

Chairman's Letter

Apart from attending meetings of the Full Council and various committees this is the time for the parishioners to make their views known and to exercise their democratic right to vote and indeed to stand as Parish Councillor. I would urge every one of you to use your vote at this grass roots level.

Some of you may feel hesitant about applying to become a Councillor owing to lack of knowledge about the system etc. There is a New Councillors' course available at the commencement of office and further courses are made available throughout the year.

Your present Councillors and past Councillors have all worked extremely hard to keep this Parish as we would all wish it to be, so, if you feel up to the challenge do give it serious consideration.

Cllr Mrs Stephanie Smith
Chairman

CENSUS 2011

The 2011 Census takes place on 27th March. Forms will be posted out, and can be filled in by hand or online.

Help will be available in a number of ways- see the front cover of the form.

If you send the completed form off in good time no-one will need to call on you.

If a form has not been received you may get a call from a friendly member of the Census staff who will check that you are not having any trouble filling the form in. They **do not** need to enter your house or take the form with them.

Forest, Heathland Areas – Parking

Please remember that gates particularly those leading onto forest and SSSI areas are there in case of fire or other emergency. They need to be kept clear at all times. If you block a gateway the delay could cause the loss of valuable habitat, damage heath or could cause loss of life. Please do not park in gateways!

Horton Road Village Green

This site is for the open enjoyment of all. The Council has provided waste bins for litter and dog waste and has supplied the goals. The Council pays for the litter picker, the Lengthsman; the grass cutting and the Dog Warden to tend and nurture the site for all of the Parish's benefit –

at great expense, your taxpayers' money. The site is surrounded by nice well kept homes. However, behind its quiet, green sylvan setting it is grossly abused. That small **minority**, of whom I speak and I really hope that this letter is in **their letter box**, have flytipped; allow their dog or dogs to foul the land even in the goal mouths on the pitch, or dropped litter.

You may be able to help if you see any person not clearing up or flytipping or any other antisocial activity note the day and time and give a description, with any other relevant information that may help, to the Clerk. If you wish ring anonymously on 01425 482727 or ring the Police and leave a message for the St Leonards & St Ives Safer Neighbourhood Team on 01202 222222. **To be able to take action we have to catch them and we need information from you.**

INVITATION TO THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 20TH APRIL 2011

DOORS OPEN AT 7.15PM TO

START AT 7.30PM PROMPT

IN THE MAIN HALL

AT THE VILLAGE HALL, BRAESIDE ROAD, ST LEONARDS

Hear the annual report from the Chairman of the Parish Council and take the opportunity to ask questions directly of the Councillors

Election Day 5th May 2011 - This will also be the date for the 4 yearly cycle of elections for the Parish Council.

Why is it important that everyone votes in local elections?

Did you know that your local councillors are consulted on nearly everything that happens in your area? They take an active part in influencing what services are and are not provided - and that affects you and your family! Parish and Town Councils are responsible for many things like: bus shelters, litter bins, parks and footpaths to name but a few. They are also consulted on planning applications, highway improvements, street signs and projects that affect where you live and what facilities your community has or receives. Local councils are delivering more services for residents than ever before and with changes proposed by the new coalition government, Parish and Town Councils will be in a position to do even more in the future.

Everything we come into contact with on a daily basis affects how we feel and what we do - so how much effort do you actually make to get your opinions known? Voting in local parish and town council elections takes so little time, but will have a daily impact on you for the next four years, because councillors remain in office for a four year term and their decisions affect the future for your whole community.

What is a Parish council?

Parish councils are the tier of local government **closest to the people**. Parish Councils represent the concerns and aspirations of a genuine local community. They are not a voluntary organisation, not a charity nor (a common mistake) anything to do with the Church. The part-time nature of the Parish Council should not, however, be taken as any indication of the effectiveness and efficiency of the council as many Parish Councils work very hard for their electors and can run a wide range of services very effectively. Despite being strictly audited each year, Parish Councils are the most non

bureaucratic and the cheapest kind of local authority in existence.

What can they do?

As Parish Councils were created in law, they can only act within the law by exercising their powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Statutes (i.e. Acts of Parliament). Anything a Parish Council tries to do outside these powers is *ultra vires*, in other words, outside the law.

The range of powers available to Parish Councils continues to change and proposals announced by the new coalition government especially in relation to 'Decentralisation and Localism' give a clear indication about the government's plans to reinvigorate local politics by giving more power to councils and communities. Legislation enacting the changes will come into force at a later date, but the message is clear: services are to be improved by bringing them closer and making them more responsive to local communities. Already Local Council responsibilities are many and varied, including (not a comprehensive list) the purchase of land and buildings, providing and maintaining village greens, the provision of recreational facilities, crime prevention measures and traffic calming. In future these responsibilities will be far greater.

