

St Martha Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2020

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This has been another busy year for the Parish Council with changes in personnel, both at local and Guildford Borough Council level.

As the Council year comes to an end, we are facing the Covid-19 pandemic. The Annual Assembly was cancelled and as a result Council meetings are now taking place via Zoom. Please see the website and Noticeboards for more information and meeting joining instructions.

Following the May 2019 Borough elections, we were sorry to lose Cllr David Wright as our Borough Councillor and we wish to express our thanks to him for his support over many years.

Cllr Richard Billington (Mayor of Guildford) continues to serve on the Borough Council and he and Borough Councillor, Diana Jones, represent our area and both regularly attend our Parish Council meetings. We thank them both for their support of the parish.

We also thank Surrey County Councillor, Keith Taylor, for his attendance at our meetings and his ready support of our Parish initiatives.

At local level, we were delighted to welcome the co-option of Cllr Clare Price onto the Parish Council in July. Clare has lived locally all her life and has very quickly become a valued member of the Council. Thank you, Clare.

We also plan to co-opt another new Councillor at the next Meeting on 17th June – all good news!

But we still have room for more and Clare has offered to 'field' any enquiries on becoming a councillor, so do email her at price.c@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk and find out more about the commitment and the type of issues we deal with.

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 Mrs Patricia Allen for her role in this.

We have representation on the Surrey Hills Highways Working Group that is involved with the de-cluttering of our lanes, by removing redundant road signs and markings, the re-routing of heavy goods vehicles and the alleviation of pressure on the Surrey Hills lanes due to new housing development. The de-cluttering of road signs has now been completed in our Parish.

Also, the Parish Council continues to be consulted on all planning applications and enforcements 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 by GBC.

St Martha Parish Council continues to collaborate with Shalford Parish Council on issues affecting Chilworth 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. Particular thanks must go to Cllr Adrian Cansell (Shalford PC) for his regular attendance at St Martha Parish Council meetings and for all his support of the village.

In January, we were sorry to learn of the retirement of Graham Fagg and the possible loss of the Post Office to the village. We expressed our thanks to Graham for the many years he has served the village not only by providing postal services but also for providing a social meeting point for the village.

We plan to meet with Shalford Parish Council to discuss ways to keep the Post Office service in the village.

We are also working with Shalford Parish Council on the monitoring of the speed of traffic through the village. As Shalford Parish Council has kindly allowed their Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) to be sited in St Martha Parish on a rota basis, we have decided not to go ahead with purchasing a VAS for St Martha Parish at this time. The data recorded by the VAS is collated by Cllr Cansell and shared with both Councils on a monthly basis, giving useful evidence of the reality of the situation.

Councillors have requested Surrey Highways put two 30 mph round signs on the A248 itself to try and slow traffic down. We are hoping this work will be carried out as soon as possible.

This time last year, I reported that the move to persuade Guildford Borough Council to support St Martha Parish Council to retain West Lodge, rather than selling it on the open market had failed and the decision had been made by the Borough to put West Lodge up for sale on the open market.

West lodge has not been sold and the Parish Council have decided to re-visit this matter and along with the 'Friends of the Gunpowder Mills', Chilworth2gether and other interested parties have been working on this project with the intention being to maintain the integrity of this industrial archaeological site and to keep West Lodge for community use.

To date, the Parish Council have agreed to consider undertaking the lease of West lodge, providing certain assurances have been given by the Borough. These include further agreement around planning approval and access to the building. It is considered that it is essential to provide access to the rear of the building with parking for up to five vehicles.

All this news, and more, can be found on our website, thanks to Emma Hosking and her website Company, 'COW-SHED'. We also now have a 'Mailchimp' facility and you can follow us on Instagram and Twitter.

For more details and to sign up for 'Mailchimp' updates, please contact the Parish Clerk, clerk@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

NB. In view of the Covid 19 restrictions, the Annual Meeting and the election of officers for the following Council year, due to take place 20th May 2020, has been postponed until further notice.

It only remains for me to thank Councillors, John Peake, Patricia Allen, Graham Brown and Clare Price and our Clerk, Anne Tait, for all the time and commitment they give to the Parish.

Thank you, All!

Stephanie Sokolowski
April 2020