

# Shillington Parish Council

## Annual Report 2017/2018

### Chair's report

This is our ninth published annual report and gives me the opportunity to review parish activities over the last twelve months.

Progress on the new community building and proposed development to the rear of the Village Hall has been frustratingly slow over the last couple of years and now that planning permission has been granted, albeit with several conditions/S106 negotiations/legal requirements still to be agreed/fulfilled between the developers/solicitors and CBC, things should hopefully start to get moving shortly.

Discussions are currently ongoing with the Charity Commission and our solicitors regarding the dissolution of the two existing charities (Village Hall and Playing Fields) and merging both into one new charity. A few of us have been sitting on these two committees over many years and are looking forward to making room for new trustees once this project is finally completed. Interestingly my grandfather Reg Collins (landlord of The Crown for 30 years until 1961 when he retired) was an original trustee on the Playing Fields Committee in 1947.

Although we are consulted on planning applications and provide valid, relevant, local comments and also take into account any received through the good offices of the Village Design Association, it is frustrating to see applications which don't fit receiving approval by the CBC Planning Committee. Several of which have impacted on surrounding properties and spoil the existing street scene. Unfortunately, this is no longer a planning consideration.

We were saddened to hear of the demise of the Noah's Ark – an historic village pub run by Mike and Julie for 23 years. This should have remained as a village pub and was well supported by locals, but unfortunately developers have now taken it over, built two houses where the petanque court used to be and there is planning permission granted for two more on the same site. A very tight squeeze we thought when we made our objections and obviously gardens are no longer a consideration. The pub was scheduled to be converted into a dwelling, but latest talk is that the developers have found it to be unsafe now they've started to work on it – we'll see how this unfolds.

We are currently looking at getting both The Crown and Musgrave Arms listed as assets of community value with CBC. We're not sure how much protection this will give to prevent any further closures by the breweries, but hopefully may help.

Work is moving apace now on the "Hanscombe Meadow" development of 15 houses opposite Chalkley Bush – bit of a tight squeeze we thought when we objected to it but this apparently is the standard number for a development of this size. Not much room for gardening and hopefully some of the new residents won't mind being so close to the highway.

To get any sort of improvement to our village facilities, new building schemes have to be considered to gain any monies for such works.

This was the reasoning for the development behind the Village Hall to get our new community building and other community benefits on the back of it. The CBC Local Plan called for more building sites to be made around Bedfordshire and following consultations, we have got away lightly compared to neighbouring parishes like Stondon and Meppershall, with the only site found to be acceptable being the field on the right just past Dawes Garage.

On the community safety front there are many scams to be aware of. Ranging from unsolicited phone calls offering all sorts of services and expecting residents to give out various passwords, bank account details, etc., or cold callers trying to sell you something on the doorstep. Please be very alert as to who is asking you for what and do not pass on any information that will leave you exposed. Don't answer the door if you have any doubt who is knocking. Consider joining a local 'NEIGHBOURHOOD /FARM WATCH' scheme in your area. Be neighbourly and look out for each other. Thefts from Sheds/Garages/Vans are high on the neighbourhood alert e-mails and our crime statistics. Please follow any guidance to help secure your property.

We are currently looking at SPEEDWATCH due to so many complaints about speeding traffic and the lack of available police to carry out speed checks. So far we have four residents who have come forward with a couple more expressing interest. We have discovered that there is only one SID unit available (Speed Indicator Device), which is shared across the county and neighbouring parishes take turns in its usage. We will see if this is something that lottery funding might cover for another unit.

We are very fortunate to have two local shops offering a wealth of services including post office, news agency, fresh bread and snacks and cleaning. We are also lucky enough to have 3 pubs/restaurants (The Crown, The Musgrave Arms and The Live & Let Live) offering a variety of menus and a social club manned by a team of volunteers. We have two local garages, still in family ownership, offering not only fuel but car sales; our historic Church on the hill and the Congregational further down; lovely village school and under fives/ baby & toddler groups – supporting the development of our village children. All of these need your support to ensure their sustainability.

We have a number of village groups offering fitness, interest and wellbeing. All count on your support so they can continue. Hopefully you will use them to the greatest benefit. Thanks to all those making the commitment to provide these services.

Mrs. Karen Cousins, our former Clerk left us in September after nearly 22 years of loyal service. We were pleased to welcome new Clerk Mrs. Helen Smith from 1<sup>st</sup> October, who is settling into her new role.

And finally... grateful thanks to fellow Councillors for their continued support and diligence.



Chair Person

## Introduction

This Report describes the main achievements of Shillington Parish Council during the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. It also gives details about the services provided by the Council.

## About the Parish

The parish of Shillington includes the communities of Shillington, Pegsdon and Higham Gobion. Located at the north east end of the Chiltern Hills, part of the parish lies within an area of outstanding natural beauty. The parish is located in Bedfordshire although it has a Stevenage postcode and uses a Hertfordshire postal address. It is a parish with a history. People have lived at Shillington for over 1000 years and during that time it has been sustained by farming, sheep, straw and fertiliser. As in all parishes, change has always, and still is occurring. Farming has diversified within the parish, horses having become a leisure feature and new small home-based businesses and enterprises have started up. The parish is still very much alive and has maintained a character of its own.

