

## **Bolney Parish Council Chair's Report for 2026**

I would like to share what the Parish Council has achieved since the Chair Report last May.

### **The Parish Council**

The Parish Council has met on the third Tuesday of each month throughout the year (apart from August) and all meetings have been open to the public. The Parish Council has a full compliment of 9 councillors and it remains a politically independent council. From January this year, meetings now start at the slightly earlier time of 7pm. A resident who wishes to raise an issue or ask a question may attend any Parish Council meeting to speak to councillors.

To keep up to date with issues that may impact on Bolney, members of the Parish Council regularly attended briefings held by Sussex Police concerning Road Safety, meetings of the Mid Sussex and the West Sussex Associations of Local Councils and meetings concerning the District Plan Review, of which more below.

The Parish Council has held a number of informal surgeries at the Rawson Hall to give residents the opportunity to meet with members of the Parish Council to raise any issues or concerns they may have.

The Parish Council website contains information about the Parish Council, a calendar of events, agendas and minutes for the Parish Council meetings, and details of who to contact to report issues such as pot holes or fly-tipping, for example. Residents can also subscribe to receive news, updates, meeting agendas and minutes by email.

### **District Plan Review and Foxhole Farm**

The Mid Sussex District Council District Plan Review process began in January 2022. The Regulation 19 draft District Plan was submitted by Mid Sussex District Council to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in July 2024 following the conclusion of the second public consultation held in early 2024. 340 objections were made by members of the public and the Parish Council in the second consultation against the proposals in the Draft Plan to allocate land at Foxhole Farm for 200 homes.

The initial Stage 1 Examination hearings took place in October 2024 after which the District Plan Examination was paused for over a year. Earlier this year, the Examination restarted with a new Planning Inspector appointed to conduct the Examination process and the Stage 2 hearings took place this Spring. The Parish Council prepared and submitted written representations for consideration by the Inspector during the Examination hearings.

Unfortunately, during the period in which the District Plan Examination was paused, Wates, the promoter of the Foxhole Farm site, took the opportunity to submit a planning application to Mid Sussex District Council for outline planning permission for its proposals for 200 homes

on the Foxhole Farm site. Despite over 350 objections submitted by the Parish Council and residents against the planning proposals, and oral representations made against the proposals at the planning hearing before the District Planning Committee by the Parish Council and others, the Planning Committee approved the application for outline planning permission. The applicant now has until November 2027 to submit a planning application to MSDC for approval of the reserved matters, that is, the full details of the appearance, layout, scale and landscaping of the proposals.

### **Other planning matters**

The Parish Council Planning Committee comprises five councillors and has met every month (except August) to consider all planning applications in the Parish. This year the committee has considered 32 applications and submitted comments on each of these applications to Mid Sussex District Council.

The Parish Council involved the Enforcement Department at Mid Sussex District Council in several planning breaches at sites across the Parish, including at the former Marylands site, at Piccadilly Woods and at Nailards Wood, and will continue to press for action to remedy these planning breaches.

### **Parish assets and maintenance**

The Parish Council has been responsible for the cost of the electricity and maintenance of 15 street lights in the village area, 3 of the dog waste bins and ensuring that the 13 salt bins across the Parish were full at the start of the winter season. We were responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Parish notice boards; village bus shelters; War Memorial; 12 finger posts across the Parish; Speed Indicator Device (SiD); picnic tables and benches on Batchelors Field, and of the Bolney village gates and signs.

The Parish Council has pushed MSDC to have the multi-use games area (or 'MUGA') at Batchelor Fields resurfaced for the safety of users. Progress is slow but the Parish Council will continue to keep the pressure on MSDC to complete the works as quickly as possible.

The Parish Council receives its income through collection of a precept from parishioners. The precept is set after a budget is prepared each year to cover the costs of the running and maintenance of these assets, insurance, forward planning, and other expenditure for the following financial year. Once finalised and agreed by the Parish Council, it is submitted for payment by Mid Sussex District Council and then collected by them through monthly Council Tax payments.

### **Grants**

The Parish Council supported local groups and village societies through grants.

We supported the maintenance of the churchyard through an annual grant to the Parish Church, another to the Rawson Hall for the cleaning of the outside public toilets and another to the Horticultural Society for daffodil bulbs to be planted in the village verges. At the end

of the financial year we also made grants to charitable organisations which have supported residents in Bolney such as 4Sight Vision and the St Peter and St James and St Catherine's Hospices.

## **Volunteers**

The Parish Council has continued to coordinate the volunteer group's activities. The group has cleared footpaths in the village and the cleared and tidied the War Memorial. Over the summer months the volunteers ensured that the verges around the village were kept tidy and have organised litter picks.

Councillors regularly walked the Public Rights of Way across the Parish and reported any issues to West Sussex County Council.

## **Devolution and local government reorganisation**

You may have read in the local and national press about the Government's plans for devolution and local government reorganisation.

Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government, and the creation of a new strategic authority that will be led by a mayor. The local government reorganisation is the process of restructuring local authorities from a two-tier (currently County and District councils) to a one-tier council or unitary authority.

In Sussex, devolution will create a Mayoral County Combined Authority which will take responsibility for big, strategic issues such as highways, transport, economic growth, health and public safety. The mayoral elections are scheduled to take place next year. The newly created single council, or unitary authority, formed by the reorganisation of the current two-tier council system, will operate most of the day-to-day services currently delivered by the County and District councils, and the County and District Councils will be disbanded. The reorganisation of the councils will be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028.

The Government was due to decide in March between a number of alternative structures that had been proposed for the reorganisation of Sussex. Instead, however, it announced its own proposals. These would see two new authorities for West Sussex (one combining Mid Sussex, Horsham, Crawley and Chichester Districts and the other comprising Worthing, Adur and Arun), one for East Sussex (but with some of the coastal parts of Lewes District surrendered to an extended Brighton and Hove authority so as to provide Brighton and Hove with more land for building to ease its housing shortage) and one for Brighton and Hove. It also announced that local government elections will go ahead this year and therefore the West Sussex County Council elections will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> May. Joy Dennis, who has served as County Councillor for the district of Hurstpierpoint and Bolney for the last 9 years, has decided not to stand again for election for the District, so Bolney will have a new County Councillor in May.

We will keep the Parish informed as more details become available

**And finally**

Thank you to my fellow Parish Councillors who volunteer their time and expertise for the benefit of our community.

And a special thank you to Debbie Thomas, the Parish Clerk. Debbie is the first point of contact with the community, the County and the District Councils. She prepares the monthly agendas and minutes, the monthly and annual financial reports and ensures we comply with our regulatory obligations. The Parish Council is extremely grateful for everything that Debbie does and the Parish is very fortunate to have such an experienced and proactive Clerk.

**Cllr Nicky Hanley**  
**Chair Bolney Parish Council**  
**April 2026**