

St Martha Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2022

www.stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

The Parish Council recently conducted a short survey about West Lodge, the small building at the entrance of the Gunpowder Mills. I am grateful to those of you who responded but in particular to one resident whose comments included describing the council as “useless”. That comment made me stop and reflect on my year as Chair of St Martha PC and why I and others act as councilors and whether or not what we do is at all worthwhile. Although St Martha PC is entitled to seven councilors, we only currently have four active members. Most were co-opted onto the council, there not having been sufficient candidates to warrant an election. None of us are politically motivated nor have any particular agendas. We simply feel that we’d like to do “our bit” for the parish and to try and address the views and aspirations of parishioners. Actually, trying to understand what those aspirations are is challenging since we have very little feedback and our council meetings, which are held monthly in the village hall and which are open to the public, are poorly attended by residents. I am therefore particularly grateful to Councilors Patricia Allen and John Peake for taking a special interest in planning applications that the council is asked to comment on, to Clare Price who has worked to improve traffic flow in Halfpenny Lane and for forming a volunteer group to help in the Gunpowder Mills and again to Patricia for the work she has done in securing improvements at the station.

Chilworth itself is unusually represented by two councils, Shalford Community Council who are responsible for the part of the village to the west of Tangley crossing and St Martha PC who are responsible for that part of the village to the east of the crossing. There are many issues that are of interest to the village as a whole and having two councils involved makes it harder to address the needs of the village and I have therefore been trying over the past year to forge closer cooperation between the two councils so that Chilworth can be sure it gets a joined-up service from both councils.

To that end, Shalford CC have supported St Martha in its efforts to keep West Lodge, which is an important heritage asset owned by Guildford Borough Council, in public hands. I regret to report however that our attempts to obtain funding to refurbish the building so that it could be put to community use have not been successful and as a consequence it now appears that GBC will again attempt to sell the property. This is something that we still hope to prevent, and we will be consulting further. I’d like to thank Andrew Norris for the effort he put into helping us to obtain funding, but which was ultimately unsuccessful due to the changing priorities of the funding bodies.

During the year, the parish council has supported residents in successfully resisting the installation of a large phone mast in a quiet residential area. We have taken on the upkeep of the defibrillator at the Percy Arms, supplied and previously maintained by Chilworth2gether and have played our part in the organisation of the forthcoming event at Chilworth Manor to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. Our thanks go to Lord and Lady Wrigley for inviting us to use their wonderful home for what promises to be a fantastic occasion.

Events that have been organised to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee show what can be achieved when communities act together and return me to my original theme about working towards the community’s ambitions. I would therefore urge you to guide us by telling us what is important to you and how the Parish Council can help to achieve that. We hope soon to provide a facility on our webpage to allow you to make your views known or you can do that at our council meetings. Finally, if you are interested in hearing more about becoming a councilor, please contact our Clerk - Anne Tait whose details you can also find on our website.

Jean-Pierre Pugh
Chairman