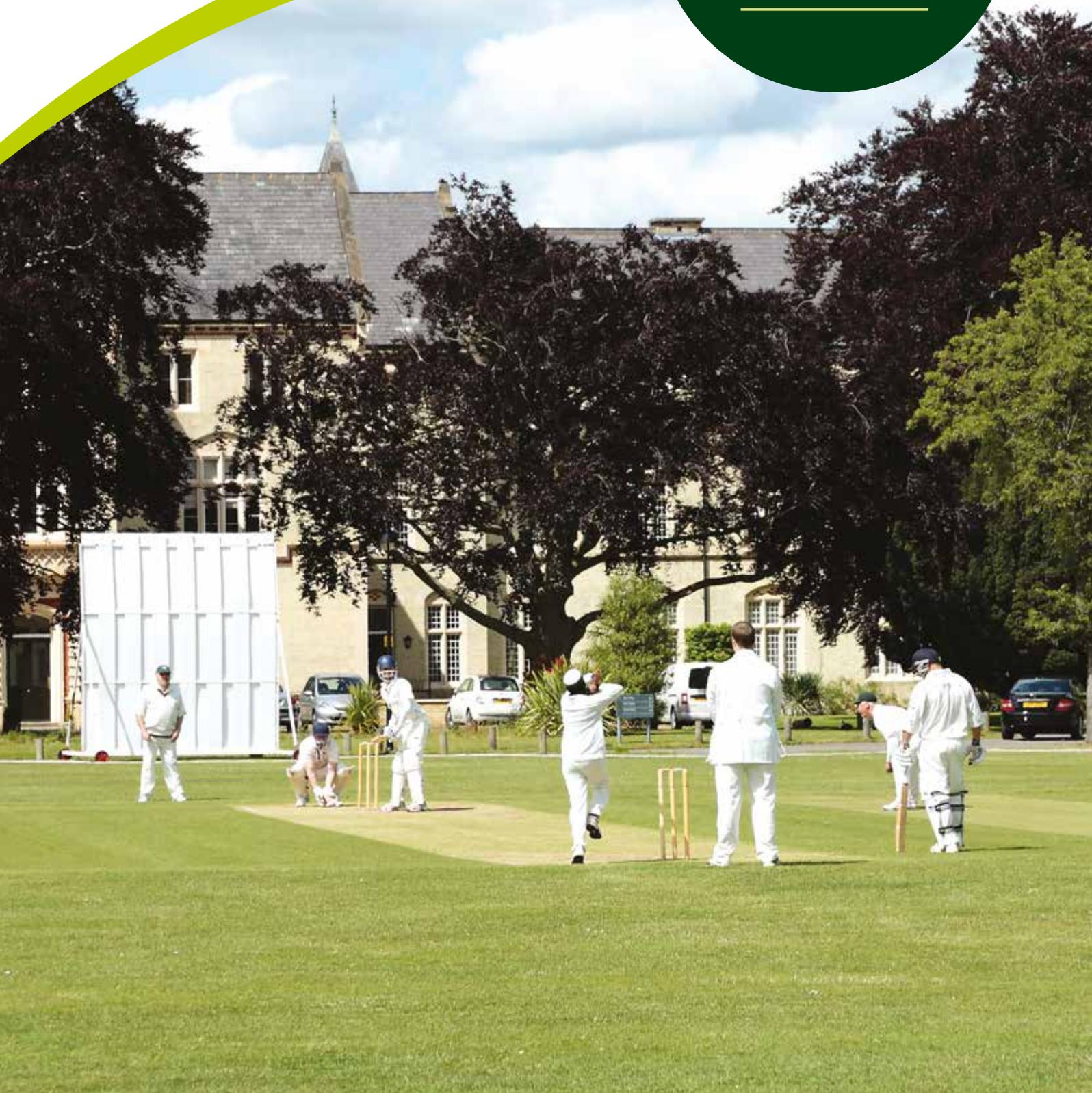


Annual Report  
& Accounts  
2014/2015





Barrie Dack Chairman

# Report from our Chairman

This is my second Annual Report and the Fairfield Parish Council is now fully established with signs that, at long last, we are beginning to achieve things that will benefit the long-term future of Fairfield.

Our passage to get to this point has been arduous. At times it felt like we were hitting our heads against a brick wall. In the business world, where I spent my working life, you make a decision and in days, often minutes, you have put that into practice and are, hopefully, reaping some of the benefits.

