

Joe Berger

Having been invited to join the Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council by former chairman, Simon Crouch, Joe was soon allocated the role of Chair of Finance. This was not surprising given his financial background: he is a chartered accountant having trained with Price Waterhouse, one of the 'Big Four' accountancy firms in London.

He went on to be Finance Director of the Panini Group, based in Modena, Italy. Most children are probably familiar with their main product which was football stickers. It was a great experience: with his wife and three young children, they were able to enjoy Italy being within easy reach of Verona, Venice, Florence and the Apennine mountains. In the two years there he learnt enough Italian to 'just get by'. Subsequently he has attempted to learn some French!

Following this, he established a company that developed into a large media-based business, running exhibitions in the Gulf region, India and Egypt. He was then the Finance Director of Chestertons, the estate agents, before taking on a similar finance role at an investment bank in the City of London.

Born and brought up in West London, he was educated at St Benedict's in Ealing where he is now the Chair of Governors. He left there to go to University in London where he obtained a degree in Chemistry.

Joe and his family moved from Maidenhead to Peppard about 25 years ago, initially to one of the houses built on the site of the old Highlands School. The main attraction was the good schools in the area. They then moved the short distance to Kingwood Common where they have lived for about 20 years.

Having retired in 2017, Joe's interests include gardening and he has spent many hours investigating his family's ancestry – a time consuming but enjoyable pursuit. He has identified the family name as originating from the village of Berger in Norway and has discovered that several generations of one branch of the family lived in India over a 150 year period. He is currently researching the Northumberland branch where it has been possible, so far, to go back to the 1500s using various old wills and property information made available by Durham University.

Recently elected by his fellow councillors as Acting Chair of the Parish Council, as reported in the Henley Standard, his was the only dissenting voice regarding his election to this post! Whilst retaining the Finance role, he remains committed to ensuring the parish's rural nature is protected, including joining with other local parishes to contest the Third Reading Bridge and the associated highway that would slice through the Oxfordshire countryside. He also supports the Planning Committee in ensuring that any developments are properly considered and implemented.

The Election process of the Council has been hampered by Covid-19 so Joe will remain Acting Chair of our Parish Council until formal elections take place in May 2021.

Rita Hadgkiss