

St Martha Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2023
www.stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

At the time of writing and with St Martha Parish Council about to elect a new chairperson, it is time to reflect on the past year.

We are a small parish, entitled to seven councillors. Unfortunately, we have been operating with only five councillors for some years now. All our councillors have other interests and commitments and the shortfall in our numbers means that all the council’s responsibilities fall on those in post which sometimes prevent us fully engaging with local issues in a way that we would like. We are desperate to hear from anyone who feels they can make a difference in local affairs. Councillors do not need to live in the parish itself but can live close by, so that leaves plenty of scope for residents of Chilworth as a whole to become involved.

The affairs of Chilworth are shared between St Martha Parish Council and Shalford Community Council. Some years ago, a Boundary Review asked parishioners whether Chilworth should have a parish council of its own and whilst residents in Chilworth voted in favour they were outvoted by those living outside of the village. Nevertheless, the two Councils recognised that they needed to do more to appreciate the concerns of Chilworth residents and decided to invite an observer from one council to attend meetings of the other.

In the last year issues such as the environment, traffic calming, the railway station, the Post Office and the Gunpowder Mills, all things that directly affect the village as a whole, have led to a common understanding by both Councils that they need to work more closely together to address these important issues. This is perhaps easier said than done but we are exploring how we can improve matters in this regard. For example, St Martha PC makes space at its meetings to discuss Chilworth issues and we also invite the Shalford CC representative to contribute to our meetings. I’d like to thank Adrian Cansell from Shalford CC for his valuable input. We will continue to look for ways in which we can work more closely on things that affect the village.

Environmental issues are becoming more and more important to our communities, and we recognise that these are issues that cannot be confined to one council. A Climate Action Group is based in Shalford, and we are exploring ways in which we can further contribute to the work of that group.

Organised biking events in the Surrey Hills have led to some residents encountering riders presenting dangers to walkers and those on horseback. Some cycle riders also ride off the permitted routes and cause damage to footpaths that are legally reserved for pedestrians. Some also ride cross country causing erosion to the hillside below St Martha’s Church. Please let us know if you see such instances.

Traffic calming measures such as 20 mph speed limits and parking restrictions have been proposed that clearly will impact on the whole village. We are actively engaged in consultations and are working with Shalford CC to co-ordinate our input.

The continuing deterioration of our roads affects us all and we continue to make representations to Surrey County Council to get things fixed as quickly as possible. I must thank Councillor Bob Hughes of Surrey County Council for his help in doing this.

The Gunpowder Mills site, although located in St Martha Parish, is an asset that is enjoyed by the whole village and what happens in this historic site is of great interest to many. For some years St Martha PC sought to prevent Guildford Borough Council from selling West Lodge, the small building at the entrance to the Mills, by turning it into a community asset. This unfortunately could not be achieved. We have now received a proposal from a resident to turn the Lodge into a dwelling with the rental proceeds being put to community use. We are exploring the possibilities with Guildford Borough Council in an attempt to keep this historic building in public ownership. If you have any views on the matter, please let us know.

I'd like to thank Anne Tait, our Clerk, our Councillors; Clare Price, John Peake, Patricia Allen and Julia Tantram, and Councillors from Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council who attend our meetings, for all the work that they put into local affairs. Finally, thanks to Rosemary and Helen for regularly attending our meetings.

Jean-Pierre Pugh
Chairman