If only local government could move that fast! Our agenda has been littered with repetitive items throughout the time but we have recently been able to tick quite a few off and to add new ones.

Our most important task to date is to produce both a Neighbourhood and Parish Plan that will be blueprints for the future. My colleague, Councillor Phil Mitchinson, outlines this elsewhere in this Annual Report. My thanks to Phil and his team for all of the work they have done so far for the Parish.

Much concern has been expressed about the speed of vehicles on Fairfield roads, many of which are far too narrow and this we can do nothing about! How some drivers go at the speed we see, I don't know. Surely they realise the danger they are causing – particularly in the main road of Dickens Boulevard where there is only one way traffic most of the time.

Your answers to specific questions in the Parish questionnaire have allowed us to approach Central Bedfordshire Council with a view to making Fairfield a 20mph zone. When we first asked for this we were told we needed to prove public backing. Your answers very much agreed with this proposal.

But don't hold your breath; the whole procedure means that it will be about 12 months before this can be introduced. There has to be further consultations and legal processes to go through before Central Bedfordshire Council can issue an order under the Road Traffic Act. The cost of the whole process, likely to be up to £5,000, will come out of our Parish tax.

There has been an encouraging request for allotments while the growing need for recreation space is obvious. A fine day sees scores of youngsters playing football on the grass areas adjacent to Tesco. Children make a habit of growing up and will soon require more formal facilities while it would be good to see



“Things are now really starting to take shape!”

the Fairfield Football Club have its own home, plus a place for families to enjoy sport. The problem here is that no land was left free for these facilities in the master plan. We are now negotiating both with Central Beds Council and tenant farmers to obtain some land for these purposes. We have identified one area as a preference and are now awaiting the result of Central Beds Council negotiations with the tenant farmer concerned. The mystery surrounding areas of land behind the community centre, the tennis court and the orchards has now been solved. Alas, a solution to find a way forward, so that the community can use and enjoy these facilities, has so far not been very successful.

Report continued on the following page...



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“All the hard work is finally paying off!”

## Report from our Chairman (Continued)

At our first annual meeting, MP Alistair Burt offered his assistance and he kept his word. Sadly we have not been able to bring the freeholder, Hotbed Investments, to the table.

We do now have Central Beds Council on our side. It is the failure of their predecessor, Mid-Bedfordshire Council, to enforce planning conditions back in 2008 that has largely caused the problems we face today.

Hotbed's statement that they intend to sell all their freehold on Fairfield gave us hope that we can thrash out a solution. But this has gone totally quiet.

Our MP has been more successful in bringing developer PJ Livesey to book over failures within Fairfield Hall that are stopping completion certificates being granted. Work is now in progress to finish these matters.

Here I have to thank Councillor Chris Bidwell, for the help and guidance he has given to the hall directors that has helped them steer in the right direction to get a solution. The time he has given is far beyond that expected.

The Localism Act passed two years ago has given us some hope. We have issued what are known as "Right to Bid" options on all the community land – including both the Cricket and Bowls grounds. This means that if the

freeholder does decide to sell he must give the Parish Council an option and we have six months to raise any money required.

However, it is a "Right to Bid" not a "Right to Buy". The same act gives Parish and town Councils the right to declare land as local green-space if that is the wish of the people. Again the answers you gave to the questionnaire have given us overwhelming support on this. These areas will therefore form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It also gives us the ability to reinforce the Design Statement that formed the Master Plan. This is over 10 years old and thus ceases to have any value to planners. A recent case has shown that the government expects authorities to respect the wishes of the people right from the questionnaire stage.

In years to come I think the Localism Act will prove a powerful tool for authorities such as ours. It gives us rights to run our affairs without interference to a far higher degree than before.

There is a small amount of public art money left in the developers budget. After consultation with groups on Fairfield it has been decided to use this money to enhance the rather bland Urban Park.

"Improvements to the Urban Park are underway"

"We need to get more people actively involved"

A small group has been formed to discuss ways this can be achieved. However, as this 106 money is under the old system, Central Beds Council is very much in the driving seat as to how the money will be spent.

We have been asked by Linden Homes to take over the ownership of the community centre as had previously been agreed with the FPRA. However, the handover is moving quite slowly and we are still at the "talks" stage.

We have successfully applied, and had installed, a defibrillator on Fairfield. Our thanks go to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue for providing this out of their budget. It is on an outside wall at Tesco as it is a condition that it must be accessible 24/7. We thank them for allowing us to do this.

