



NEWSLETTER

Woldingham Parish Council Newsletter, Winter 2019-20

www.woldingham.com/parishcouncil

Your Parish Council Team:

Councillors

Deborah Sherry, *Chairman*

Becky Rush, *Deputy Chairman*

Mark Sculthorpe, *Planning Head*

Rebecca Fuller

Peter Holbrook

Keith Jecks

Alex Standen

Council Staff

Karen Newman, *Parish Clerk*

Terri Waghorn, *Planning Administrator*

Dates for your Diary:

- Monthly WPC meetings

(last Wednesday of the month, not August and December other than by exception); occasional exceptional meetings (publicised in advance)

- Annual Parish Meeting/ 20th Birthday Celebrations *(15th May)*

- The Big Village Picnic *(14th June)*

- Annual Litterpick *(22nd September)*

- Christmas Carols in the Crescent *(5th December)*

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Woldingham Neighbours,

Your Woldingham Parish Council has been hard at work on issues of importance to our beloved Woldingham. Your Parish Council's regular activities include commenting on planning applications and addressing key issues that face the village, such as the threat of heavy goods vehicles from the Oxted Quarry or the changing flight paths from Biggin Hill Airport. We address road safety on private roads in winter, contracting for salt spreading services.

We also run key village events like the annual Christmas Carols in the Crescent and the Litterpick. But the largest projects we undertake by far, are those pursuant to the Neighbourhood Plan, under which we address other village safety and improvement works.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan and why do we need it?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which changed the powers of local government in England, devolving decision making to communities. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 bill was then enacted.

What does this mean for Woldingham?

While it does not turn us into a planning authority, the Localism Act empowered us as a community to enact a set of rules that defined our 15 year plan for planning and development, greenbelt protection and any other community development projects that we wanted to target for Woldingham. These rules must be taken into account by our local planning authority, Tandridge District Council.

When this option was given to us in 2012, your Parish Council embraced the opportunity to work together to define and protect the future of our village. Although there was no legal requirement to write and pass a Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council believed it could only strengthen the protection of and further the interests of Woldingham. And so we set out to write and enact a Neighbourhood Plan.

Benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan and Fit with the District Local Plan

A Neighbourhood Plan (sometimes called a Neighbourhood Development Plan) is a way of helping local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. It can be used to:

- *Develop a shared vision for the village.*
- *Choose where new homes, shops, offices, other development should be built.*
- *Identify and protect important local green spaces.*
- *Influence what new buildings should look like.*

Notably, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot reject or contradict the District Council Local Plan or other legislation and regulation, and indeed as the District Council must inspect and accept the plan, it must align with it. But it is an opportunity to take general District Council Local Plan policies and ensure the specifics needed for your locale are clearly delineated and can strongly influence planning policy and decisions.

Only Parish and Town Councils can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. There are clear rules guiding how to develop and enact a neighbourhood plan and the Parish Council embraced these and deeply involved the full community.

What did the Parish Council do and what did the community do?

In 2013, the Parish Council implemented a community-wide survey on both paper and digital format. The insights gathered informed the next two years of work, including community working groups, on which many members of the community served, and many village consultations, workshops and focus groups on the key proposals that were developed from the community survey. This body of work led to the development of the policies that would form the basis for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council completed the draft Woldingham Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) plan in 2015 and submitted the plan to Tandridge District Council for review and acceptance. The inspector reviewed the proposed WNP for compliance with existing legislation and regulation and requested some minor changes which were duly made. Then the plan was accepted by Tandridge District Council and offered to Woldingham in a public referendum.

The Public Referendum

Woldingham residents had the chance to accept or reject the WNP in a referendum held on 17 March 2016. Turnout was 33.4% and the WNP was passed by an 85% majority.

Since the WNP was enacted, Tandridge District Council (TDC) planning decisions have referred to it many times. And the improvements and projects that your Parish Council undertakes are largely pursuant to the WNP, which in turn was based on the extensive community survey and engagement. Another added benefit of enacting a Neighbourhood Plan is that Woldingham Parish now receives 25% of Woldingham Community Infrastructure Levies (levied on certain developments) collected by TDC rather than just 15%.

