



Fittleworth Parish Council

Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022



About the Plan

The Parish Council recently requested residents to raise issues they would like the Council to focus on specifically in its work. We have developed this Plan based on responses to that request together with our understanding of the community's needs gathered from our day to day involvement with residents. The Plan sets out five key priorities that the Parish Council intends to focus on.

This Plan is a working document and aims to guide the Council in its work over the next 5 years. We will need to seek the support and co-operation of both Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council in working to achieve our objectives. The Plan will be reviewed annually and will be used in the budgeting process, to plan activities for the forthcoming year and will enable the Parish Council to monitor its progress against key priorities.

This Plan should give our local community a better idea as to what the Parish Council does and to clarify what it doesn't do – to explain what issues fall under the responsibility of other bodies (such as Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council).

Please do tell us what you think about the Plan. We welcome your comments.

Introduction to Fittleworth and the Parish Council

Fittleworth sits within the South Downs National Park, between Petworth and Pulborough. It has a population of just under 1000. It includes the hamlets of Little Bognor and Coates and parts of Egdean and Bedham. The map on the final page of this booklet shows the civil parish boundaries.

Fittleworth boasts a thriving village primary school and pre-school groups, a Sports and Social Club, two Fittleworth village churches and one at Coates, a well-used village hall, a monthly village market and the 14th century pub, the Swan Inn. Our website, www.fittleworth-pc.org.uk, includes further information about the village and its rich history.

The Parish Council owns certain areas of land within the parish boundaries. The most significant of these are Hesworth Common and Birchwalks Woods which are owned and maintained by the Parish Council and are much loved and used by both residents and visitors to the village. The Parish Council also owns the recreation ground and the land on which the Scout Hut, Bowls Club and Rifle Club stand and the Sports Pavilion and Bowls Pavilion building. We hold these assets on behalf of the community.

The Parish Council is the first tier of local government. It has an important role to play in promoting the interests of the village and outlying settlements, representing its interests and working with other groups in the community.

Chichester District Council is responsible for services including housing and environmental services. West Sussex County Council's responsibilities include highways (both roads and pavements), education, health and social services and public rights of way. The divisions of responsibility between Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council are not always clear. Both Councils do have websites which give detailed information as to the services they are responsible for and contact details for the relevant departments. As Fittleworth is within the South Downs National Park, the South Downs National Park Authority also has some specific responsibilities in relation to Fittleworth, being responsible for maintaining and enhancing the character of the area and planning issues (although the processing of all but the most major schemes is subcontracted to Chichester District Council).

The Parish Council is funded by a precept which is collected by Chichester District Council on our behalf as part of the Council Tax on residents. The precept set for the year 2017 - 2018 is £18,500- which is on average less than £20 per person per year. This amount is shown clearly on the council tax bill each resident receives.

The Parish Council also receives a small income from the rent received from the Sports and Social Club for the Sports Pavilion and from rents from the Bowls and Rifle Clubs and the Scouts. The Parish Council also receives some grants, particularly in relation to Hesworth Common, and bank interest.

Strategic Priorities

We have identified the following strategic priorities that the Parish Council will focus on over the next 5 years:

- Continue with the development of the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Continue to implement the Management Plan for the maintenance and improvement of Hesworth Common
- Support and work with the Village Shop Management Committee to establish a successful community shop within the village
- Work with Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council to review road safety within the parish and to see if there are any measures that could be adopted to improve road safety
- Improve the appearance and standard of maintenance within the village

Delivery of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 to give residents a greater voice in the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans allow communities more control over the type, location, size, pace and design of development in their area.

Following the June 2015 Housing Survey and the October 2015 public consultation a steering group (under the auspices of the Parish Council, but including non-councillors) has been hard at work producing a draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Plan sets out the vision for Fittleworth and the planning policies for the use and development of land within the parish boundaries over the next 15 years. The steering group is working with the South Downs National Park Authority on the content of our draft Plan and it is hoped that the Plan will be ready for formal consultation processes during spring 2017.

The Plan will then be submitted to a referendum of all village residents, probably during autumn 2017. If approved, all subsequent planning applications and proposals affecting Fittleworth will need to take account of the Plan.

Hesworth Common Management Plan

Hesworth Common is an area of about 100 acres, approximately half of which is covered by trees and the other half open areas of bracken and heather. It is owned by the Parish Council on behalf of the parish and is jointly managed by the Parish Council and the South Downs National Park Authority. Natural England funds the work required to increase the heathland areas, in relation to the bog area and general maintenance works.

We have a management plan in place to guide work on Hesworth Common. This is because there are some interesting features which would be lost if no action were taken. For instance, there are wonderful areas of heather and bilberry which are threatened by advancing bracken and scrub. Also,

there are several splendid viewpoints of the South Downs which visitors and villagers enjoy; which need to be preserved. We need to maintain newly planted trees and shrubs to ensure the growth of a larger number of species. Step building and replacement of seats are also required from time to time.