With different bodies running different aspects of the good management of Fairfield, it means that the need for volunteers is greater than elsewhere. I frequently hear the complaint that it is the same people who seem to have a finger in all the pies. If this is so, it is because people are not stepping forward to offer their services. We do not operate a closed shop. If you would like to help with any organisation on Fairfield we can put you in touch with the relevant party.

May I thank my colleagues for their help and support over the past year and our clerk for keeping us on a straight and narrow path. May I particularly thank Councillors Geoff Smith and Viv Batten neither of whom sought re-election in May 2015. Councillor Smith was an instrumental part of the action group that campaigned for the Parish Council while Councillor Batten has done sterling work on preparing the Disaster Plan for Fairfield should we be unfortunate enough to experience one.

# Parish and Neighbourhood Plan Update

In October 2014 all households in Fairfield were invited to complete a Parish and Neighbourhood Plan survey.

The deadline for the submission of the Parish Plan questionnaire was the 25th of November 2014. At that time 226 questionnaires had been submitted online and 324 hard copies had been received. The 550 responses gave us an approximate return of 52% of households in the Parish and hence the results represent the views of a majority of households in Fairfield. In the main the questions were answered as intended but there are some results that may need revisiting.

The main issues identified from the Parish Plan results are:

98% regarded the environment/landscaping and open space important.

96% noted that the main green areas should be protected from any kind of development.

95% noted that any new development and extensions should retain the look and the character of Fairfield in style and materials.

90% said that The Orchards should be restored.

84% supported a 20mph speed limit.

90% wanted parking restrictions on dangerous junctions.

84% said that there was a traffic flow problem within the Parish.

96% generally felt safe within the community during the day with this falling to 79% at night.

These results have given the steering group a clear steer as to what the issues are at Fairfield together with suggestions of what would/could if possible be acceptable improvements. Action groups are currently considering all the options available prior to preparing a draft Parish Plan for the Parish Council to consider.

"The full results of the plan will be published soon"

### The Neighbourhood Plan

We are going to include two main themes:

- Retention of the main green areas within the Parish as open space.
- Local design statement for future developments, conversions and extensions on Fairfield.

We have liaised with Central Bedfordshire Council and agreed the process that needs to be followed to have this approved. An initial draft will be written by the Parish Council and checked for compliance. The draft and supporting evidence will then be open to all Fairfield residents for a six week consultation period. A referendum will then be organised by Central Beds for residents to vote on whether to accept the final draft. If greater than a 50% yes vote is achieved then the final draft will be submitted for final approval.

The neighbourhood plan will then be a legal planning document used alongside planning policies when they determine planning applications. This is a lengthy process with Central Beds Council expecting it to take about eight months from when the initial draft is available.

# Financial Report

Fairfield Parish Council employs the Parish Clerk as its Responsible Financial Officer. The budget is set by the Councillors in November for the following financial year and it is at this time that Councillors consider financing future and ongoing projects.



The annual accounts were agreed at the Parish Council meeting held on 14th May 2015 after having been reviewed by an independent internal auditor. They have now been sent to the External Auditor, BDO LLP Chartered Accountants.

"We're really lucky to have such green areas!"

"Get to know more people in the community"

The following grants were awarded.

Item / Organisation	Item / Description	Amount (£)
Fairfield Youth Club	Youth Leader	£5,130.00
Red Bear	Community Hall Rent	£1,920.00
Fairfield Scouts	Community Hall Rent	£1,657.50
Community Hall	Keyboard and Stool	£549.16
<b>Total Amount</b>		<b>£9,256.66</b>

For the financial year ending 31st March 2015.

Summary of the budget for 2015/16 including what has been brought forward.

Subject / Item	B/F 2014/15	Budget 2015/16	Balance
Administration incl. Wages	£16,536.40	£10,000.00	£26,536.40
Recreation & Public Land	£45,736.04	£38,940.00	£84,676.04
Parish Plan	£16,196.75	£15,000.00	£31,196.75
Parking	£15,000.00	-	£15,000.00
Grants	£475.84	£15,000.00	£15,475.84
Reserves	£20,000.00	£10,000.00	£30,000.00
Interest	£367.59	-	£367.59
VAT	- £3,297.49	-	- £3,297.49
<b>Total Amount</b>		<b>£88,940.00</b>	<b>£199,955.13</b>

