

Chair's Report

Horsley Parish Council Annual Report 2025

The Parish Council is elected to represent the interests of Horsley residents. Every year we give an account to our village of the work we have done. Your Council has 9 Parish Councillors who serve 4-year terms. The position of councillor is unpaid and voluntary. We meet 10 times a year, every month except for December and July, and also have occasional meetings of subgroups who may be considering specific issues or working with parishioners to support wider initiatives. All decisions are made at our monthly meetings, and we try to work in an apolitical way.

Staff

We have a part time Clerk who is responsible for advising us on legal and technical issues. We own and maintain the Playing Field, Pavilion, Playground and Burial Ground and we employ contractors to carry out day-to-day tasks such as maintenance and safety inspections. All other work is undertaken by the Councillors themselves. Our Clerk is professionally qualified (CILCA).

All our minutes and reports are on our website together with our policy documents.

We are committed to equal opportunities for staff, councillors and volunteers, and seek to serve the whole community to the best of our ability.

How do we spend your money?

In 2024-25, we received £40,700 as an annual precept which funds our work (you pay this as a share of Council Tax, and it is collected on our behalf by Stroud District Council). We also receive some additional funds from burial ground fees and occasional project contributions and grants. Our income is used to pay our Clerk and contractors, and to maintain the green spaces and buildings that we are responsible for. We have faced the same pressures as villagers with increased costs because of inflation, especially higher energy costs, but we always ensure we are obtaining value for money for our parishioners.

Since the onset of the pandemic, village resilience has been a major focus of the Parish Council. Over the past year, we have been focused on delivering the Horsley Walking & Cycling Project (at a cost of £17,500, mostly funded by grants) in partnership with Parishioners and we have also made provision in our budget for works to improve the Village Hall Car Park (costing £19,400) which have just been completed. Additionally, we support our village groups with grants and aid to the Village Shop, the Horsley Orchard Project & the Youth Club. Overall, these expenses account for a significant proportion of our budget.

In 2024, we gave £1,500 to the Youth Club, and established a £1,300 Horsley Cultural Fund which is available for grants towards village events.

Each year our accounts are independently audited and published for comment.

We have moved to a paperless system to cut down on costs and wasted paper, and we support digital initiatives whilst being mindful to avoid digital exclusion.

In 2024 we signed the Town and Parish Charter with Stroud District Council and a number of other Local Councils which will improve how we work together. We have also signed the Civility & Respect Pledge.

Our recent achievements:

1. Improving our environment

We have worked with villagers to develop a Biodiversity Policy and bring a renewed focus to supporting our local biodiversity.

We have applied for the Gloucestershire County Council Ash Dieback scheme to obtain trees to be planted within the Parish.

We are part of a county wide group arguing for 20mph speed limit in rural areas.

We have continued to support “no mow May” and are reducing grass-cutting in parts of the Burial Ground to encourage pollinators and provide biodiversity protection.

We comment on all planning applications in the village and argue for the policies which were agreed in our Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2. Improving village resources

We have funded major improvements to the Village Hall car park.

We have repaired and replaced facilities in the play area as this is one of the best-used resources in the village.

We continue to support the Community Shop.

We launched our new website during the year, now on the domain horsleyparish.gov.uk, to provide a single official source of information about our activities and keep our parishioners updated.

We have just launched our free, Community Hub connection sponsored by Gigaclear, which provides Internet Access to the Village Hall and surrounding area for the first time. This improves the facilities of the Hall and allows it to be used in the future for more varied events.

3. Supporting village groups

Local parents run the Youth Club which is an important service for young people in the village.

We provide support and assistance to community groups looking to benefit our village, from the Walking and Cycling Group to the Horsley Shop and Horsley Orchard Project. We are grateful for the many volunteers who support and run community groups throughout the village and wish to record our thanks for their efforts.

Plans for next year

We have developed actions from our Biodiversity Strategy which we intend to implement over the next year and beyond. We hope to support “habi-map” Habitat Mapping to record and help better understand and manage our locally biodiverse resources.

Traffic on the B4058 continues to increase as it is a direct route to the Horsley Household Recycling Centre - we estimate around 250,000 movements to and fro during the year. This coming year we would like to build upon our successful work to encourage walking and cycling to further reduce traffic, especially speeding traffic, through the village if we can.

We will shortly be hosting a Meet Your Council drop-in session to hear from villagers and help make the Council more approachable. We hope this will be a well-attended event which will help inform our future work.

Seb Howells
Vice Chair 2024/25