



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, Deputy Clerk and 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 Sub Committees and 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 another unusual year but we have continued to work on your behalf to protect the character of the Parish and to do what we can to ensure it remains a great place to live and work. We have worked to improve our communications with residents to ensure that our work reflects local priorities.

We continue to work closely with WBC and local organisations as through working together we can make best use of resources to help maintain services and facilities for our residents. 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 and we are involved with many projects from the future nature reserves in the south of the Parish to the regeneration of the Gorse Ride community.

We have seen quite a few changes at the Council this year, with three long standing Councillors and a member of staff leaving us, but we are pleased to have welcomed new faces to the Parish Council team. This report summarises our work over the last year and our priorities for the coming year. **Simon Weeks, Chair.**



We work to protect the character of the Parish

We aim to help ensure it is a great place to live and work

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Finchampstead Future, an independent voluntary group working with the Parish Council, is producing the Finchampstead NDP. The Plan will play an important part in guiding future planning decisions affecting development and conservation in our Parish.



The group has continued to work closely 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.

Two formal public consultations on the draft Plan took place during 2021. Work is underway on the final draft of the Plan and there will be a further consultation and opportunity to comment during 2022. There will then be a process of external examination, and finally a referendum when the people of Finchampstead can vote on whether to accept the Plan.

Finance & General Management



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 2021/22 our precept was £168,500 and our budgeted expenditure was £185,635. The balance was met from income and reserves. Our budget and Audit are published on our website.

The Committee also leads on the overall management and direction of the Parish Council including forward plans, policies and procedures. Our Human Resources and Risk Management Sub Committees report to the Committee, together with Working Groups covering various projects and areas of work.

Communications

Sign up for our monthly e newsletters for regular updates on our work, and local services and activities.

Our website is a good source of information about the Parish Council and Finchampstead Parish.
www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

Grants and donations

This year we have awarded over £40,500 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 Countryside 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 Homestart, Involve Cancer Support, the Link Visiting Scheme, Me2 Club, MS Therapy, Sue Ryder, Wokingham Job Support Centre, Wokingham Poppy Appeal and the Volunteer Centre.

Hazebrouck Meadows path - funded by CIL



A well used route to school for local young people

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

CIL is the contribution paid by developers towards local infrastructure improvements. The Parish Council receives 15% of all CIL contributions related to development in the Parish and we aim to ensure 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; defibrillators for local schools; path improvements and gates for public footpaths; work at Finchampstead Ridges; the War Memorial relocation project; surveys of trees on Wellingtonia Avenue; tree planting, and signs and equipment for speed watch.

War Memorial relocation - a CIL funded project

The Parish Council, as custodian of the Finchampstead War Memorial, has resolved to relocate the Grade II listed monument to The Village, adjacent to the Memorial Park. This decision has not been taken lightly and is in the interests of public safety and the preservation of the Memorial which is such an important symbol of remembrance for those from Finchampstead who died for us. A public consultation in 2021 confirmed local support for the relocation, and planning consent has been granted.

The relocation is progressing and the 2022 Remembrance Day parade and service will be held at the Memorial Park with the Memorial in its new setting.



A visualisation of the War Memorial in its new home in The Village

Planning

Our Planning Committee has considered 203 planning applications in 2021/22 including some applications in adjacent Parishes which may have an impact on Finchampstead

WBC is the Planning Authority and makes the decisions on planning applications. However we are notified of every development application submitted within the Parish and we consider

and comment on all of these. In 2021/22 the applications have varied from home extensions to the Barkham Solar Farm, to further phases of housing at Finchwood

Park. We have responded to consultations on the WBC Local Plan Update, including voicing strong opposition to development proposals at Rooks Nest Farm.

