

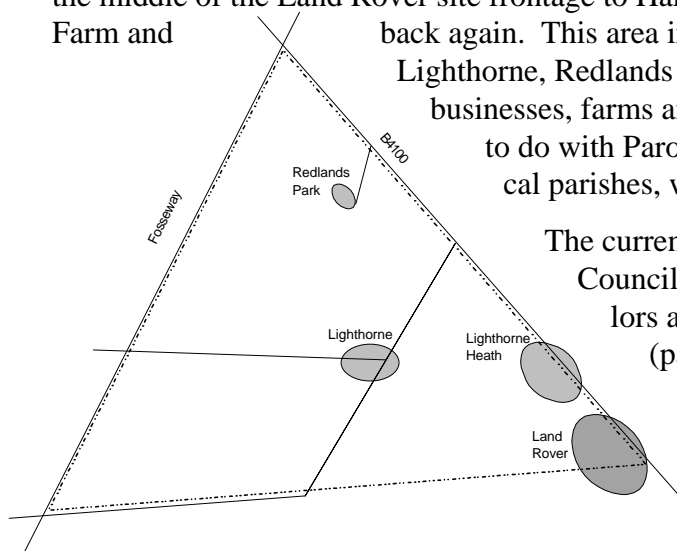
LIGHTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Review 2001

This Council has a track record of using the annual parish meeting as an opportunity to present a verbal report on the year gone by. This year we have been encouraged to produce this Review as a written source of information for you, our electorate. In the following sections you will find an introduction to the Council, an overview of some of the things we do and a summary of how we spend the money we receive. The last page will help you contact us. If you have access to the internet a copy of this Review, and other Council information, can be found on the *lighthorneonline* website.

Just what is Lighthorne Parish Council?

The civil parish of Lighthorne covers the roughly triangular area enclosed by the B4100 from near the middle of the Land Rover site frontage to Harwoods House, down the Fosseway to Three Gates Farm and back again. This area includes the villages of Lighthorne Heath and Lighthorne, Redlands Park, Lighthorne Rough and a number of businesses, farms and other properties. (Parish Councils have nothing to do with Parochial Church Councils: these represent ecclesiastical parishes, which are different.)



The current electoral role has 949 names. There are seven Councillors, elected all together every four years. Councillors are unpaid volunteers, but the Council employs a (part-time) clerk and treasurer.

Lighthorne parish has more electors than many other rural parishes and the Parish Council is very active. The law requires that there should be a minimum of 4 meetings a year, whereas we usually hold 12 (see

notice boards or the website for details). Time is allowed at Council meetings for public participation, but in addition we hold surgeries or call public meetings whenever there is a special need.

To keep Council meetings down to a reasonable length we wish to be as efficient as we can. To this end the Council has chosen to operate with 3 “working groups” to handle the bulk of its day-to-day workload. The working groups operate in their own way, bringing reports to the full Council. Councillors can then discuss and vote on any proposals that are brought forward.

The working groups are:

Assets, Contracts and Finance: This group monitors the state of the assets of the council, draws up and administers contracts, and advises on financial matters. The Council’s treasurer is the Responsible Financial Officer and is a member of this group.

Highways: Parish councils have limited powers in respect of highways, but we work closely with Warwickshire County Council (WCC), which is the area Highway Authority, because we know that many highway issues are of concern to our electorate.

Planning: Again, parish councils have very limited powers, but Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) have a policy of consultation with parish councils and we participate fully. This is the only working group with delegated powers (due to time constraints in the planning system).

————— What did the Council *do* last year? —————

The full minutes of the Council have been published on the *lighthorneonline* website since August 2000, although please be aware that the Council does not run this site. Minutes and other public documents of the Council are available from the Clerk, who also has copies of planning applications affecting the Parish. (Please telephone to make an appointment first.) Here is a selection of items from the last year to give you an idea of what keeps us busy:

Rights of Way: The Council first signed a “Parish Path Partnership” agreement with WCC three years ago to ensure that, over time, the ten miles of footpaths and bridleways within the Parish would be fully opened up. We continue to renew the partnership annually and work towards that goal. There has been an ongoing programme of surveying, negotiating with landowners, clearing obstructions, and installing and replacing stiles and gates. There is plenty still to do, but we now have more than 80% of the network open (subject to the current FMD outbreak). We are also negotiating to create a new permissive path over farmland from Lighthorne to the sports ground.

Bus Shelter: The Council will pay for a new bus shelter which will be installed at the lay-by on the B4100 in Lighthorne Heath. Installation is expected to be complete by June 2001.

Traffic Calming: This is a topic which is under constant review. The Council has been lobbying WCC to make improvements. Signs on the B4100 were replaced last year and we learnt in February that the B4100 through Lighthorne Heath has been formally identified as an area of concern. We will continue to press for speed reductions. Signs in Lighthorne are also expected to be replaced in the coming year, but we have to be sensitive to the conservation area status of much of the village.

Planning: We received 55 applications to review during the year. We are often required to respond within 2-3 weeks, although for an agricultural notification we may only get a week. Many applications are tree orders related to the conservation area. The working group operates so that Councillors from the community closest to the application site are notified in time to see the plans and consider the impact they will have. We are taking an active part in the early consultation on the new District Local Plan. The application from Aston Martin to build cars on the Land Rover site was opposed by the Council and took a lot of Councillors’ time, including holding public meetings in both our major communities, researching and developing our representations, and speaking at several planning meetings. SDC approved the application in the end, but we succeeded in getting important planning conditions added. We participate in consultation meetings with Ford (the parent company) and are monitoring progress of the development to minimise its impact on the electorate.

Assets: For historical reasons the Parish Council has most of its physical assets within the village of Lighthorne. Street lighting there belongs to the Parish Council and we pay for its maintenance and for the electricity. We own the sports ground and we have been taking close interest in the difficulties of the Lighthorne Sports Association because we want to see the facility remain available for future generations. The Broadwell is a listed structure in our care and the area in front of it was being damaged by the nearby Willow tree. We involved the public in consultation about the future of the tree and the management of the adjacent land; the response to date has been most gratifying. Since the tree had a preservation order on it we were involved in lengthy discussions with SDC, but they have now given permission for it to be felled and replaced by a “Common Ash”. Safety issues with some of the play equipment behind Lighthorne Village Hall is involving us in extensive consultation to get best value from maintenance work.

New Village Greens: The Council discussed what might be done to further enhance the environment at Lighthorne Heath. We identified three areas of land which we consider meet the criteria for them to be considered as Village Greens. We have now begun the legal process to have them recorded as such and therefore protected as a community asset.

————— Summary of Finances —————

Lighthorne Parish Council's precept for 2000/2001 amounted to £23.08 for a band D household (and we have *not* increased this amount for 2001/2002). The draft accounts show how it was spent:

Our income (from the precept - Council Tax):	<u>£10,600</u>
We spent:	
Administration	£3,190
Use of Lighthorne Village Hall as a Post Office	£460
Insurance	£1,000
Electricity	£550
Repairs / Maintenance	£1,200
Grants / Donations:	
Heartstart	£500
Lighthorne Millennium Village Sign	£500
Other	£400
	£1,400
	<u>£7,800</u>
Leaving unspent:	<u>£2,800</u>

which has been allocated to the bus shelter to be erected on the B4100 at Lighthorne Heath.

————— Communication and Consultation —————

The Council instigated a “surgery” approach during the last year which seems to be appreciated, but times are changing. The government's recent Rural White Paper made the following statement:

Access over the internet will increasingly be used to provide convenient information and advice in rural areas, under our commitment to make all public services available on line by 2005. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) access points through schools, libraries and (in the future) post offices will provide assisted and convenient access in rural areas.

It is clear that this will affect the way that (local) government services are delivered. The government appears to favour a move from representative democracy to participatory democracy. A parish council is the first level of a hierarchy. We invite you to write to us with your views. Here are some questions you might like to consider:

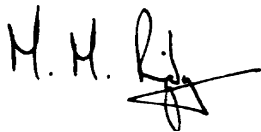
- On what topics do you think the Parish Council should be concentrating?
- What topics should we leave to you to express your own views directly to the other tiers?
- How might we use ICT to set up local forums for consultation and idea-sharing?
- Do public meetings still have a place?
- How can we best communicate and consult with **you**?

Your thoughts on all these topics will help to shape the way that local democracy operates in the future. Please let us have your comments and views. Write to the Clerk to the Council, e-mail the Chairman, or talk to any of your Parish Councillors (see the last page for addresses).

———— The Future ————

Stratford District Council has recently voted the funding required to re-examine the boundary issues associated with splitting the Parish. It is many years since you, the electorate, petitioned for this to happen. The present Parish Council supports this move. Soon we may have two parish councils, one representing Lighthorne Heath and the other the remainder of the existing parish. Either way there will be elections. The government feels that a “quality parish council” should consist of councillors who stood for election rather than being co-opted. They feel that this demonstrates a thriving community. You may disagree, but if the allocation of central funds depends on obtaining “quality parish council” status then let’s go for it!

The present Parish Council feels that it is in a strong position with active members from both communities working for the benefit of the whole Parish. We should like to see that continue, and if there are two new councils we have people with the experience and expertise to grow both councils into bodies to be proud of. But new councillors will be needed. Please start thinking about that now. Find out more. Consider if *YOU* could be one of those people. Get involved!



Cllr Mike Rigby, Chairman.
11 May 2001.

———— Contacts ————

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You can visit the Lighthorne website at <http://www.lighthorneonline.com> and the Rural White Paper can be found at <http://www.wildlife-countryside.detr.gov.uk/ruralwp/index.htm>

This document could be made available in larger print, if requested.