Parish Councils have many powers if they choose to use them. It is how and which of these powers that councillors decide to use, that makes a vibrant forward thinking Parish Council and can bring positive benefits to communities. The basic responsibility of Parish and Town Councils is to make the lives of their local communities more comfortable by representing the whole electorate within the parish, delivering or co-ordinating services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in the parish. Parish Councils can also comment on planning applications and be represented at public enquiries.

Parish Councils do not receive Council Tax directly from the public, but are primarily funded at present from a small percentage of

the Council Tax charge made by District/Unitary authorities to local householders. Parish and Town Council budgets are a tiny part of the whole Council Tax and Parish and Town Councils do not receive any Government funding or income from business rates. The way that local government is financed is under great scrutiny and there is likely to be a fundamental change in the way that the whole of local government manage their services to the community and the way they fund them.

All meetings of the Council must be open to the public, although for certain restricted items of confidentiality they may occasionally exclude the public.

A Parish or Town Council is the collective voice of its community.

WHO CAN BECOME A PARISH OR TOWN COUNCILLOR?

Please contact the Clerk or look on the Parish Website to find out whether you would qualify to be a Councillor. **Please note that other than a nominal Chairman's allowance, this Council does not pay allowances to Members, although travelling expenses for training and external meetings are paid.**

What does becoming a councillor involve?

A councillor is a member of the Council and is normally elected for a term of four years.

Serving councillors on parish and town councils are a broad mix of men and women of all ages and experience. Whilst they may have differing political views these do not normally extend into their parish council work. What parish councillors do all have in common is **an active interest in their local community** and a **concern** for it.

Councillors take collective decisions which form the policy of the Council. The policy of the Council will therefore reflect the views of the majority of the members.

In addition to attending meetings of the full Council, most councillors are also appointed to be members of certain committees of the

Council which deal with specific areas of council business. The council clerk will advise councillors on their work. Clerks are employed to implement the functions and duties of the Council, as decided by the elected councillors who must act within the law.

Interested in becoming a Councillor – To request an application pack, contact East Dorset District Council at Furzehill on 01202 886201.

Grit Bins

With the extreme weather this Winter the demand for grit bins has naturally escalated. In the past these were supplied and installed by the County Council, however, this year with the cutbacks the County has decided to pass on the cost of the provision of the containers to the Parish and Town Council but retained the authority of where they may be placed.

On the 26 January, 2011, the Parish Council again discussed the possible provision of the bins but were concerned about the potential demand coupled with the maintenance costs and expectation from some residents to provide staff to spread the grit. The Council has already received a considerable number of requests with more coming in all the time. We are sure that this demand will escalate further once more bins are seen around the Parish. The Council does not have the budgetary provision or staffing resources, to supply and maintain the bins, to meet the anticipated demand. The Parish Council has only one member of staff. Changes and cutbacks at both District and County level are pushing more and more responsibilities on to the Parish yet without any additional money or resources to cope with them and with little or no warning to allow the Parish Council to raise budgets to manage them. We are in a period of great change and it is going to take time to resolve a number of these issues.

Grit – self-help for residents

Residents can take some action themselves by grouping together

and purchasing their own grit bin. This has been done successfully in a couple of parish roads.

Step One: is to get a group of residents together

Step Two: decide on a potential location for the bin

Step Three: contact Dorset County Council direct

The County Council has to approve of the location as it is normally Highway land. They will also fill the bin and put it on their schedules for refilling. All of this relies on the public, in that immediate area, to accept certain responsibilities. If the County Council agree to the location they will install the bin for you provided your group accepts certain conditions:

- Grit is provided for the highway and pavements. It is not for personal use on driveways
- Bins are filled free of charge on request provided DCC salt and grit stocks are adequate
- Residents pay the cost of the bin - £78+ VAT for 204 litre capacity (approximately 20 bags). There is a larger size available at about £155+VAT
- Residents accept that they will need to spread the grit and maintain the bin themselves

The contact is the County Gritting Officer at Dorset County Council. Telephone 01305 221333, he can also be contacted via Dorset Direct on 01305 221000.

St Leonards and St Ives Village Hall

The Hall is the only asset the Parish has for the use of the local community, regularly used by forty five organisations and a very popular social venue for private functions. Information can be found posted on the Annexe window as you enter the car park, directly in front of you. More information can be found on our website:

www.stleonardshall.org.uk. Or by telephoning the hall administrator Geraldine on **07847 430815 who can assist with queries and bookings.**

Our internet cafe has been very active for the last 18 months and

meets on a Friday morning in the committee room and a charge of £1 per half hour is made for help with all internet problems. More advanced classes have now started and run for three weeks on a Tuesday afternoon again in the committee room. These courses can be booked by contacting Mrs V. Frecknall on 01425 476558

The hall has always required funding help from the Parish Council the owners of the freehold of the hall, this is true of all community buildings. The Hall is run by a management committee under whom bookings have increased considerably. Inevitably due to the age of the building there are always repairs and replacements necessary and recently the committee approached the Parish Council for grant help. The Parish Council has kindly agreed to assist by giving the following sums for work necessary: £5,787 towards replacement UPVC windows in the main hall, £700 for an urgent roof repair, £2,200 for two new external security doors, £1,003 towards an external security light system and £400 towards the community day costs. A total of £10,090 in all. The Council has also agreed £12,000 for the next financial year 2011/2012 to assist with essential works (health, safety and security items) as identified in our rolling works programme. This money will be found from the precept and reserves built up over the last few years, essentially money provided by the community Council Tax.

