in multiple quotations.

A full copy of the council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2012 is appended to this report.

The parish council office, which is open 09.00 – 12.00 four mornings a week, gives us all access to the parish council, the clerk and to minutes, reports, planning applications 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 members of the council. Current Harbury Parish planning applications can be viewed via our website, along with the information from many of the other Harbury community groups. Please note the web address: <http://www.harbury-pc.gov.uk/>

My thanks also 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 commitments throughout the past year.

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

Reports from Village Groups & Organisations

The Harbury Duke of Edinburgh Award Group

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Group in Harbury goes from strength to strength. We are part way through achieving our first group of Gold awards and we now have full groups for each level of the award, a total of over forty young people. Since receiving the grant of £660 from Harbury Parish Council we have spent the money on training our volunteers to be able to run expeditions. This has involved 2 WCC minibus driving tests, 1 First Aid in Remote Areas Course, 1 Walking Leader Training Validation course for over 600m and 1 course for under 600m. We have also been able to buy more expedition equipment for the young people. We appreciate the council's help in enriching our young people's lives and hope that through the volunteering section of the award at least the village is a better place as a result of their activities.

Nick Tawney
Harbury Duke of Edinburgh Award Group

Harbury Rugby Football Club

With a grant of £500 from the parish council plus a further £1,650 of grants and donations from other supporters and a contribution from the club's own reserves, we have erected a sizeable storage facility (18ft x 14ft) on a concrete base, which now houses all the pitch and playing equipment for the mini/junior and senior sections of the club. The photo below shows the facility.

David Andrews
Facilities Manager, Harbury RFC



Harbury Village Hall

This is the hall's Golden Jubilee year.

The hall continues to thrive and booking levels are good. The committee are grateful for the support of the parish council and the village in general.

Four years ago to satisfy the demands of a major National Lottery application two meetings were called to establish what facilities were thought appropriate for the village hall. The net result of that being, with hindsight, some rather over ambitious plans, especially in the current financial climate. The committee has now embarked on a phased modernisation of the hall which has nevertheless produced some good results and is realistic.

The management and fundraising committees have worked hard the last three years to raise approximately £200,000 pounds to improve the hall. The results of their efforts have been:

- The new toilets, disabled toilet and baby changing facility.
- The stabilisation and strengthening of the South roof, which was in danger of collapse.

- The installation of photovoltaic panels. The panels are projected to reduce the hall's electricity bill by 75%.
- New curtains.
- Replacement fire doors in the Farley Room.
- Most recently, the complete refurbishment of the kitchen.

The recent heavy rain has sadly demonstrated the inadequacy of the flat roof to the East of the hall and quotations are being sought for re-roofing.

The next major plan is to provide a permanent stage and new changing rooms. This is likely to cost in the region of £150,000. This project is now in its early stages.

Geoff Thorpe
Chairman, Harbury Village Hall Management Committee

Harbury Energy Initiative (HEI) Report

This year witnessed a considerable step forward in delivering real impact on sustainability and carbon reduction in the village. As a result of the Harbury Energy Initiative working closely with the village hall some 40 or so householders have installed photovoltaic and solar hot water panels. So much energy went into alternative energy solutions in Harbury in the year 2011/12 that the Harbury Energy Initiative has been in danger of blowing all its fuses. Having had a year to get established, constituted, linked into the parish council agenda and with a clear purpose, HEI was still unprepared for the burst of activity stimulated by entering the Energyshare launch. With village support, some mad campaigning and a ragged introduction to social media communication, we made it through two selection processes to be in the last 6 in our category of an original 900 groups. We have every reason to be proud of this record, even if we did not come away with the big prize of £100,000 that we sought.

At the same time we encouraged and supported the village school children to prepare, distribute and analyse a village wide study of sustainable behaviour in Harbury. This study was a major focus of our October event 'Green Memories, Green Future', collaboration with the school that celebrated the past and looked to a greener future. Around 200 people attended the day, which was opened by our MP, Jeremy Wright.

In December, the Department of Energy and Climate Change announced a bidding round for communities to apply for funding to prepare householders for the Green Deal to be introduced in October 2012. We were awarded a grant of £47,000. With a very short time to prepare and extremely tight deadlines to deliver, we:

- Worked with the company Blue Sky to identify houses that could benefit from solar panels
- Assessed and reported on 4 community buildings for potential energy saving improvements and generation opportunities

- Looked at 5 different types of home in the village to see how efficient they are and what cost reductions could be achieved, based on the now obligatory Energy Performance Certificate formula.
- Completed the internal insulation of the Wight School to make it fit to be our village library and internet cafe with the eventual aim of cutting running costs massively.
- Planned and delivered the 'Green £uture Green Deal' event for the community to learn about ways to afford carbon reduction and cost savings in heating and powering the home.
- Produced new banners and literature for publicising HEI activities
- Provided boards to explain the benefits of the work done in the village hall and Wight School. The village hall was provided with a special digital display to give real time readings of energy generated by the solar panels

We look forward to delivering more impact on carbon levels in Harbury in 2012/13.

