



About the Parish Council

Parish Councils are statutory bodies and are the first tier of local government, at the heart of the community. Finchampstead Parish Council is made up of 17 Councillors, supported by the Clerk and the Planning Committee Clerk. The Council also employs a Footpath Warden and two Litter Wardens, all working part time. The Parish Councillors are all volunteers, and the Council is not political.

Our activities fall into 3 main areas; representing the local community, working with partners to deliver services and provide facilities to meet local needs, and striving to improve the quality of life and community well being. We try and work with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) wherever possible to bring benefits to the Finchampstead community, but are not accountable to the Borough Council in any way.

The Council meets monthly and has five committees which meet regularly, covering Amenities, Finance & General Management, Planning, Rights of Way, and Roads & Road Safety. We have several Working Groups dealing with specific projects or activities and the Council also has representatives on a number of organisations from the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership to the FBC Advisory Board and the Gorse Ride Steering Group. Members of the public are always welcome to attend our Council and Committee meetings.

For more details please visit our website www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

Chairman's report

This has been a year like no other but we have continued to work on your behalf to protect the character of the Parish and to ensure it remains a great place to live and work. Some of our activities and plans have been put on hold due to the pandemic, but others have moved forward.

We may not be responsible for the implementation of the larger projects in the Parish, but this does not mean that we cannot influence these. We are involved with the regeneration of the Gorse Ride Community, the large developments at Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park, and improvements to the California Country Park as well as other projects.

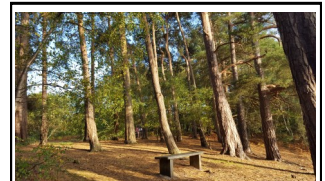
This year we have continued to work to improve our communications with residents. We continue to work closely with WBC and local organisations. Through working together we can make best use of resources to help maintain services and facilities for our residents. This report summarises our work over the last year and some of our plans for the coming year. **Simon Weeks, Chairman.**

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Finchampstead Future, an independent voluntary group working with the Parish Council, is producing the Finchampstead NDP. Once the Plan has navigated a process of external examination and has been voted for by the people of Finchampstead in a referendum, the Plan will play an important part in guiding future planning decisions affecting development and conservation in our Parish.

The draft NDP has been developed using the findings from a public consultation in 2019 to which over a thousand local people responded. The group has also worked with Wokingham Borough Council, as its Local Plan update develops, to make sure that there is a common understanding with the Council on the future of Finchampstead and the best way to protect ourselves from speculative development.

The draft NDP includes policies to help meet the growing need for homes while protecting the semi rural character of our community. The first formal public consultation on the draft Plan took place in February to March 2021. Responses will be taken into account and there will be a further opportunity to comment before the Plan is submitted for independent examination.



We work to protect the character of our lovely Parish



Finance & General Management

Communications

We continue to develop our website so that it is a good source of useful local information.

For regular updates on our work you can sign up for our monthly e newsletters

www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

This Committee is responsible for preparing and monitoring the annual budget and setting the precept - the amount collected from residents by Wokingham Borough Council as part of the Council Tax. In 2020/21 our precept was £162,600 and our budgeted expenditure was £172,800. The balance was met from income. Our budget and External Audit are published on our website.

The Committee also leads on the overall management and direction of the Parish Council including plans, policies and procedures. Our Human Resources and Risk Management Sub Committees together with Working Groups covering Communications and Consultation, Climate Change and Finchampstead Emergency Response each report to the Committee.

Grants and donations

This year we have awarded over £37,000 to organisations providing support or services to our residents. Our largest donations are for the youth activity programme run through the FBC Centre, the Blackwater Valley Partnership, Citizens Advice and Keep Mobile. Donations have also been made to our community halls, primary schools and St. James' Churchyard.

We have awarded grants to Gorse Ride community projects, a Christmas Grub Club, the Link Visiting Scheme, Me2 Club, MS Therapy, Wokingham Job Support Centre, Wokingham Poppy Appeal and the Volunteer Centre.



Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

CIL is the contribution paid by developers towards local infrastructure improvements - including schools, roads and community facilities. The Parish Council receives 15% of all CIL contributions related to development in the Parish. One of our priorities is making sure that the CIL funds we receive are used to bring maximum benefits to the Finchampstead community. This year we have contributed CIL funds towards allotment site improvements; gates for public footpaths; the Finchampstead Ridges Ramble; studies of our War Memorial; a pilot survey of trees on Wellingtonia Avenue and the Finchampstead Village Club.

Planning

Our Planning Committee has considered 165 planning applications in 2020/21 including some applications in adjacent Parishes which may have an impact on Finchampstead

Wokingham Borough Council is the Planning Authority and makes the decisions on planning applications. However we are notified of every development application submitted within the Parish and our Planning Committee considers

and comments on all the applications. These vary from a garden room or a flagpole to a small development of several new properties. We consider larger applications such as those for the Gorse Ride regeneration,

Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park, and even highway infrastructure proposals such as the recent application for changes to the Molly Millars Lane / Finchampstead Road junction.

Gorse Ride regeneration

The first phase of the regeneration is at Arnett Avenue where 46 new homes are due to be completed in June 2021. Plans for the second phase were approved in December 2020 and will see existing poor quality homes replaced with 249 brand new energy efficient homes, of which 74% will be affordable homes to meet local demand. The Parish Council fully supports the project and is following progress closely, with representatives on the Steering Group.