The hall has been awarded the Hallmark Accreditation which makes us one of the best in Dorset.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY DAY on 4th JUNE, 2011

Please note that the Parish Clerk is unable to assist with Village Hall queries or bookings.

Exercise can help prevent a cold

Did you know that feeling fit and being active can cut the risk of having a cold by nearly 50%? According to a study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine a team of researchers from North

Carolina, USA found that staying active nearly halved the odds of catching the cold virus and failing that, made the infection less severe.

Bouts of exercise spark a temporary rise in the body immune system that can help to fight off the cold virus.

The Bagot Stack technique is a total exercise system emphasising good posture, central control, mobility and co ordination in a fun and friendly way. Helping to improve your immune system is an added bonus.

Why not come along and try Bagot Stack class at the Village Hall, Braeside Rd, Wednesday Afternoons from 2.00 - 3.00pm and help ward off the cold virus this winter?

For information please ring Diane Wyatt on 01202 386069 or visit our website www.thefitnessleague.co <<http://www.w.thefitnessleague.com/>

Council Meetings and Public Speaking

Meetings of the Council are required by law to be open to the Public, but they are not public meetings. This means that the Public can attend but cannot actually take part in the Council discussion and debate. They are permitted to speak on any item on the agenda and ask questions of the Council. This opportunity is known as the Public Forum and it is standard practice to allow up to 10 minutes before the meeting starts. Public speaking limited to a maximum of 2 minutes per person at the discretion of the Chairman. Obviously if 20 people turn up not all are going to get 2 minutes. In these circumstances it is normal practice to ask groups of people to nominate a spokesperson to speak. The reason that public speaking is limited is that the Council will have various items of business to discuss at that meeting. Many of which have stringent statutory time limitation. This is particularly relevant on planning items as we are only given 21 days to respond. If the

Council takes too long on one item it may miss the opportunity to comment on other equally important issues. The Chairman also has the authority to temporarily close a meeting to hear further from a Member of the Public if the meeting feels it is relevant, but that person is not part of the Council debate.

Financial Report

During the financial year 2010/11 the Parish Council has continued to monitor costs and obtain the best value for money. We have maintained our general obligations such as the maintenance of recreation grounds, grass cutting and tree felling, cleaning and maintenance of bus shelters, the provision and servicing of dog bins, repair and maintenance of Parish noticeboards etc. In addition, we have entered into a contract for the services of a lengthsmen for general duties such as leaf clearing and other necessary jobs to ensure the tidiness and overall appearance of the Parish. With the cutbacks at both District and County Council level, it is highly likely that we will seek to increase the lengthsmen's hours to deal with such matters as weed-killing and other duties no longer being done by the relevant authorities.

We have continued our support of various bodies which are of relevance to our parishioners. These include CAB, Greyfriars mini-bus, Air Ambulance and Dial a Ride.

We also support the Age Concern Monday group and the afternoon Wednesday and Friday clubs at the Village Hall and the Youth Club. The major recipient of grants has continued to be the Village Hall (details in the Village Hall report). The next financial year will see a change in the way we give them financial support as it will be in the nature of core-funding.

Each recipient of donations or grants is requested to furnish financial details and the number of parishioners dealt with. All grants/donations are reviewed annually.

When the draft budget for the coming financial year was drawn up, we made a guesstimate of around 3% inflation. Currently, it is running at 4% and is predicted to rise to 5%. The precept for 2011/12 shows a 0.9% increase as the Parish Council has tried very hard to minimise the effect on parishioners.

We will have to draw on our reserves to cover any costs over the predicted budget and will already be using some of our reserves to cover the core-funding of the Village Hall.

The Parish Council can be contacted as follows:-

In writing:
Mrs A Jacobs,
Parish Clerk,
Parish Office,
Village Hall,
Braeside Road,
St Leonards, Ringwood
BH24 2PJ

Telephone: 01425 482727
Office hours Tuesday-
Friday 10.30am to
12.30pm

By Email:
stleonardsstives@dorsetparishes.gov.uk

Web Site:
www.stleonardspc.org.uk

Important notice: **Flying of Model Aircraft**

The Council has not given permission for the flying of model planes or other model aircraft at Braeside Road Recreation Ground or Horton Road Village Green. These sites are totally unsuitable for this purpose. We would also point out that such use is a breach of the Air Navigation Order (1) Article 74.