Bob Sherman
Chair, Harbury Energy Initiative

Contact Your Council

Clerk to Harbury Parish Council:
Alison Biddle MILCM
2, Bull Ring Business Centre
Church Terrace
Harbury
Leamington Spa
CV33 9HL

Office opening hours: 9.00am to 12.00pm Monday – Thursday

Telephone: 01926 614646

Email: clerk@harbury-pc.gov.uk

Website: www.harbury-pc.gov.uk

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

Parish Council Attendance April 2011 to March 2012 (maximum 10)

Cllr Tim Lockley, Chairman	10
Cllr Keith Thompson, Vice-chairman	9
Cllr Jenny Patrick	10
Cllr Sharon Hancock	7
Cllr Pat Summers	8
Cllr Amanda Lewis	9
Cllr Alan Knowles	10
Cllr Tony Mancell	9
Cllr Steve Ekins	8
Cllr Janet Thornley	8

HARBURY PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012

Year Ended 31/03/11

Year Ended 31/03/12

GENERAL PARISH FUND

£	<u>Income</u>	£
66,252.00	Precepts	67,256.00
137.30	Interest received	96.70
875.00	Allotment rents	890.00
1,215.46	Burial ground fees	2,725.00
200.00	Playing field hire	200.00
33.96	Wayleave	34.08
1,251.20	Grass verge contribution - SDC	695.11
11,000.00	Grant funding	2,411.23
50.00	Sale of computer	-
310.00	Contribution from sports club	120.00
-	Insurance claims	2,220.00
-	Other contributions	12.00

81,324.92

TOTAL INCOME

76,660.12

Expenditure

16,052.08	General administration	15,822.50
236.80	Training	110.00
1,054.00	Purchase of office equipment	265.20
3,835.85	Parish office	3,670.69
8,465.00	Power of wellbeing	1,735.00
5,000.00	Contribution to village hall	5,500.00
45.00	Concessionary travel	-
-	Parish plan update	2,305.00
Running costs:		
865.35	Allotments	550.95
2,194.06	Burial	2,381.47
4,354.07	Open spaces	4,204.60
9,953.20	Playing fields & car park	13,376.14
9,458.00	Resurfacing basket ball court/tennis court works	2,300.00
1,605.00	Non-estate roads	1,499.40
13,275.97	Street lighting	5,541.80
4,347.50	BMX track	1,250.00
575.72	Purchase of village assets	250.00
1,870.00	Contribution to sports club fund	1,870.00
1,756.14	Councillors allowances	1,750.00

84,943.74

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

64,382.75

- 3,618.82

SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR YEAR

12,277.37

HARBURY PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012

SPECIFIC FUNDS		
Year Ended 31/03/2011		Year Ended 31/03/2012
£		£
	Tennis & Netball Court Repairs	
	Income	
37.56	Interest received	53.85
1,870.00	Contributions from parish council	1,750.00
3,740.00	Contributions from sports clubs	3,860.00
- 310.00	Less payment	- 1,746.00
<hr/> 5,337.56	TOTAL INCOME	<hr/> 3,917.85

Harbury Parish Council
Financial Statements Year Ended 31 March 2012
Supporting Statement

1. Debtors

Debts Outstanding at 31 March 2012

At the year end a total of £2590.69 was outstanding and due to the parish council. This debt relates to VAT paid and will be re-imbursed during the next financial year.

Payments in Advance	£
Two months of insurance premiums	375.44

2. Creditors

These are made up of:

Allowance for audit fee	500.00
Allowance for street lighting electricity	327.98
Tennis court works	2,300.00

Payments made in advance to the parish council

Allotment rents	440.00
Total	3567.98

3. Power of Wellbeing

This power replaces Sec.137 and allows councils to spend an unlimited amount (subject to budget) on any item provided that it is considered to be "likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area and providing the proposed action is not prohibited by other legislation".

The relevant payments are:

Payee	Nature of Payment	£
Heart of Harbury Games	Grant	500.00
Harbury RFC	Grant	500.00
Royal British Legion	Grant	75.00
Harbury Duke Of Edinburgh	Grant	660.00
Total		1,735.00

Harbury Parish Council
Financial Statements Year Ended 31 March 2012

Funds Statement

Year Ended 31.03.2011		Year Ended 31.03.2012
£		£
47,273.91	General Fund	43,655.09
- 3,618.82	Balance at 1 April	12,277.37
47,273.91	Add surplus/less deficit for year	
	Balance at 31 March	55,932.46
	Tennis & Netball Courts Fund	
18,386.47	Balance at 1 April	23,724.03
5,610.00	Add payment into account	5,610.00
37.56	Add interest for year	53.85
- 310.00	Less payment out of account	1,746.00
23,724.03	Balance at 31 March	27,641.88

Asset Register

As of 31 March 2012, the assets belonging to the parish council can be summarized as follows:

	£
Community & land assets with a nominal value	14.00
Office equipment	3,459.01
Street furniture (including street lights)	122,068.02
Cemetery - land and chapel of rest	28,500.00
Play equipment	90,071.32
Tennis & netball courts	17,680.00
Total	261,792.35

Harbury Parish Council
Financial Statements Year Ended 31 March 2012

Balance sheet as at 31 March 2012

Year ended 31.03.2011		Year ended 31.03.2012	
£		£	
333.43		Payments in advance	375.44
1,833.06		VAT Debtor	2,590.69
-		Other debtors	-
100.00		Cash with clerk to the council	100.00
82,609.78		Cash at bank	84,076.19
84,876.27			87,142.32
 Less current liabilities			
-	17,497.15	Creditors	3,567.98
67,379.12		Total Net Assets	83,574.34
47,273.91		General fund balance b/f	43,655.09
-	3,618.82	Less deficit/plus surplus	12,277.37
43,655.09		Balance 31.03.2012	55,932.46
23,724.03		Specific funds:	
		Tennis & Netball Courts Fund	27,641.88
67,379.12			83,574.34

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31 March 2012 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

These financial statements were approved by Harbury Parish Council on 27 June 2012 and are subject to audit.