



The Parish Council, The Camp and East and West Commons

The Parish Council maintains both East and West Commons which are owned by David Baldwin, the Lord of the Manor. The Camp – an early British Iron Age Fort – was purchased by the Council in 1952, thus ensuring its continuing enjoyment by Residents but also becoming its responsibility. All three are widely used by residents for walking, running, dog walking, for entertaining children on the play equipment on East Common, cycling and, on The Camp, horse riding. Maintenance involves:

- grass cutting and strimming areas that cannot be reached by the tractor
- removing dead or dangerous trees and overhanging and fallen branches
- Inspecting footpaths and keeping them clear of the ever invasive holly and brambles
- supplying seats, (and keeping them free of graffiti), litter and dog bins
- looking after the two ponds on West Common, cutting back rushes, spraying against crassula (a spreading pond weed) and removing rubbish thrown into them
- Volunteers and Councillors making frequent collections of rubbish and litter and
- weekly, inspection (for health and safety reasons) of the play equipment on East Common.

The Council has great assistance from **The Conservation Volunteers**, a group of residents who meet once a month on a Saturday morning, and help keep the bushes and undergrowth clear of the footpaths. Tools – and coffee – are provided and this very friendly and hardworking group would be delighted to welcome additional help. Those interested should contact the Parish Office.



The major consideration for the Parish Council is to keep the Commons and Camp as natural as possible. It strives to do this whilst offering something of interest for all ages, such as:

- play equipment on East Common suitable for the very young to the pre-teens, such as the very popular aerial runway. In order to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Council has set aside £20,000 to provide additional equipment and residents' ideas would be very welcome on what is needed.
- The football pitch on West Common used by four teams, including teams for juniors. Phil Mooney and his colleagues at Gerrards Cross and Fulmer do a tremendous amount of work both in

maintaining the grass and in running the teams. The Council cuts the grass and, out of the Tesco Fund, gave money to improve the pitch.

- The 2,500 metre running route on both Commons which is widely used. A map is available from the Parish Office.
- the recently erected Youth Shelter (pictured) on East Common, also paid for out of the Tesco Fund and already very popular with our teenagers.
- Permitting occasional Fun Fairs and other entertainment on West Common. During this, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Year, there will be additional activities including "Run the Race", organised by the local Churches.

The Council is seeking expert advice on the maintenance of the two ponds on West Common, both hit by the current drought. From this April the Pond Conservation Authority will be monitoring both and preparing a management report. To date this Authority confirms that what has been done is moving in the right direction. A Forestry Management Plan is also being prepared for the Commons and a grant of £1,000 has been obtained by the Council towards this. On the Camp, the Council has sought expert advice on the preservation of the many ancient trees and has recently authorised the building of a 12 metre length of steps at the top of the Valley Way footpath to help pedestrians gain access.

Please tell us so we can help you

Email clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk and tell the parish council what you think about its management of the commons and the camp. What additional facilities would you like to see?

- more play equipment and, if so, what?
- wooden, fixed, exercise equipment at various locations on the commons?
- a cycle track?
- what else?

Planning update

Empty shops in centre

We have all noticed the depressing gaps in our shopping centre but there is nothing the Councils can do about it. The solution is in the hands of the Landlords and those setting the rate of business taxes. It is the high cost of both which is putting off retailers.

The Councils – South Bucks District (SBDC) and the Parish Council – are both very reluctant to permit change of user from retail to, say, offices or a food outlet, feeling that once other use is permitted, the shop will be gone forever. Gerrards Cross is classed as a District Shopping Centre for the purposes of planning. SBDC policies state that change of use of any existing shop unit will only be permitted if there is no loss of A1 use i.e. retail which should retain its predominance in the street scene. The policies seek to provide a range of facilities which should include shops, offices, banks and restaurants to meet the needs not only of their immediate locality but also significant parts of the surrounding area. The aim is to retain the vitality and viability of the shopping centre. There is a balance to be struck: it is unfortunate that in times of recession and when rents are high, traders go out of business.

Summer plans by the Gerrards Cross Traders – financed by the Traders, the Tesco Fund and the Parish Council – to have hanging baskets, flags and trees in planters in the centre will make the centre more attractive and, hopefully, increase the

number of shoppers. Free parking at Tesco's for 3 hours has certainly helped.

Extending Houses

The trend continues – particularly in The Camp and Duke's Wood areas – to apply for permission to extend houses. When considering these applications, both SBDC and the Parish Council pay close attention to the impact on the neighbouring properties. Are they going to be overlooked? Will trees and other screening be retained? What about underground streams? Will access to and from the road be dangerous to other road users?

Conservation areas

Gerrards Cross has two conservation areas which were agreed in 2010. These areas help to protect the built environment which has areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which should be preserved or enhanced.