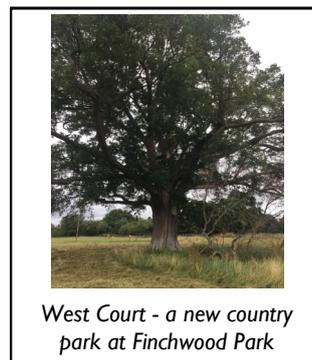
Gorse Ride, Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park

These planned local developments are bringing many new homes to the Parish. We continue to closely monitor progress, liaising with developers, the Borough Council and local stakeholders. The 46 new homes

forming Phase 1 at Gorse Ride are now occupied, and plans for Phase 2 are well underway, with construction of the 249 homes due to start later in 2022.

Arborfield Green lies mainly within Barkham

Parish but there are around 300 homes in Finchampstead. At Finchwood Park, in our Parish, 140 homes are now occupied. When complete there will be up to 1500 homes, a primary school and community facilities.



West Court - a new country park at Finchwood Park

Amenities



Our allotments are really popular. The site is full with nearly 100 tenants, and we have a waiting list.

- Our two part time litter wardens have collected over 450 sacks of litter from our roadsides.
- * We completed the Wellingtonia Avenue tree surveys.
- * We provided defibrillators for two local schools, adding

to the five already provided for the community.

- * Our Adopt a Street scheme has 45 volunteers covering 41 roads.
- * We co-ordinated the Spring community litter pick, the first for two years.



Our hanging baskets brighten the California Crossroads



A new noticeboard near St. James' Church

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 new circular walks maps.
- * Working with the Ramblers and landowners we have helped get four stiles replaced by kissing gates.
- * Working with Barkham Parish Council, paths at

Hazebrouck Meadows have been improved.

- * We have installed signs explaining why some paths should not be used by horse riders and cyclists.
- * We continue to focus on much needed cycle routes.



One of the new kissing gates installed to replace stiles, improving access for path users

Roads & Road Safety

- * We have continued to use our two pole mounted speed indicator devices to remind drivers of the speed limits.
- * We have worked with WBC to get new gateway signs and 'speed watch area' signs installed at the entrances to our Parish.
- * We continue to work with WBC to try and improve the condition of our roadsides, from pavements to road signs.
- * We have worked to get arrangements in place so we can restart roadside speed watch sessions in line with new Police guidance.



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 provide care, support and friendship to others in the community to those who 'adopt a street' and help keep it clean. From those who work to maintain and improve open spaces such as The Ridges to those who help with speed watch. Last but not least, to the Finchampstead Future group who work so hard on the NDP which is so important to the future of the Parish.



Our plans for 2022/23

We are focusing on our residents' priorities:

- * Footpaths, cycleways and bridleways; parks, open spaces and play areas; roads and road safety schemes.

We will continue to work to:

- * Improve our communications with residents; use CIL funds wisely to provide or support local infrastructure; protect our green spaces from development.

Our priorities for 2022/23 include:

- * The Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan
- * Gorse Ride regeneration Phase II
- * The Finchwood Park development, and community facilities at Arborfield Green
- * New nature reserves and rights of way on land at Fleet Hill and Manor Farms
- * Planning cycle routes - especially to Wokingham
- * The relocation of the War Memorial
- * Working with WBC on plans for the War Memorial junction
- * Challenging inappropriate development proposals
- * Reducing litter and waste and promoting recycling
- * Restarting roadside speed watch activities under the new Police scheme
- * Improving the condition of our roadsides and pavements
- * Planting and protecting trees
- * New allotments at Finchwood Park
- * California Country Park lakeside improvements
- * California Crossroads improvement scheme
- * Additional circular walks, and links between paths or paths and green spaces
- * Path improvements including to bridlepath 26

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



Our circular walks are very popular

We are planning new walks



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:

Emily Biskup; Steve Bowers; David Cornish; Roland Cundy; Chris Driver; Becky Eytley; Sally Gurney; Graham Jukes OBE; Sylvia McDonald; Rebecca Margetts; Roger Marshallsay; Jim May; Andy Pearce; Gordon Veitch; Roger Woof.

Clerk: Katy Dagnall BSc (Hons), FSLCC.

Deputy Clerk: Colette Warke BA (Hons); **Planning Committee Clerk:** Caroline Cordell.



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