

St Martha Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2021

www.stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

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

As the County, Borough and Parish Council years comes to an end this May, we are still facing restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with the High Court directive, the Parish Council agreed to the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council being held face to face this year, with the necessary safety precautions in place. As no suitable venue was available within the parish, it was agreed to hold the meeting on Wednesday 19th May at 7pm in Blackheath Parish Church. Thank you to Blackheath District Church Council for facilitating this.

All other Parish Council meetings throughout the year have been held via zoom link.

At County level, our Surrey County Councillor, Keith Taylor, announced his resignation. Councillor Taylor has attended all our meetings and has given us his unfailing support with parish matters. We are very grateful for all his efforts on our behalf and send our thanks and good wishes for the future to him.

Councillor Bob Hughes was elected as Conservative County Councillor for the Shere Division. Councillor Hughes is also a member of Shalford, Peasmarsh and Chilworth Parish Council, so, as he says, he understands the issues in our parish, and we look forward to his support.

As a result of the pandemic, Borough Councillor Richard Billington continued to serve as Mayor of Guildford for an additional year. He, too, along with Borough Councillor, Diana Jones, has ably represented our area and both have regularly attended our Parish Council meetings. We thank them both for their continuing support of our parish.

At local level, we were delighted to co-opt two new members onto the Parish Council: Councillor Jean-Pierre Pugh at the June meeting and Councillor Julia Tantram at the February meeting. Welcome and thank you, Both!

This time last year, I reported that the Parish Council had decided to re-visit the possibility of retaining West Lodge for community use, thereby maintaining the integrity of this industrial archaeological site.

The Parish Council has since been successful in getting approval from the Borough for a ‘Change of Use’ and is currently in the process of arranging a Lease on the building. Councillors have requested a meeting with the Borough’s Director of Resources to consider ways in which the Borough and Parish council might be able to work on this project collaboratively for the benefit of the asset and the local community.

As a Parish Council, we continue to 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 Councillor Patricia Allen for her role in this.

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.

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 Councillor Adrian Cansell for his regular attendance at St Martha Parish Council meetings and for all his support of the village.

All news, updates and more, can be found on our website, thanks to Emma Hosking and her website Company, 'COW-SHED'. You can also follow us on Instagram and Twitter. For more details and to sign up for an electronic newsletter, please contact the Parish Clerk, Anne Tait, telephone 07976 778864. Details (dates and venue) of future Parish Council meetings will be advertised on our website and noticeboards.

On a personal note, the time has come for me to stand down from the Parish Council. It has been interesting and enjoyable to have been involved in village matters in this way. I will miss working with you all and send best wishes to the new Chairman and members.

It only remains for me to thank our Clerk, Anne Tait, for the time and commitment she gives to the Parish and to send all good wishes for the future of St Martha Parish Council.

Stephanie Sokolowski
May 2021