

ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY MAY 19th 2015

Your Council has been understrength throughout this year. In spite of advertising and many approaches to members of the public we have been unable to fill a vacancy by co-option. With a full complement, the Council has only seven members; with only six it makes it more difficult to spread responsibilities. I am delighted to say that Patricia Allen has agreed to serve the Council, returning as a Councillor after a gap of six or so years, when she has been heavily involved as Chairman of Governors of Chilworth Church of England Infants' School. However, in the forthcoming four year term, we start again short of a Councillor. Cathy Browning has decided not to stand for re-election. We thank her for her years of service on the Council, and, in particular, for her taking forward the War Memorial project. (of that more later).

You will recall that at this meeting last year, I announced that I would be standing down as Chairman. This, therefore is my last Chairman's report, in which I shall outline the activities of the year. Appointments for the new Council will be made at the full Council meeting on Thursday at the School.

It has long been the intention of the Council to replace the plinth of the War Memorial which has suffered badly over the years. It was inappropriate to continue making repairs by patching - cut and replace. After a lengthy period negotiation, we successfully secured grants from GBC and most importantly the War Memorial Trust.

The work was carried out in time for the Remembrance Service in November by Chichester Stone Works. It looked good, and stood proud, as Stephanie conducted the very well attended service. It was in March, however, that Barry Wakeford, who has tended the Memorial Garden, from time immemorial, reported damage to the steps of the plinth. It transpired that frost had lifted the surface of the stone, albeit that it had been a mild winter. We are now talking to John Rye, of Chichester Stone Works about a complete rebuild, replacing it with a stone that **IS fit for purpose.**

Work was also carried out by Councillors to cut back overgrown branches around the Memorial, and the boundary of the plot was enhanced by new fencing.

The other asset which we have replaced is, of course, the bus shelter at the Triangle by the Railway Station. We sought a like for like replacement and were delighted to commission a local craftsman Julian Bramble . The shelter stands testament to his work. The pin board for public notices has been provided by Chilworth2gether, to whom we are most grateful.

Chilworth2gether has also formally offered to the parish the oak chair that sits outside the Infants School. That will be added to the Council's assets register.

I have to state for the record the failure of the Parish Council, along with Chilworth2gether, to secure land we sought for community use, north of the Infants School and the Percy. You will recall the land was purchased by the Diocese to secure the opportunity for the Infants School to extend its playing fields if required in the future. The price paid was greatly in excess of the market value. Unfortunately the Diocese was only prepared to sell a part of the field at a proportionate rate. The result was that the £80,000 we would buy only a small parcel of land, insufficient for our purposes. Negotiations consequently fell through, and monies donated have been returned, or at the wish of the donors, transferred to Chilworth2gether funds, for the benefit of the village. A lot of effort and time was spent as it turned out, in a futile exercise.

Attempts are being made to divert the £32,000 Development money of Haywards Corner from the field to Chilworth Community Association for recreational purposes. We are optimistic that boundary problems will be overcome, in so far that Chilworth Playing Fields are in Shalford and therefore outside St Martha Parish and the Tillingbourne Ward areas.

With regard to the Boundary Review being conducted by GBC in response to the petition raised by Chilworth2gether, we await the preferred option to be announced in July before further consultation takes place. St Martha Parish Council favoured a single Council to represent the whole of Chilworth on the grounds of economy, efficiency and community. A "Save St Martha" campaign was formed by those vehemently opposed to any change.

Your Parish Council has voiced its strong opposition to proposals within the GBC Draft Local Plan to make incursions into the Green belt. The Plan was shelved until after the Election.

In terms of local Planning, there have been no major, or outstanding , planning applications required widespread public consultation. However, Blackheath Cottage is of great interest. On 1st April, 2015, in the case Arnold v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government at the High Court (Queen's Division) Judge Dove upheld the report of the Government inspector, finding that the property constituted a new building, not a staged extension of an existing building, for which no planning permission had been granted. Are you watching the series on Monday evenings, Channel 4 "Damned Designs. Don't Demolish my House"?

On that sober note, I should like to conclude my report by thanking fellow Councillors for their work and commitment over the year, and the support I have received, especially from my Vice- Chairman Michael Lunnon. I should also like to thank our clerk Anne Tait, who has significantly and meticulously improved the efficiency of our Parish Council.

I have to say to you that my greatest sadness is that there has been a distinct reluctance by those in the parish who are perfectly capable of doing so, to serve as Councillors. The recent upsurge of passion for the retention of St Martha parish has surprisingly resulted in no one new coming forward to sit on the Council. I ask why?

For my part, I have enjoyed my role as Chairman of the parish over the last six years it has not always been easy, but I have sought to serve you to the best of my ability. I shall continue for a while as a Councillor.

Thank you