We have a number of aims for the next 5-10 years. Namely, to:

- maintain a pleasant, unspoilt stretch of countryside, which villagers and visitors can enjoy;
- preserve a variety of habitats, to encourage wildlife and increase areas of gorse and hedgerow to expand bird life;
- increase areas of heathland, wild flowers and encourage rare varieties of flowers and plants in the bog area to flourish;
- increase tree planting in small areas, introducing new varieties where possible;
- avoid urbanising the common;
- provide special areas of interest for local groups, school children, scouts, cubs and guides.

We would like to encourage more parishioners to get involved in the future care of the Common. The Parish Council organises regular working parties of village and local volunteers, the South Down rangers (and their volunteers). We hope to increase the number of parishioners taking part in these working parties to ensure that our Common remains a beautiful piece of Sussex. Tools and expert advice will be available.

Village Shop and Playground

The Parish Council established a working party in January 2016 to investigate demand in the parish for a community owned and run shop and café and the feasibility of establishing such a shop in the village. In April 2016 questionnaires were distributed to households within the parish seeking views on the possibility of a community shop. Responses to the questionnaire showed strong support for a shop and café in the village and initial research concluded that community shops were thriving in similar locations and that there were various forms of grant funding that could be applied for to contribute towards the costs of the project. The Parish Council therefore concluded that the project should proceed and that a separate body would be required to take the shop forwards.

As a result, a community co-operative (the Fittleworth Community Shop Limited) has been established to oversee the design, build and operation of the shop.

The Parish Council will work closely with the Management Committee of Fittleworth Community Shop Limited on the build and opening of the community shop and café and to support this important community project. It has been decided that the best location for the shop and café would be the recreation ground on School Lane, in the area currently used as the children's playground. The Parish Council own the land (the recreation ground) on which the shop and café will be built – and will continue to own the land once the shop has been established. There will be a lease of the land in place between the Parish Council and Fittleworth Community Shop Limited.

The children's play area will be moved to an area adjacent to the shop and it is hoped to incorporate a new area of play equipment behind the Sports Pavilion aimed at a slightly older age group of children. The play area and equipment will remain under the ownership of the Parish Council. Again, the Village Shop Management Committee and the Parish Council will be working closely together to ensure the successful delivery of the new play areas.

A planning application was submitted and planning permission granted in March 2017. We have also sought consent from the Charity Commission (as the recreation ground is held under a

charitable trust) to allow the use of part of the land by the shop. The build of the shop and installation of the new play areas is a significant project for our parish and in Spring 2017 a funding programme commenced. The aim is to raise the funds required through a number of sources, including grant applications, donations, a share issue in Fittleworth Community Shop Limited and fundraising events. The commencement of the build is very much dependent on the time within which funds can be raised – we are hoping to be able to commence building before Spring 2018 at the latest.

It is hoped that the shop and café will act as a much-needed social hub for the village and will form a platform from which future community resilience projects can be launched.

Highways

Residents have expressed concerns over speeding traffic within the village, especially along the Fleet, School Lane and Lower Street.

The Parish Council will work with West Sussex County Council and other local community groups such as FTAG to ascertain if any traffic calming measures may be viable, to review speed limits, to see if improved signage may help and to investigate any other solutions.

The state of the roads and signage within the parish remains an ongoing concern. The Parish Council will continue to report issues such as potholes to West Sussex County Council who are responsible for these issues.

Village Appearance and Maintenance

The Parish Council believe that the parish is generally maintained to a high standard but we will review any initiatives to improve on the maintenance and appearance of the village. As part of this the Parish Council will look at keeping footpaths in the parish clear and walkable. Again, we will liaise with West Sussex County Council regarding the schedule of footpath clearance. Unfortunately, due to budget restraints the County Council schedule of footpath clearance is limited and not sufficient to keep our network of footpaths in as good a condition as we would wish. The Parish Council also therefore intend to look at the feasibility of establishing a volunteer workforce to carry out additional path clearance and maintenance tasks to supplement the County Council's activities.



Your Parish Councillors

Chris Welfare *Chairman*
01798 865563
chriswelfare@btinternet.com

Shelagh Morgan *Deputy Chair*
01798 865036
shelmorg@btinternet.com

Mike Allin
01798 865230
marieallin05@aol.com

David Brittain
01798 865426
davidbrittain@live.co.uk

Tony Broughton
01798 865459
novel_timetoact@yahoo.co.uk

Robin Dunstan
01798 865237
redunstan@btinternet.com

Mick Foote
01798 865156
footemichael1@gmail.com

Chris O'Callaghan
01798 865189
chrisjocallaghan@yahoo.co.uk

Alison Welterveden
01798 865650
welterveden@btinternet.com

Parish Clerk
Hannah Hails
01798 669391
fittleworthparishclerk@gmail.com

Map of Fittleworth civil parish boundaries

