



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 a busy year and 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 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. 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 and are pleased to have welcomed four new Councillors, a new Deputy Clerk and a new Litter Warden to the Parish Council.

This report summarises our work over the last year and our priorities for the coming year.

Simon Weeks, Chair.



We help ensure the Parish is a great place to live and work

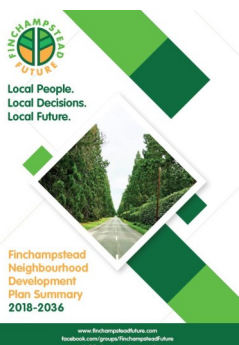
Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Finchampstead Future is an independent voluntary group working in partnership with the Parish Council to produce a Finchampstead NDP.

After 4 years work, the Plan is nearing the end of the process. A third public consultation took place in autumn 2022 and the Plan is now going through an external independent examination. The final stage will be a referendum when the people of Finchampstead can vote on whether to accept the Plan. We hope that this will take place during 2023.

When complete the Plan will play an important part in guiding future planning decisions affecting development and conservation in our Parish. We hope that it will lead to development in the places where it does least damage whilst protecting the areas which we value most.

www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/community-projects/neighbourhood-development-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 2022/23 our precept was £184,615, meaning that a property in Council Tax Band D paid just £29.32 towards the Parish Council – for the whole year. Our budgeted expenditure for the year was £195,315, with the balance met from income and reserves. The Committee also leads on the overall management 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.

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 Berkshire Vision, Saving Fly Grazing Equines, First Days, Growing Places, Me2 Club, Link Visiting Scheme, Wokingham Job Support Centre, Wokingham Poppy Appeal, the Volunteer Centre and Bohunt School.

Communications

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



The relocation of the War Memorial was funded by the CIL

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

CIL is the contribution paid by developers towards improvements to local infrastructure such as community or sports facilities, play areas, green spaces or highways. The Parish Council receives 15% of all CIL contributions related to development in the Parish.

This year we have contributed CIL funds towards equipment for community speedwatch; bridle path improvements; kissing gates for public footpaths; access work at Rooks Nest Woods; a cycle route feasibility study; Wellingtonia Avenue tree surveys and the War Memorial relocation project.

Future plans for CIL

CIL funds have opened up new opportunities for the Parish Council, enabling it to undertake additional projects itself and to support projects led by other organisations, aiming to bring maximum benefits to the Finchampstead community. We are expecting to invest significant CIL funds in the coming year. This includes co-funding new play equipment and facilities for the Finchampstead Primary School playground. We are also supporting major WBC projects including improvements at the California Country Park and to the War Memorial junction. We are in discussion with other local schools and organisations over support we may be able to offer for their projects.



Planning

Our Planning Committee has considered over 200 planning applications in 2022/23 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 2022/23 the applications have varied from home extensions to developments of one or more new homes to barn conversions. We

review plans for further phases of housing at Finchwood Park. We monitor progress with the Local Plan, and respond to WBC and Government consultations.

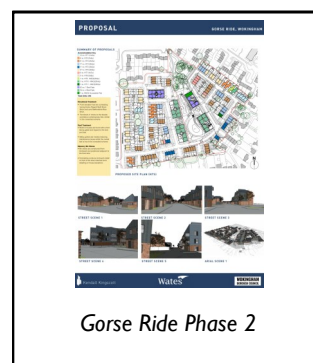
Gorse Ride, Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park

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 have been occupied for over a year, the construction of the 249 homes forming Phase 2 started in autumn 2022.

Arborfield Green lies mainly within Barkham

Parish but there are around 350 homes in Finchampstead. At Finchwood Park, in our Parish, 150 homes are now occupied. When complete there will be up to 1500 homes, a primary school and community facilities.



Amenities



Our allotment site is now 10 years old. We have nearly 100 tenants, and a waiting list.

- * Our part time litter wardens have collected over 330 sacks of litter from our roadsides.
- * We supported the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in the Parish.
- * We planted trees, now registered

under the Queen's Green Canopy scheme.

- * Our Adopt a Street scheme has 45 volunteers covering almost 50 roads.
- * We co-ordinated the community litter pick, part of the Great British Spring Clean.



Our hanging baskets brighten the California Crossroads

Rights of Way

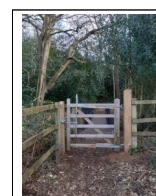
- * We have continued to help monitor the 21 miles of rights of way in the Parish, supporting WBC which is responsible for the network.
- * Our part time Footpath Warden carries out regular maintenance.
- * Working with the Ramblers and landowners we have helped get three stiles replaced with kissing gates.
- * Working with Wokingham Borough Council, we have improved access for residents to Rooks Nest Woods.

Nest Woods.

- * We arranged much needed drainage improvement works to Bridleway 26 over Wick Hill.
- * We continue to focus on cycle routes, particularly to Wokingham.



We organised a first aid / defibrillator training session



A new gate and bridge have improved access to Rooks Nest Woods

One of the new kissing gates



Roads & Road Safety



Roadside community speedwatch sessions resumed in May 2022.

- * 33 sessions have taken place, with 618 vehicles reported to Thames Valley Police for exceeding the speed limit.
- * We have continued to use our two pole mounted speed indicator devices to remind drivers of the speed limits.
- * We have started to log traffic volumes and speeds on various roads across the Parish.

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 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 have worked tirelessly on the NDP which is so important to the future of the Parish.



Our plans for 2023/24

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 include:

- * The Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum
- * Developing our Forward Plan or Strategy for the coming years
- * 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
- * California Country Park lakeside improvements
- * Ensuring the new allotments at Finchwood Park are delivered
- * Planning cycle routes - especially to Wokingham
- * Working with WBC on plans for the War Memorial junction
- * Challenging inappropriate development proposals
- * Reducing litter and waste, tackling fly tipping and promoting recycling
- * Continuing roadside community speed watch activities
- * Improving the condition of our roadsides and pavements
- * Planting and protecting trees
- * Monitoring progress with the California Crossroads improvement scheme
- * Supporting our local schools and other organisations with appropriate projects

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



We are supporting lakeside improvements at the California Country Park



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

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Chair: Councillor Simon Weeks

Vice Chair: Councillor Steve Bromley

Councillors:

Eric Allen; Steve Bowers; David Cornish; Roland Cundy; George Evans; Becky Eytle; Pauline Grainger; Sally Gurney; Graham Jukes OBE; Sylvia McDonald; Roger Marshallsay; Chris Mortimer; Andy Pearce; Gordon Veitch; Roger Woof.

Clerk: Katy Dagnall BSc (Hons), FSLCC.

Deputy Clerk: Kate Lang. **Planning Committee Clerk:** Caroline Cordell.



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