Illustration of phase 2

Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park

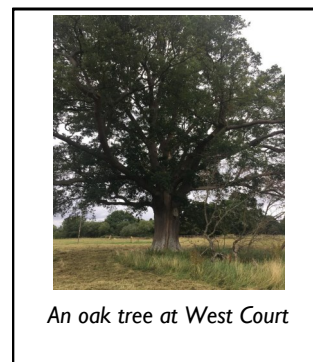
We continue to closely monitor progress with the development of 3500 homes and are represented on the Steering Group and the Community Liaison Forum.

Most of the new homes

at Arborfield Green are within Barkham Parish but there now around 300 in Finchampstead. Around 80 homes are occupied at Finchwood Park, the southern part of the development which all lies within

our Parish. Eventually there will be up to 1500 homes, a community centre, primary school and allotment site at Finchwood Park.

Part of the new country park at West Court is already open.



An oak tree at West Court

Amenities

- * Our allotments have provided a lifeline for many this year and we now have a full site with 100 tenants, and a long waiting list
- * Our two part time litter wardens have collected over 400 sacks of litter from our roadsides

- * Commemorative trees have been labelled, from the 1901 Queen Victoria Oak to the hornbeam planted in 2019 to mark the centenary of World War I
- * We have planted more trees at

- Burnmoor Meadow
- * Our hanging baskets have brightened the California Crossroads.
- * We started the Wellingtonia Avenue tree surveys
- * We supported local schools for Walk to School Week



Our allotment site has been especially popular this year



We refurbished the King Henry VII signpost on Longwater Lane - visit our website for more information

Rights of Way

- * We have continued to help monitor the 21 miles of rights of way in the Parish, supporting WBC which is responsible for the network
- * Our part time Footpath Warden carries out regular

- maintenance
- * We published our new footpath map and a guide to who should use certain paths and why
- * Working with the Ramblers and landowners we have helped get two stiles

- replaced by kissing gates, with plans in place to replace four more stiles. Another two gates have been installed to overcome unauthorised access problems
- * We have continued to focus on cycle routes



Our 21 miles of rights of way have been really well used this year

Roads & Road Safety

- * Our speedwatch sessions have been on hold this year due to the pandemic
- * We have continued to use our two pole mounted speed indicator devices to remind drivers of the speed limits
- * We have finalised plans for new gateway signs and 'speedwatch area' signs for the entrances to our Parish
- * We continue to work with the Borough Council to improve the condition of our roadsides, from pavements to road signs



Thank you to our volunteers

We are hugely grateful to all of the local volunteers who help in various ways to make the Parish such a great place to live.

From those who 'adopt a street' and help keep it clean to those who work to maintain and improve open spaces such as The Ridges. From those who have provided care to others in the community during the pandemic to those who have previously and will again help with speedwatch. Not forgetting the Finchampstead Future group who have worked so hard on the important NDP.



Our plans for 2021/22

We are focusing on priorities identified by our residents:

- ◆ Footpaths, cycleways and bridleways
- ◆ Roads and road safety schemes
- ◆ Parks open spaces and play areas

We are also aiming to:

- ◆ Improve communications with Residents
- ◆ Use CIL funds to provide or support local infrastructure
- ◆ Protect our green spaces from development

Our priorities for 2021/22 include:

- ◆ The Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum
- ◆ Gorse Ride Estate regeneration
- ◆ The developments at Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park
- ◆ New nature reserves and rights of way at Fleet Hill and Manor Farms
- ◆ Planning cycle routes - including to Wokingham
- ◆ Challenging inappropriate development proposals
- ◆ Reducing litter and waste and promoting recycling
- ◆ Restarting Speedwatch activities
- ◆ Parish gateway signs with speed limit reminders
- ◆ Improving the condition of our roadsides and pavements
- ◆ Planting and protecting trees
- ◆ Wellingtonia Avenue surveys
- ◆ Raising awareness about Climate Change
- ◆ Additional allotments
- ◆ California Crossroads improvement scheme
- ◆ Adding to our staff resource to ensure we can bring even greater benefits to our residents

Working together

We will continue to liaise and work with WBC to ensure that local services and facilities are maintained and improved for the benefit of our residents.

We will also continue to work with our neighbouring parishes and other organisations to try and achieve positive benefits for Finchampstead



Improving facilities for cyclists is a high priority

We hope you have found this report interesting. If you would like to receive our regular e newsletters please visit our website www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk or email clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

This report may be delivered to a small number of households outside Finchampstead Parish.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Chair: Councillor Simon Weeks Vice Chair: Councillor Steve Bromley

Councillors:

Steve Bowers; David Cornish; Roland Cundy; Chris Driver; Becky Eytley; Nancy Jennings-Frisby; Graham Jukes OBE; Sylvia McDonald; Rebecca Margetts; Roger Marshallsay; Jim May; Andy Pearce; Richard Rampton; Gordon Veitch; Roger Woof.

Clerk: Katy Dagnall BSc (Hons), FSLCC. Planning Committee Clerk: Anna Kent.



PARISH OFFICE, FBC CENTRE, GORSE RIDE NORTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE RG40 4ES

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