The parish has a population of 1,842 (2011 population estimate, published by the Office for National Statistics).

## Shillington Parish Council

The Council's address is: 11 Hillside Close, Shillington, Near Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3NN.

Tel: 01462 713224  
Fax: 01462 713224  
Email: [clerk.shillingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:clerk.shillingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com)  
Web: <http://shillington.bedsparishes.gov.uk>

Shillington Parish Council was created under the Local Government Act of 1894. In 1964 it was divided into two wards and thereafter known as Shillington and Stondon Parish Council. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1985 Shillington and Stondon were divided and became separate Parish Councils.

## The Council and its Committees

The full Council oversees all the activities of the Council.

The Council meets at 7.45 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Shillington Congregational Church. Additional meetings are held when necessary. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. During 201/18 the council met on 13 occasions and the finance committee met once.

As well as fulfilling the requirements for regular meetings, councillors received invitations to attend a number of other meetings and events representing the residents of Shillington parish including those organized by the Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Police and other partner organisations.

When necessary Councillors and the Clerk attend appropriate training courses to familiarise themselves with new legislation, planning procedures, etc.

## Parish Councillors

Shillington's ten parish councillors were all elected on 7 May 2015 and will remain in office for a period of 4 years, the next election being in May 2019. The Parish Council operates under a strict code of conduct which all councillors must abide by. Councillors during 2017/18 were:

Councillor John Clark (Tel No: 01462 711446)  
Hillside, Hillfoot Road, Shillington

Councillor Tracey Forsyth  
Contact via the Clerk to the Council

Councillor Alison Graham (Tel No: 01462 713543)  
21 Church Street, Shillington

Councillor Tony Howells (Tel No: 01582 881611)  
Chapel Cottage, Pegsdon Way, Pegsdon

Councillor Ben Jepps (Tel No 01462 711430)  
Clawders Hill Farm, 6 Upton End Road, Shillington

Councillor Angus McCormick (Tel No 01462 712096)  
Meadow House, 1 Bells Close, Shillington

Councillor David Mott (Tel No: 01462 711222)  
Pump Farm Lodge, 141 High Road, Shillington

Councillor David Simkins (Tel No: 01462 711209)  
Rose Hill Farm, Shillington

Councillor Sally Stapleton (Tel No: 07711 504489)  
26A Apsley End Road, Shillington

Councillor Derek Turner (Tel No: 01462 712462)  
54 Bury Road, Shillington

## Offices

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the council are elected annually in May. During 2017/18 the following Councillors held office:

Chair: Cllr. Sally Stapleton  
Vice-Chair: Cllr John Clark

The Chair of the Council receives an annual allowance to cover expenses incurred whilst carrying out her duties (currently £200) but other councillors do not receive any payment or allowance for attending meetings or for carrying out any Council business.

## Staff

The Clerk to the Council is employed on a part time basis working 42.5 hours per month. On the retirement of Mrs. Karen Cousins after more than 20 years of service in September, we appointed our new Clerk Mrs. Helen Smith, who joined us on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017.

## Council Facilities

The Parish Council is custodian trustee of Shillington Memorial Playing Field although the day to day management of the facility is the responsibility of a management committee. The Parish Council owns the neighbouring field known as Horns Pasture which was purchased in 2003. The Parish Council also maintains the Village Green and is sole trustee of the War Memorial and the car park opposite All Saints Parish Church.

The Council provides and maintains street lighting in some areas of the parish (Central Bedfordshire Council being responsible for the remaining lighting) as well as road side seating and bus shelters.

## Planning

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications. As such it is entitled to comment upon all the applications which fall within the parish. During the year those comments were passed to Central Bedfordshire Council who took them into account when reaching planning decisions.

The Parish Council was consulted on 53 new or revised applications, or planning appeals relating to properties within the parish during the year. Despite the relaxation of planning laws and regulations in recent years which means that planning permission is no longer needed for certain types of work, this was a slight decrease (8%) on the total number of applications consulted on during the previous year.

The majority of the applications considered by the parish council during the year were for residential extensions. Although there were a number of applications received for the erection of new dwellings and the change of use of redundant agricultural buildings, etc to dwellings. The parish council also saw an increase in the number of applications for works to trees in the conservation area.

During the year Central Bedfordshire Council approved the reserved matters for the development of 15 new dwellings on land between 30 & 48 Hanscombe End Road which had been granted in outline in 2016. Construction has now commenced on site.

The development of 9 new dwellings on the site of the garages off Greenfields was completed during the year and has been named Jepps Close.

The Noah's Ark public house was sold to a developer in 2017 resulting in its closure. An application was then approved for the conversion of the pub into a dwelling and for a further two houses to be built on the car park.

