

Chairman's Report - Annual Assembly 18th March 2015

Welcome to everyone this evening - to the Councillors, Local representatives and members of the public. Thank you for attending.

I would like to report on the activities and business of the Council over the past year to this point near to the end of March 2015.

This has been my third year as Chairman and as usual it has been an active year for all members of the Council and I would like to thank them all for their diligence and their contribution. I wish particularly to record our thanks to Phil Bawden for his excellent contribution over many years until he had to stand down due to the pressure of other commitments. We have been fortunate to co-opt Mark Hallam to replace him as our councillor for the Peasmarsch ward, and earlier in the year we were joined by Nick Wiggin following the vacancy left by Jay Punatar at the end of 2013.

As many of you are aware the Council is responsible for a number of activities which continue unseen - the maintenance and repair of our street lighting, our bus shelters, the running of the cemetery and the maintenance of St Mary's churchyard, maintenance of 4 playgrounds within the parish and the running of our 2 allotment sites. In addition we review all planning applications within the parish and comment upon them as we determine is appropriate.

In addition to these routine activities there have been significant additional projects. The most significant issue in terms of Council time and the impact on our community was the GBC Local Plan. Following the initial consultation in 2013 a Draft Plan was issued in the early summer of 2014. This version of the plan excluded two major potential developments in the parish in Peasmarsch and Shalford whilst the Hornhatch Farm development in Chilworth remained in the new draft. In addition a possible development behind the village hall in Shalford had been included along with boundary changes on the edges of Chilworth. The Council responded to these proposals seeking to maintain these sites as Green Belt and at this stage we are awaiting the next version of the Plan which has now been delayed until after the May elections.

The second major commitment of Council effort has resulted from the Community Governance Review initiated by GBC following the petition from certain Chilworth residents seeking a boundary review, with the intention of the creation of a new parish with the ward of Chilworth, within our parish, being joined with the parish of St Martha. As all residents will be aware this Council has determined to oppose such a change and recommend the status quo. All residents within the 2 existing parishes have been consulted and their opinions must be submitted to GBC by 30 March 2015. We encourage everyone to express their views and we as a Council, will work with GBC and St Martha to implement any changes that the borough may ultimately determine. We have continued the works on the listed cemetery chapel and the interior has now been cleaned with all of the seating being refurbished. Currently work is nearing completion on the mortuary to enable the cataphalque to be relocated to the mortuary and allow further works to be completed on the chapel floor. An open day in September was quite well attended in the hope of attracting potential uses for this unique and

delightful space. The bulk of the expenditure in the year was met from Council funds with some grant funding from Guildford Borough Council.

We have continued to improve the allotments at Bradstone Brook and Peasmarsh which had suffered from some neglect and this has resulted in a higher take up of the unused allotments. However vacancies remain and any enquiries should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

We have been fortunate to benefit from further Section 106 funds and have been able to continue to replace some of the playground equipment during the year.

The Council continues to maintain good relations with the local police who regularly report on any matters of concern at the monthly council meetings.

The Parish Council was represented at the Shalford annual fete continuing to raise the profile of the council locally. The Chilworth Community Association continue to be supported by a regular grant to assist them with their valuable work at the Brookwood pavilion and sports field.

2014 marked the centenary of the outbreak of World War 1 and the Council marked the occasion in August by placing 68 crosses alongside the war memorial, named individually with Shalford parish members of the forces who gave their lives during the Great War, and then again for Remembrance Sunday in November. In addition we organized a road closure on Remembrance Sunday for the laying of wreaths which was much appreciated by those involved in and attending the ceremony.

Many of you will have observed that many of the benches throughout the parish were in a poor state of repair and a programme of refurbishment is now well under way. With assistance from the friends of Shalford, St Mary's and St Thomas' Churches and the Snooty Fox the Council supported Christmas trees in Chilworth and Shalford for the first time, with carols around the Shalford tree and a carol service at St Thomas' Church in Chilworth being very much enjoyed. Two significant trees were lost on Shalford Common in the 2013/14 winter and other trees had died on the approach to the cemetery. New trees have now been planted by GBC and funded by this council and I hope that some of us can live long enough to see them mature into worthy companions to their neighbouring more mature companions.

The Council administers the Smith's Charity for this parish and has given support to 13 members of the parish and 4 organisations working with a variety of groups across the parish in the current year. In addition we have donated £400 to Age Concern who carry out valuable work in the community.

Many of us are very concerned with Road Safety and Parking issues within the parish. We have made representations to Surrey CC on road safety issues and held meetings with our SCC councillor and SCC officers with the particular aim of improving safety near our schools. Progress is slow but we are now getting recognition of our concerns and some action is scheduled to improve road safety at a number of sites. GBC are also in the midst of a parking review affecting many roads in Shalford and we hope to meet with the officers shortly to review the findings.

Last year I introduced the subject of a Neighbourhood Plan which should be a community led initiative. I have been overwhelmed by the sadly apathetic response to this proposal and after consideration of a Parish Plan which again would need community involvement we are now contemplating a “lighter” version of a plan, a Business Plan for the Council. We would intend to consult within the community before finalising and adopting such a Plan and I will discuss this later when talking about the Council’s hopes and aspirations for the future.

Finally I hope that you have now seen the new Parish Council website. This has been produced by our Parish Clerk who has taught herself the necessary skills to do so, ably supported by a generous member of our community Mr Tadhg Bowe to whom we are very grateful. The site will continue to develop as we endeavour to join the 21st century.

It has been another unusual year and I wish both personally and on behalf of all the Council to thank our Parish Clerk, Nuala Livesey, for guiding us through our tasks and maintaining a sense of humour and perspective. I also wish to express my thanks to my Vice Chairman Mary Phillips for her excellent support throughout the year, and equally to all our other councillors.

Thank you.