Annual Accounts year ended 31st March 2015

Receipts	Amount (£)	Receipts & Payment Summary	Amount (£)
Precept	£88,785.00	Balance at 1st April 2014	£76,430.67
Bank Interest	£262.38	Total Receipts	£91,188.60
VAT Refund	£2,141.22	Total Payments	£56,604.14
<b>Total Amount</b>		<b>Balance To C/F</b>	<b>£111,015.13</b>

Payments	Amount (£)	Bank Accounts	Amount (£)
Administration incl. Wages	£18,153.91	Unity Trust	£110,776.20
Equipment	£653.48	Alto Card	£238.93
Repairs & Maintenance	£732.97	<b>Total Amount</b>	
Recreation Facilities	£27,863.96	<b>£111,015.13</b>	
Parish Plan	£3,803.25		
VAT	£5,396.57		
<b>Total Amount</b>			

# Meet the Council



**Barrie Dack** Chairman

Email: [barrie.dack@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:barrie.dack@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk)

It has been my privilege to be the first chairman of the Fairfield Parish Council but this will be my last year in the position.

If people stay too long in such positions, ideas get stale while things tend to stand still. Fairfield is broadly a young, vibrant community that constantly needs to be looking to the future.

My working career involved writing. First as a local paper journalist and then on a wider scale involving national newspapers and magazines. With others I set up our own publishing company in 1982, which was very broad-based and had divisions in all branches of media.

We broke the company down in the early nineties and I ran a design, PR and digital print company until my retirement.

Covering politics at all levels was a major part of my journalistic career, as well as sports. I am a football fanatic as well as avidly following most other sports. My interest in local affairs comes from this involvement. My current aims for Fairfield are to ensure we keep and restore the Orchards, get allotments for those who want them and provide proper recreation facilities for families and the youngsters on Fairfield who get older by the week.

Hopefully, the coming months will see some progress on that front. But it is a hard slog with many hurdles to cross.



**Phil Mitchinson** Vice Chairman

Email: [phil.mitchinson@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:phil.mitchinson@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk)

My family and I moved to Fairfield in November 2006 into the middle of the mud that was the building site that eventually became Faraday Gardens and Paxton Drive.

The opportunity to become part of the Parish Council came at a time when I had just taken the decision to retire. My post as Director of Corporate Services for Grand Union Housing Group with responsibilities for housing development, asset management, PR and marketing and communications provided me with skills that I thought would be useful to the newly formed Parish council.

Over the past two years I have been mainly responsible for leading the steering group for the Parish and Neighbourhood Plan, advising on the community hall transfer and being one of the three planning advisors to the Parish. I am now vice-chair of the Council and look forward to completing the works in progress and implementing the actions in the Parish plan.

I have been an active sportsman all my life but this has reduced with age to visits to the gym and an occasional game of golf with my teenage son. I do, however, have more time to watch sport than I ever did and do so whenever possible. I admit to being a Newcastle United fan and must be one of the few that can actually remember them winning something.



**Penny Daffarn** Councillor

Email: [penny.daffarn@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:penny.daffarn@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk)

I have lived, with my husband, at Fairfield for 5 years. We bought the house off plan when we retired and decided to move nearer our children so we could share in grandchild care. This is now a major part of our lives. In a previous existence, we led a peripatetic life courtesy of the RAF, enjoying tours around the UK, Germany and Spain. I am a qualified nurse and have worked both as a nurse and an FE teacher, careers that fitted well around my husband's regular moves.

Becoming a Parish Councillor has been a revelation to me. Everything is so convoluted and drawn-out. Standing on the outside, it seemed easy to suggest solutions to our problems, but when I got involved I soon realised there are no easy fixes! My interests are in improving the environment, and maintaining the uniqueness that is Fairfield and the surrounding areas.

I volunteer regularly with Teasel, the conservation group based in Stotfold, and am also an active member of the Green Wheel group, which is working to develop countryside access for Fairfield and our neighbouring towns and Parishes.

When I am not child minding or wading through the 'administrivia' that is local government, I enjoy walking and cycling and particularly going to the gym.



**Chris Bidwell** Councillor

Email: [chris.bidwell@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:chris.bidwell@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk)

I started in the 1970's as a fireman and during my career I was promoted many times finally becoming responsible for fire safety in large London Councils and then as the responsible Fire Safety Enforcement Officer for the whole of London, north of the River Thames. I have represented the London Fire Brigade in law courts and have been involved in many of London's largest emergencies. On retiring, I moved to Fairfield, finding the whole environment, with its unique style and design, a pleasure to live in.