Following the refusal of an application for a development of 41 dwellings on Thomas' Meadow in November 2016, an amended application was submitted this year for 35 dwellings. This was also rejected.

Central Bedfordshire Council's launched a pre-submission consultation on the Local Plan in January 2018 with the intention of submitting it to the Planning Inspector by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. However, an announcement in March by the Government regarding changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reduced the urgent need for submission of the plan and Central Bedfordshire Council now expects to submit it to the Planning Inspector by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The purpose of the Local Plan is to protect Central Bedfordshire communities against speculative development and ensure that growth is delivered in the right place and is of the right character and quality. It also ensures that the supporting roads, schools and services such as health, as well as retail, leisure and community facilities are provided.

## Promoting Shillington

Shillington parish is a thriving parish with a great sense of community and is fortunate to have residents who give willingly of their time and energy. The Parish Council web site (<http://shillington.bedsparishes.gov.uk>) provides important information to residents and visitors to the parish and the Shillington village website (<http://www.shillington.org.uk>) is also seen as a valuable resource.

A Village Welcome Pack is available to all new residents on request or can be viewed online on the Shillington village website.

The Parish Council regularly contributes to the bi-monthly 'Parish News' magazine which is distributed free of charge to every house in the parish.

Residents can also sign up to the 'Parish Email Service' so that they can be kept informed of matters affecting the parish such as road closures, warnings about criminal activity in the area, local services affected by adverse weather conditions, etc. Any resident wishing to be part of this service can sign up by emailing [clerk.shillingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:clerk.shillingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com) and including 'Parish Email Service' in the subject line.

A parish council Facebook page was established this year to enable important information to be shared with residents.

### The Civic Function

The Council has continued to play an important Civic role. The Remembrance Sunday service was held on 12 November at The Congregational Church followed by the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial. The event was very well attended by residents as well as several serving members of the armed forces.

### Highways, Traffic and Transport

Central Bedfordshire Council is the Highways Authority responsible for highways matters but the Parish Council takes an active interest in traffic issues advising Bedfordshire Highways of matters of local concern. During the year the Parish Council has raised numerous issues with the Bedfordshire Highways including road safety and maintenance issues.

The Parish Council been made aware of a number of locations of concern in village due to unsafe parking (e.g. on bends and close to junctions) and pavement parking (cars with two wheels on the footpath which forces pedestrians to walk in the road to pass the vehicle). Further consideration will be given next year as to whether waiting restrictions are needed to alleviate these issues. Speeding has also been a topic of discussion at meetings and the Parish Council is in the process of setting up a Community SpeedWatch with volunteers from the village.

### Achievements during the year

Much work has gone into making good the main grass verge coming into High Road where the drainage board dumped all the spoil when dredging the stream. A team of volunteers kindly cleared the rubbish buried within it. Our contractors have done a good job to restore it with rolling and grass seed to make this approach into the village look much more pleasing.

### How your money is spent.

Each December, the Parish Council sets a budget for the next financial year. For 2017/18 £35,935 was raised by a precept to meet the budgeted expenditure. The Tax base for the year was 815 with band D equivalent properties paying £44.09 to the Parish Council's expenditure. This represented a reduction of 0.13% per dwelling on the previous year

### Grants and donations

Organisations benefiting from donations made by the Parish Council this year included Shillington Village Hall, All Saints Church, Whitbread Wanderbus, Mid Beds Link-a-Ride, The Wildlife Trust, The Chilterns Conservation Board, Mid Beds Citizens Advice Bureau and Autism Bedfordshire.

Village non-profit making organisations are reminded that the parish council has a grant awarding policy and grant application forms are available on request from the Clerk to the Council.

### Summary of the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

A summary of the draft accounts for 2017/18 is opposite.

The Parish Council opened the year with a balance of £93,883 and closed with £102,314 of which £10,602 are restricted funds. The major receipt was the precept which is the local charge on the Council Tax.

<b>RECEIPTS</b>	
Annual Precept	35,935
Parish News	1410
Bank Interest	432
VAT reclaimed	2,641
Rental Income	750
Other Income	650
	<b>41,818</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>	
Staff	8,158
Chairman's Allowance	200
Administrative expenses	4,091
Donations	2120
Upkeep of roadside verges	4,748
Street lighting	4,074
Upkeep of Bus Shelters	84
Seat Maintenance & Purchases	175
Playing Field expenses (inc Play Area)	1,690
Horns Pasture expenses	1,149
Litter Picking	1,404
War Memorial expenses	0
Village Green expenses	0
Tree Works	180
Community Defibrillator costs	175
Printing Parish News	2,237
VAT on payments (to reclaim)	2,902
	<b>33,387</b>

### Comments

The Council welcomes views from residents and people working within the parish on any aspect of life in the parish. Please contact your Councillor or the Clerk to the Council at:

11 Hillside Close, Shillington, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3NN.  
Tel/Fax: 01462 713224  
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