

Chairman's Report 2019 given at the Annual Assembly

Annual Assembly time comes around again and it doesn't seem long since this time last year!

I began to write this report, therefore, by looking back at my report for 2018 to see what the pertinent issues were 12 months ago. This was for three main reasons: to give some general perspective, to ensure important matters had not slipped off the agenda and also, to, hopefully, discover that things do move on – albeit sometimes slower than some would like!

Community interest in West Lodge was high on the agenda last year. You will remember that there was a move to persuade Guildford Borough Council to support the Parish Council to retain West Lodge for community use, rather than selling it on the open market.

This initiative failed and the decision was made by the Borough to put West Lodge up for sale. To date, West Lodge has not been sold and no renovation work has been undertaken.

Another thing I reported last time was that improvements to the stretch of the A248 between Blacksmith Lane and Mill Lane, including the stretch known locally as 'the cheese grater', had finally been scheduled for "major maintenance and not merely surface dressing." This work has now been completed.

Local residents and Councillors were impressed with the way this major project was managed and the Parish Council was pleased to be able to commend the contractors who were extremely helpful and considerate and also to thank Cllr Keith Taylor for his support in getting this project underway.

As ever, though, one thing leads to another and the smoother quieter road has raised serious concerns about the issue of traffic speeding through the village.

Councillors are currently looking into the possibilities of increased use of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and are waiting for Surrey Highways' authorisation to install a suitable VAS post near the Infant School so that we can share the use of Shalford Parish Council's VAS on a rota system.

Councillors are also considering buying a permanent solar powered VAS to place on the post already installed by the War Memorial. There are many factors to consider, though, before going ahead with what would be a costly purchase, including research into effectiveness, management and trouble shooting strategies, grant funding possibilities and so on. In the meantime, the Parish Council has made allowance for this expenditure in its Precept calculations.

A positive new venture, instigated by Parish Councillors is the formation of a new Gunpowder Mills Group. For this, we are grateful to Cllr Graham Brown and his wife for their interest and enthusiasm. Though not under the auspices of the Parish Council, there will still be Parish Council representation on the group, along with other familiar faces.

This gathering gives us an opportune moment to keep a minute's silence to remember Kim Owen, who died recently and his long-time service of the Gunpowder Mills Group and our local community.

The Parish Council continues to collaborate with Shalford Parish Council on issues affecting our village. We each send a representative to one another's meetings who reports back so that we keep in close touch with one another on Chilworth village issues.

For example, both Councils put together statements to forward to the Borough regarding parishioners concerns about building on the Hornhatch Farm site in response to the modifications in

the Guildford Borough Council Local Plan. The indications, to date, are that building there is not on the agenda at the moment but both Councils keep up to date and informed about the progress of the Local Plan, mindful of their responsibility to represent the views of local residents.

As a Parish Council, we have representation on the North Downs Rail Line Steering Group and continue to be instrumental in changes for the better at Chilworth Station – thanks, especially must go to Cllr Patricia Allen for her role in this, noting and reporting recently, for example, on missing roof tiles from the Points Box.

We also have representation on the Surrey Hills Group that is working on de-cluttering our lanes, by removing redundant road signs and markings and re-routing heavy vehicles. The de-cluttering of road signs has now been completed in our Parish, as Councillors have checked and evaluated every sign in the Parish and either cleaned them, or arranged for them to be removed. Thank you to Chilworth2gether for their help, too.

Other improvements to our local environment include:

A replacement Notice Board at the end of Old Manor Gardens, varnished by David Allen – thank you, David!

Tree works and planting in the War Memorial garden

Four new footpath signs with environmentally sensitive wooden posts

Maintenance work at Lockner Farm bus shelter

Litter picking sessions

Site meetings with the Environment Agency to address water flow issues

Also, of course, the Parish Council continues to be consulted on all planning applications received by Guildford Borough Council for our parish and its immediate surrounds. Knowing that local knowledge can be so important, Councillors take this aspect of their role very seriously - not that their recommendations are always upheld.

As hopefully demonstrated, Parish Councils contribute in many and varied ways to the wellbeing of their communities and they need all our support to keep them relevant and active.

It would be a significant loss to our village if we no longer had a Parish level of local knowledge, experience and involvement to feed into the hierarchy of government in this country – and YES THAT IS A PLUG FOR MORE PARISH COUNCILLORS!!!

Nearly finally, it remains for me to thank Councillors, Vice Chair Michael Lunnon, Patricia Allen, John Peake, and Graham Brown, and of course our Clerk Anne Tait, for all the time and commitment they give to the Parish Council.

I said nearly finally because sadly there is one of our number, an extremely long serving and valued member of the Council, Michael Lunnon, who has decided it is time to step back and so has not stood for election for another term of office.

Michael we are going to miss you, but, thankfully, as you are not moving out of the village, we will still be able to call for your help from time to time!

On behalf of us all – Thank You Michael!

Stephanie Sokolowski
Chairman
11th April 2019