In this newsletter, we want to update you on the key projects that we have undertaken, pursuant to the WNP, and share other key news and activities.

I am proud of the hard work that your current Council has undertaken to deliver safety and community usage improvements in the village, as a considerable number of projects have been undertaken over the last couple of years.

I also want to offer great thanks to those Councillors who toiled endlessly and for years to build the plan that now provides protection and guidance to our community. They have left an indelible mark on our village, for which we all should be eternally grateful.

Deborah Sherry
Chairman, Woldingham Parish Council

WOLDINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROGRESS

The WNP identified key safety issues on specific road junctions as well as village centre improvement works.

Junction of Bug Hill, Halliloo Valley Road and Woldingham Road

The junction at the bottom of Bug Hill has been the source of a number of accidents – so far, fortunately none involving loss of life. This was one of the issues raised in the 2015 surveys that underpinned the Neighbourhood Plan and encouraged the Parish Council to ask our Surrey County Councillor at that time, David Hodge, to help us create a safer road layout for this junction. A professional safety audit was carried out by Surrey Highways, which recognised that there had been accidents involving personal injuries. It concluded that the key issues needing to be addressed were the speed with which traffic travelling East enters Halliloo Valley Road and the fact that traffic turning right from Halliloo Valley Road and traffic turning left from Bug Hill are often on a collision course.



Turning right into Halliloo Valley Road has always been difficult: the key issue again being the speed of oncoming traffic, together with limited visibility. The latter has been mitigated by keeping the hedge on the inside of the corner trimmed and this will obviously continue.

After the Surrey Highways safety review, the Parish Council were presented with four options designed by Surrey Highways to improve the junction. The differences were

aesthetic as all four options addressed the same safety concern. The Parish Council, in conjunction with Surrey Highways, agreed the best aesthetic approach.

The Parish Council was expecting this work to take 18 months or more before it would be scheduled to commence, but pressure from David Hodge, based on the recorded accident statistics, meant that the work was carried out within a few months.

The changes have not been universally welcomed, but have had the intended effect of separating traffic leaving Bug Hill and Halliloo Valley Road and slowing the traffic entering the latter. There remained one key issue after the work was done: the tendency of traffic to cut the corner when travelling South along Woldingham Road. Becky Rush, our current Surrey County Councillor as well as Woldingham Parish Councillor, pursued Surrey Highways to paint hatched traffic separation markings along the corner. This has now been done, providing a safer transit around this bend.

We are aware that there have been many questions about what is going on with the field on the right, just after the Bug Hill junction. Some have feared a housing estate was being constructed and we can assure you that is not the case. Following the floods of 2014, in which Woldingham Road was closed for months, three "reservoirs" have been created to hold the waters of the river Bourne back, with sluice gates between them. Two of these are the other side of the viaduct and this is the first one. The work was delayed due to weather conditions but was completed in spring 2019. It now looks much more natural and attractive.



Speeding and Car Crime

The WNP also identified speeding and car safety as an issue. To help alleviate speeding in the village, the Parish Council purchased and installed vehicle activated speed signs in the village. We are checking speed data periodically and the signs appear to be having impact. To address break-ins at parking hotspots near the station, the

Parish Council also installed CCTV on Church Road.

Supporting Crescent Redevelopment (behind and on The Crescent)

Finally, the WNP also identified a number of development projects that would benefit the village as a whole - in particular on the lands behind The Crescent, used variously by our village residents, and on The Crescent itself.



2018/2019 saw this exciting village project come to fruition. "The Garden Behind The Crescent"

was a hugely ambitious project pulling together multiple village organisations; facilitated by and part-funded via grants from the Parish Council.