In 2012 and again in 2015 I was elected onto the newly formed Fairfield Parish Council. I want to help preserve and improve Fairfield, ensuring that it remains a unique environment for everyone.

I want to work towards the Council becoming the owners of all the orchards and other areas of land currently still in the hands of one or two developers. My aims are to be able to clear overgrown land, so that it can be used and enjoyed by residents, to provide better amenities for the older teenagers by finding other locations within the Parish that can be used for sporting activities, for allotments for those who want to grow their own, to improve the current central open spaces by planting flower beds so they resemble small gardens, and to look at ways of reducing traffic congestion and improving parking areas.

These seem easy things to achieve but unfortunately there are many obstacles still to be overcome.

# Meet the Council



**Sharon Jones** Councillor

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I am a married mother of two grown-up children and since July 2005 have lived at Fairfield Hall with my husband. We both enjoy the country walks and community environment of Fairfield Park.

I was on the committee of the Fairfield Hall Residents Association until July 2012 when I became a Director of Fairfield Hall Management Company Ltd, a role I continue to hold.

I am a member of the Steering Group involved in developing the Parish and Neighbourhood Plans which will lead to improved provision for everyone who enjoys living in Fairfield including securing various land areas, such as the Orchards, for the whole community.

I care deeply about keeping the sense of friendliness and community which has been built up in Fairfield over the years and feel that being a Councillor gives me the opportunity to expand my involvement and help towards making Fairfield an even more enjoyable place in which everyone can live.



**Tom Milliken** Councillor

Email: [tom.milliken@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:tom.milliken@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk)

After ten years in Letchworth, I moved to Fairfield in 2013. Work brought me to the area, when I was appointed Finance Director of a local commercial property investment group. I'm still with the same group, which I now manage.

I began my professional life as a business economist, and moved into more commercial roles in mid-career.

I have broad commercial experience gained in a mix of multinational and smaller firms, and would like to apply my skills for the benefit of the community.

I enjoy participating in local group activities, and have been Treasurer of Letchworth Film Club for a number of years.

I intend contributing what I can towards maintaining and enhancing our quality of life. I'm keen to see communal facilities, such as sporting amenities and allotments, developed for the benefit of all. I also want the legal relationship between the Council and the orchard landholders resolved so the orchards can be restored to their former glory.

Discover more about your Parish Councillors by reading their profiles.



**Nathan Hanks** Councillor

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I have lived in Fairfield for four years and have been part of the Parish Council for the past two. I previously assisted the residents association with road adoption and highway matters, having been asked to do so following a meeting at the community centre.

I am married and have a young baby at home and I'm keen to ensure that we continue to protect and enhance the Parish in line with the wishes of our residents and to protect and maintain the Parish for the future enjoyment of everyone.

I have worked as a transport planner and highway engineer for the past 12 years and currently run an office in central London for a small consultancy. I am a keen runner, cyclist and cricket player, although with a baby at home I rarely find time for any of that at the moment!



**Katrina Henshaw** Clerk

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All Parish Councils have to have a Clerk, who is a paid employee and whose duties vary depending on the size of the Parish. Our Clerk is Katrina Henshaw, who works for us on a part-time basis. It is her job to ensure that the Council conducts its business properly as well as to provide independent, objective and professional advice and support.

Katrina was previously the Clerk to Ickleford Parish Council for 11 years. During this time she achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA). To achieve this Clerks have to show how a Parish Council operates, how meetings are conducted, how responsibilities are allocated and how to manage activities and finances effectively.

Larger Councils would have a Financial Officer in addition to a Clerk. Katrina combines both jobs and is our responsible Finance Officer. As well as looking after the day to day spending, she completes the end of year accounts ready for a two-tier examination.

Parish Councils appoint an Independent Accountant to examine the books. This is known as an "internal audit". However, the books are then examined a second time by a Government Appointed Auditor. It is also the Clerk's job to make sure the workings of the Council are "transparent" and to keep electors informed. This is principally performed via the Council's website [www.fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk).



“Please get in touch  
it would be great  
to hear from you!”

**Photo Acknowledgements:**

Fairfield Parish Council would like to acknowledge the various photographers, who kindly gave their time and expertise to provide the images for this report. Particular thanks go to Jane Fanghanel, Richard Billing, Nick Reynolds, and Barrie Dack.

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