



Finchampstead Parish Council News

Autumn 2005

This publication is FREE

Hello, I'm Roland Cundy, Chairman of Finchampstead Parish Council. Welcome to our new style newsletter. The Parish team work very hard throughout the year to make Finchampstead a place to be proud to live in. You will see that we have sponsored many activities within the Parish that have a major impact on the environment, litter, road safety, footpaths, planning and other amenities. Please take time to read the articles and let us know your views as we value them.

Thank you.



FINCHAMPSTEAD DESIGN STATEMENT

Finchampstead is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, which was a national survey of property in England. Now, we are going to produce a modern version - the Finchampstead Design Statement of the whole parish.

The project has been started by a group of people from the Finchampstead Society, the Parish Council, other local organisations/businesses and individuals. It is being headed by Sydney Paulden, who is also Chairman of the Finchampstead Society. The Group is now 50 strong and has been split into 7 groups covering sections of the parish.

The design statement will reflect the views of the residents regarding the nature of the housing, public buildings, shopping, parking, public spaces, roads and traffic, the landscape and the flora and fauna.

A Design Statement is unlike any other planning document. It gives planning advice directly applicable to the statutory planning system and is entirely community produced and based. Once adopted by Wokingham District Council it will assist in reaching appropriate planning decisions. For further information, visit www.welivehere.org.uk or call the Parish Office on 0118 932 8256.

CALIFORNIA SUCCESS

In recent years Wokingham District Council has spent considerable sums at California Country Park and we in the Parish Council have supported them by

making generous annual contributions towards the running costs. The paddling pool has been refurbished; elevated walkways have been constructed through the bog area, footpaths generally improved and a café with toilet facilities built. There are some lovely walks around the lake.

The paddling pool was hugely popular in the summer, so much so that the car parks were full with cars parked along Nine Mile Ride. This year admission to the pool was free and

the car park is only £1.

The Scouts have a hut in California. It is located behind an earth bund in a wooded area and access is by footpath. Neither the path nor the car park has the benefit of lighting.

So, together with your District Councillors and Wokingham DC we are looking at building an extension to the café, perhaps in a courtyard design, to accommodate the Scouts and other groups such as schools, mother and toddler groups and local companies who may wish to use the new facility. As ever, funding will be a big issue and if there are any generous benefactors out there.....

Anyway, watch this space!



FOOTPATHS

Finchampstead is fortunate in having an extensive network of long established, well maintained and clearly signed Public Footpaths and Bridleways extending throughout the Parish. Some pass through unspoilt countryside with far reaching views, others cross National Trust land or run beside lakes and rivers. The Parish Council employs a part-time Footpath Warden, John Alexander, who keeps the paths clear of overgrowth and obstructions.



To facilitate access, Footpaths Chairman Wally Chapman said that "most stiles have now been replaced by kissing gates". A free colour map detailing all the Finchampstead Public Rights of Way is available from the Parish office should you wish to explore some new routes.

To encourage residents who are unfamiliar with our rural path network, some informal guided walks are planned. Please contact the Parish Office for further details.

ROADS & ROAD SAFETY

In response to local demand, the Parish Council campaigns to persuade WDC to address local road safety issues. Recent successes have included:

- Reviewing and where appropriate reducing certain speed limits, including Nine Mile Ride (western section), Sandhurst Road and Barkham Ride - all in response to overwhelming resident demands.
- Improved directional signing (particularly for Hogwood Industrial Estate).
- Additional safety signs and road markings, including additional chevrons on the two dangerous bends at each end of The Ridges and white-lining of the road edges on Jubilee Hill.
- Completion of Safer Routes to School Schemes at both Gorse Ride and Nine Mile Ride schools with Finchampstead C of E Primary scheduled for 2006.



Roads & Road Safety Chairman Ian Milne said "the Parish Council is currently working with residents of five roads in Finchampstead to get current 50 and 60 mph limits reduced to more appropriate levels, because of traffic volumes, road alignment, past accident record and danger to other road users". Additionally the Parish Council will be involved with WDC in reviewing whether California crossroads junction can be improved.

YOUTH FACILITIES IN FINCHAMPSTEAD

The Parish Council is very concerned at the limited facilities in the Parish for after school activities. Full praise goes to those running the Village Youth Project and karate classes at the Gorse Ride Community Centre, to the Finch Kidz Group and the netball section at the Memorial Hall, and particularly to the organisers of the football teams at the Rides.



However, we lack a centre with regular organised facilities such as exists elsewhere in Wokingham. The District Youth Service blames limited finances for this deficiency but the Parish Council does not accept this and believes that resources can be found. A scheme making greater use of the Rides Community Centre is being progressed, and more recently a Gorse Ride residents group has been formed with similar objectives and we need to ensure a co-ordinated scheme evolves. All ideas and suggestions are welcome and should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

PARISH RATES

Your WDC Council Tax bill includes the Parish Rates of just over £17 per annum for the average household. Finance Chairman Eric Cox stated "this is the 5th lowest (precept) of the 17 parish councils in the Wokingham District".

This money covers:

- environmental enhancement including footpath and litter wardens
- donations to local charities
- grants to local schools, churches, community halls, recreation areas etc.
- transport facilities for the elderly
- parish administration

Value for money is uppermost in all decisions and expenditure by the Parish Council.

NEW STREET MAP!

Every household should have already received their free copy of the new Finchampstead street map. Those who have not received their copy should call the Parish Office.

Additional copies are also available for 50p.



WHAT IS THE PARISH COUNCIL; AND WHAT IS IT NOT?

Parish Councils were established in England in 1894. Before that, the Parish Church would have been responsible for certain administration within the Parish, but nowadays there is no connection between the Church and the Parish Council, (writers of "The Vicar of Dibley" please note!). With the benefit of hindsight, it may have been less confusing if, in 1894, the newly created Parish

Councils had been given a different name.

The Parish Council is the first tier of Local Government, is made up of local people and is well placed to understand the needs of the community it serves. Although it has limited powers, the Parish Council is consulted by the District Council about planning matters, is responsible for its footpaths, and is able to bring to the attention of the District Council the concerns of its parishioners.

Finchampstead is a large parish with some 12,000 residents and has 17 councillors on the Parish Council. The Council is organised into committees, and has a Main Council meeting once a month, alternating between California Ratepayers Hall and Finchampstead Memorial Hall. All meetings are open to the public and we welcome input of any sort from our parishioners. If you can't get to a meeting, then speak to any of your Councillors, or the Clerk, who can raise the issue on your behalf.

LIBRARY

Amenities Chairman Geoff Markham said "Last year the Parish Council persuaded Wokingham DC to provide a container library to be situated in the California Ratepayers Hall car park on Wednesdays and Thursdays".

The library has been a tremendous success, so please keep using the library and ask your friends and neighbours to do so, as we need to make a strong case to Wokingham District Council to justify the expense of keeping it for the future.



TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS



The siting of telecommunication masts continues to be a major concern to local residents. While we all value the convenience of our mobile phones, very few of us would welcome a mast near our house or our children's school. We have found that the best way of expressing a community's anxieties about a proposed new location or the enlargement of an existing mast is for the local residents to raise a petition against the proposal and to involve their local Councillor so that the District Council can be made aware of the opposition. This has been a successful strategy in the past as proved when a recent O2 application for the erection of a telecommunications mast near California Ratepayers Hall was met with a petition objecting to the application. This was organised by the Parish Council, and signed by over 400 residents within a week. Lauraine Newcombe, Chairman of the Planning Committee said that she "was sure petitions will continue to be a strategy for the future".

TAKE PRIDE IN FINCHAMPSTEAD

In 2004 we in the Parish Council decided we were dismayed with the amount of litter being strewn around, so Roger Long joined us as part time litter warden. Roger has collected bag upon bag of rubbish from the roads, and heaven knows what Finchampstead would have looked like without him. So, we ask you to take pride in Finchampstead. This is our initiative to make Finchampstead an even cleaner and more pleasant place to live.



How can I help?

Here are a few examples:

Don't drop litter – bin it. Don't be too proud to dispose of other's litter.

Use the skips provided – the dates of these are on our website at www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/sitestimes.htm, on the notice boards and in the Parish Magazine.

Use the dog bins provided and clean up after your dog!

Keep pavements and verges clear – be considerate with signs, and trim trees and hedges.

Recycle whenever you can and join Wokingham Council's recycling scheme. On a recent visit to the recycling site at Beenham to see what really happens to the contents of the black boxes we saw air blowers separating

light paper from cardboard, next the waste was hand checked on a conveyor and finally compressed into bales for reuse. Similar techniques are used for plastics and green waste is composted. It takes just 12 weeks for huge pods of shredded waste to turn to compost. Remember that recycling saves money as well as being environmentally friendly as it is costly to dump waste in landfill sites and we are running out of local sites.

BE PROUD OF YOUR PARISH AND SUPPORT THE INITIATIVE

TEN £25 PRIZE DRAWS TO BE WON!

We are interested in your views and ask you to complete a short survey. It's open to anyone (any age) who lives or works in Finchampstead. We would encourage as many people as possible to respond because it's not just the comments that matter, which will help us with planning for the future, but the numbers of people that respond.

Write as little or as much as you want.

- Q1. What do you like about Finchampstead?
- Q2. What do you dislike about Finchampstead?
- Q3. What would you like to improve or change in Finchampstead?
- Q4. What would you resist happening in Finchampstead?
- Q5. Tell us whether you live or work (or both) in Finchampstead?
- Q6. Your age or age range (<16, 16-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-65, 66-75, 76+)?



If you would like to take part in the prize draw please let us have your completed surveys together with your name, address and or telephone number. These details will remain confidential. If you are responding in writing, please do so to the Parish Office. Alternatively, forms and email instructions are available at our website www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/survey.htm

The deadline for entry is the 30th November, 2005. The prize draw will be made before the end of December and we will summarise the overall findings which will be published early in 2006.

DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

Kiln Ride is so-named because of all the old brickworks sited in that area. The remains of the old rail tracks that took the bricks to the main railway line can still be seen in a few places.

SCHOOL

Local residents will have seen that there has been a lot of excitement in the local press over the possibility of Emmbrook School being re-located to the Finchampstead area. While the Parish Council has no information about its possible siting, we are very aware that if this does occur then we must ensure that the opportunity is seized to make this a school which could be used by the community as a whole. Providing we achieve the necessary infrastructure this will result in the much needed facilities required by Finchampstead.



PLANNING MATTERS

The Planning Committee meets every three weeks (dates are advertised on the notice boards and on the website - meetings are always open to the public) and carefully studies all planning applications - in the last year these totalled over 260. We are keen to ensure that any new development does not breach the existing building line in any particular area, thus changing the street scene, as well as being concerned that no new buildings should result in the overdevelopment of a site; for instance where one house is demolished and, on a largish plot of land, maybe six new houses - or increasingly, in these days of higher densities, a block of flats - is proposed in its place, we would seek to ensure that, again, the existing street scene ambience is maintained.

When local residents have strong views on a new proposal, we ask that they should copy to us their letters to the District Council so that we can take these views into account during our deliberations. While the Parish Council does not make the decision on planning applications (this is done by the District Council), they do take our recommendations into account, and therefore we are most anxious to have residents' views so we can make a considered comment.

OPENING TIMES

The Parish Council office is open each weekday morning from 10.00-12.00.

Parish Office
Memorial Hall
The Village
Finchampstead
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RG40 4JU

The Clerk: Mrs Jane Holloway
Assistant to the Clerk : Mrs Anna Kent
Telephone: 0118 932 8256
Email : clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

Visit us online at:

www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

where you can find out more about Finchampstead, its history, the Parish Council and what it does, schedule & minutes of meetings, pictures old and new and many other items of local interest.