A guidance for residents was printed and widely circulated. This sets out some helpful explanations of what is meant by a conservation area and the implications for residents within those areas. It does not mean that changes cannot be applied for; it means that consent is required for works of any nature to buildings, walls and trees within the areas. All enquiries and requests for copies of the guidance should be made to the planning department of SBDC.

A recent application for a house to be

put in the large garden of a prominent house has been turned down following letters of objection from neighbours. The Conservation Officer agreed that it was inappropriate and not in keeping within the area. It is a part of the policy that the space between buildings is important and needs to be given consideration.

Viewing planning applications

From September this year, SBDC is cutting costs by no longer sending hard copies of planning applications to Parish Councils, which are responsible for giving the local view to the planning authority, namely SBDC. Instead they must be viewed on line. The Chairman of our Planning Committee will look at all plans affecting Gerrards Cross and evaluate which require a site visit, which require comment and which can be approved without either. Councillors on the Planning Committee then view their allocated plans on line and make any required site visits. Plans requiring further investigation will then be referred to the whole Committee.

Plans can be viewed on line on the SBDC website or in person at the District Council offices at Capswood, Denham, Bucks. If neighbours have objections to plans, they are encouraged to write to SBDC with a copy to the Parish Council.

Grants made by the council

£12,005 of Grants made to local Charities, Clubs and Organisations were listed in the January issue of this Newsletter. Since then, a further 3 grants have been made:

£500 to the GX Cricket Club for new equipment.

£725 to the Community Centre for a bouncy castle and climbing wall at their 29 April Dog Show

£3,800 to the GX Traders for trees and iron planters along the Packhorse Road.



Parish Council Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting held on 25 April was not as well attended as past years. May we take this to mean that our residents are satisfied with what we are doing?



Highways news

Switching off of our street lights

The Council has made strong objections to the decision by Bucks County Council to switch off permanently the lights on the A40 between Tatling End and Beaconsfield. The A40 is not only heavily used by cars, HGV vehicles and buses, it is the official diversion route when the M40 motorway is closed. It is well used by cyclists who have to ride in the main carriage way as there is no alternative cycle route.

Gerrards Cross is the local shopping centre/railway station for residents of Tatling End. Tatling End is also in the catchment area for local schools in Gerrards Cross. Children walk to and from school along the A40 and, in the winter when it is dark, along unlit footpaths.

This stretch of the A40 is on the A40, 740 and 305 bus routes. As a result of this switch off, residents have to wait in darkness and, at the bus stops opposite Bulstrode Park and at the junction with Mumford Lane, standing in the carriage way in pitch darkness directly in the path of oncoming vehicles, as there is no retreat of any sort.

The street lights were originally installed on the A40 to reduce accidents by a factor of 10%. Nothing has changed in this respect and this is still valid. The Parish Council has suggested alternatives of switching off the lights between midnight and 5am or switching off every alternative light but Bucks County Council has refused both.



Why those bollards in Packhorse Road?

Admittedly not objects of beauty but, unfortunately very necessary. Why? Because some residents persistently, and notwithstanding fines and warnings, parked on the pavement opposite Marks & Spencer causing damage to the brick paving. The Parish Council had this paving laid as a more attractive alternative to slabs and it is very long lasting – but not if driven over and parked on repeatedly by 4 X 4s.

Moreland Drive School

Residents continue to complain about the damage to the grass verges (below) close to the Primary School, caused by School Mums parking on them whilst dropping off or collecting children. This also causes congestion but constant pleas and warnings

from the School and the Police have no effect.

Having tried everything else, the Council is now investigating with Bucks County Council the planting of trees on the verges.

Resurfacing of Bulstrode Way to A40

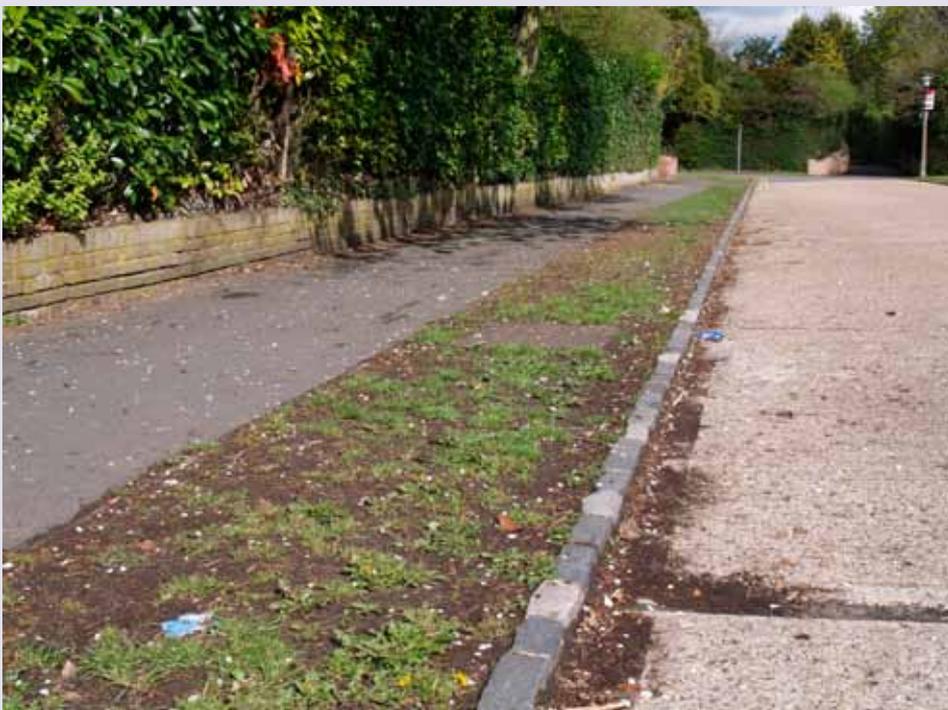
The Council understands that this is planned to be done before the end of the year.