Discussions between The Glebe and the Scouts had been ongoing for many years as to what to do with the triangle of scrub land part-owned by both parties and very much overrun with brambles and laurel. The area had well-trodden paths providing shortcuts between Slines Oak Road, The Glebe and The Crescent and over the years the Scout land fencing had been trampled down. Unfortunately, it was an area of the village that was unsightly and letting the local area down.

Established in the Neighbourhood Plan, Woldingham Parish Council had an objective to improve the footpaths and accessibility around the centre of the village and to the shops, and so along with The Glebe, The Scout Hut Committee, The Village Hall and the Woldingham Association, a working party was established to transform this area, coordinated by the Parish Council.

A tremendous amount of time and energy was put into determining the plan and seeing it through to implementation. Final decisions on how to use Glebe and Scout land were determined by the respective landowners. With the agreement of all parties, all the brambles and scrub were removed so as to establish exactly what the group was dealing with; it turned out to be a sizable space and so it was decided to create

a relaxation garden, build a network of wheelchair/buggy friendly pathways, and create an enclosed safe space for the Scout Hut so the Cubs/Brownies etc had a safe environment in which to play outdoors. The planting is all native British species designed to support native wildlife; and there is a circle of carved wooden mushrooms for children to play on or for the nursery to come to for some outdoor time exploring nature.



Funded by The Glebe, with grants from the Parish Council, and land belonging to The Glebe and The Scouts, this really was a great example

of everyone working together for the benefit of the village residents. It is now a wonderful open space planted with native trees and hedgerows, with a fabulously smooth pathway linking up the central village areas.

If you haven't come to see it or use it yet, please do come along and see the transformation at the heart of our village. Feedback is very positive, with many residents now using these walking paths regularly.

Many thanks to the core organisations: The Glebe, The Scout Hut Committee, Woldingham Parish Council, The Village Hall and The Woldingham Association, and specifically to the following individuals' without whose energy this would never have got off the ground: Paul Lunn, Andy Parr, Mark Tapley, Chris Higson, Sally Jones, Marc Sculthorpe, Becky Rush and Martin Lewis.

The next stage of village improvement, as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, will be focussed on improving The Crescent area itself. A small working party is in place, but more volunteers are always welcome.

We Need You



Parish Council Vacancies

The Woldingham Parish Council has two vacancies. We are a 9-seat Council. New Councillors can be co-opted at any time and we welcome volunteers. We also anticipate additional vacancies in May when our term of service ends.

The next Parish Council election is 7th May 2020.

We are a very diverse Council. We are currently estimated to have the youngest average age in the country, so diverse are we. But we are still light in numbers. Parish Councils across the countries are

struggling to find volunteers and some have fallen altogether. A minimum of 5 Councillors is required to legally constitute a Parish Council. If numbers fall below due to resignations in term or lack of volunteers for an initial slate, Parish Councils must disband. Sadly, when Parish Councils must disband, the local level of representation is lost and District Councils assume the local powers. We hope to never face this traumatic challenge in Woldingham.

To learn more about the Council, our activities and your Councillors, please contact Karen Parish Clerk – parish.clerk@woldingham.com

Supporting our Village

It has been a busy time in Woldingham with the Parish Council running and supporting a number of events and initiatives in the village and driving village improvements. Improvement and safety activities outside the Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Organising for the gritting and snow clearance of roads that Surrey CC doesn't service
- Occasional support of road repairs on private roads that are busy public thoroughfares
- Care of hedges or pursuit of hedge trimming that affects safety

The Parish Council also supports various societies, services and institutions; recent support includes:

Events

Village welcome party, Village Art Shows, Village Sports Events at the Cricket Club, History Society exhibitions, Village Fetes

Services

Dial-a-ride, Village Hall

Village Improvements

Historic bus shelter repair, Horticultural Society, St Agatha's churchyard and burial ground upkeep, Woodlea School Gardening Projects, Garden behind The Crescent
We were lucky enough to apply for and receive Surrey County Council grants (£1750 highways and environment and £1250 community) which were allocated to The Crescent redevelopment project and the garden behind The Crescent.

Overview of the Parish Council's Planning Activities

One of the main functions of the Parish Council is to review Woldingham planning applications submitted to Tandridge District Council (TDC). Every month we have a number of applications to review, with an average of 6 per month. Woldingham has many areas of differing character from urban to wooded hillside to green belt. The Parish Council has a duty to protect the special character of Woldingham and to try to ensure compliance with our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and the Tandridge Local Plan, as well as other national planning policies.

While there is a statutory obligation that TDC consult with us, they do not have to comply with our requirements or suggestions and recently there has been an increased turnover of TDC planning inspectors. As a result, we try to ensure they are all familiar with the specific issues associated with Woldingham and the requirement of our NP but unfortunately we are not always successful. Some developers

manage to get plans through that we believe should not have been approved.

Other issues that are of particular concern to the Parish Council in this respect are that many applications in Woldingham provide no or minimal dimensions nor do they provide topographical information. This must be common in many TDC wards and it is important that we keep the pressure on TDC to insist on proper information being specifically provided by developers. Topographical information can be particularly relevant in Woldingham. The WPC tries to provide the TDC inspectors with local knowledge and perspective in order to maintain the character of our beautiful village.

Full compliance with approved planning applications is also a problem, with developers then trying to stretch the plans and incorporate aspects that are not really covered in their original submission. Again the WPC does not have the powers of enforcement but we continually try to report infringements to TDC and follow up to ensure action is taken. However, we believe it is too easy for developers to issue amendments that get approved after the event and your WPC continues to meet with, educate, spot potential and report actual infringements to TDC.

We need to be constantly vigilant to keep Woldingham looking sylvan and semi-rural, in compliance with our approved Neighbourhood Plan.

Snow Clearing and Salt/Grit Spreading

One of the activities in the village that we spend money on is snow clearing and grit spreading. We have a contract that has been placed with a local farmer. We buy our salt/grit in advance and we have a spreader that the farmer uses, while he provides the plough as needed. Predicting when salt and grit spreading is going to be advantageous to drivers can be very difficult because if done too soon it may simply be washed away by rain or

if too late our residents have difficulty getting around the village. In winter 2017-18, our gritting services were in significant demand but this last winter we called on our local service only once. Let's see what this winter brings. Roads that are adopted highways are serviced by Surrey County Council.

Gas Mains Replacement Works in Woldingham

In November 2018, the PC received notice that gas replacement work was planned in Woldingham. The metal pipe work (at the end of its life and leaking) needed replacing with new plastic piping that will last for decades to come. The intention was to begin January 2019, however as Station road is a priority 1 grit route, it was agreed that a spring start date would be safer for residents. Work began in April 2019 and to date Station road is complete and Park View and Lunghurst Roads will be completed in the first quarter of 2020.

This is a long project with SGN expected to be working in the village for roughly 3 years; upcoming roadworks include Northdown Road, Long Hill, High Drive and Croft Road; however, by the end of the project all roads in the village will be done.

The nature of our narrow roads means that some work is carried out under road closures which, whilst frustrating, are in place for the safety of the workers and residents. Prior to commencing work on each road there is a meeting between SGN, KLT, Surrey County Council, Woldingham Parish Council and Woldingham Association to ensure the project runs as smoothly as possible; we are well represented by Becky Rush with both her Woldingham and County Councillor hats on.

SGN, in acknowledgment of the potential disruption around the village for the next couple of years, very kindly donated their Southeast community day to working at Woodlea School, carrying out repairs and maintenance to support the local area, which was greatly appreciated.



Public Life Saving Equipment. As a reminder, your Parish Council maintains two defibrillators in Woldingham. They are located, lit and clearly visible, outside the main entrances to:

Woldingham Village Hall (left hand wall adjacent to the main entrance)
The Garden Village Peace Hall (on the front wall)

You will need to have your phone to hand to call 999. The defibrillator is easy to use, no training is required. After pressing one button, it talks the user through the operating sequence with a series of voice prompts. If you have a special training need, please contact: Karen Newman at parish.clerk@woldingham.com