Traffic Lights at Tesco

Following the acceptance of the lights by Bucks County Council, the Parish Council's Highways has formed a Working Party to see what can be done to improve the traffic flow and associated rat runs and improve the safety for pedestrians. We would particularly like to see the traffic lights at Station Road removed and a pedestrian crossing put in the area where the previous one was.

We had written to Peter Hardy the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation for support on this matter and he had offered to have one of his officials meet with us. Following the Annual Parish Council, where the issue was not raised, he has subsequently withdrawn this offer stating that there is insufficient resident concern.

From the continuing comments we receive, we do not believe this to be the case and request that if you are not satisfied with the way these traffic lights function you email Peter Hardy at p Hardy@buckscc.gov.uk, copying clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk.



Save our Library – Update

The target date for the Library to become the Gerrards Cross Community Library in association with Bucks County Council [BCC] is 1 September. From this date the Library Working Party, chaired by William Skerett, will take over the running of the Library jointly with BCC, using 2 trained part-time librarians, supplied by BCC, and Volunteers from the local community. BCC will continue to maintain the existing premises and supply books, DVDs etc. as well as permitting access to its reservation systems. Initially the opening hours of the Library will remain the same and residents should notice little change as all existing services will continue.

Many residents have come forward to offer their services as Volunteers and training has already started. However

more are required to work half a day once or twice a month. Duties are issuing and returning books and DVDs, advising residents on their choices, returning books to shelves etc. Training is given and an experienced 'someone' will always be on hand to help. To volunteer register at www.gxlibrary.org

Residents have also been most generous in making donations to help secure the Library's long-term future by financing the shortfall between BCC grants and the annual running costs of the Library but more Benefactors and Friends are urgently sought. The Gerrards Cross Community Library Charity has been formed and registered with HM Revenue so that donations can be gift-aided. To find out more go to www.gxlibrary.org

Your Library is being kept open thanks initially to the Parish Council and subsequently to the hard-work of the Working Party, the co-operation of BCC, the Volunteers that have come forward and the Benefactors and Friends. Generous donations have also been made to the Library funds by the Parish Council and from the Tesco Fund.



New Council Member

Ian Bayliss (right) has been closely connected with Gerrards Cross for the past 6 years. He works for the European Space Agency at its new Harwell Centre located near Didcot. His areas of expertise are project planning, finance, budgets, writing reports and chasing actions - all areas of relevance to Parish Council work.



Ian has always been involved in voluntary work and hopes to make a positive contribution to Gerrards Cross at grass roots level through his membership of the Council.

Run the Race

"Run the Race" was formed by the local churches working in partnership to bring two weeks of free, community-focused events to Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter during the Olympic fortnight. A big screen will be erected on West Common starting with a broadcast of the Opening Ceremony and ending with a community festival and big screen broadcast of the Closing Ceremony. During the two weeks there will be a children's club with

"Timebreaker", sports café, seniors teas and evening events; something for everyone. For more information, visit the "Run the Race" website at www.runtherace.org.uk.



WAITROSE UPDATE

The store will open on 31 May. Bays in which to leave Waitrose trolleys will be erected in the Station Road car park opposite at Waitrose's expense. Waitrose will also pay to re-surface the car park and for the alterations to the entrance and exit. However the car park will continue to be operated by South Bucks District Council who will collect the parking charges.

Gerrards Cross Parishioners Electronic Database

We are establishing a database for use by the Parish Council, and no one else to record the names, postal address, telephone number and email address of Parishioners. We will ask you to log on to the database and record your details. The objective is to allow the Parish Council to communicate more quickly and more cost effectively with you for distribution of the newsletter and planning application issues. We would appreciate your feedback and comments on this and any other Highways issues outlined above, by email of course, if possible.

www.gerrardscross.gov.uk

We'd love to hear from you, it's your community, your views.



Please contact us on 01753 888018 or email us at

clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk