

Martlesham Parish Council

Chairman's Report

Annual Parish Meeting 20th April 2022

The past year has been full of uncertainties, not only for the parishioners of Martlesham, but also for the Parish Council. This time last year we were still legally allowed to hold meetings remotely, via zoom. However, in mid-May the legislation allowing this ran out, meaning a return to face-to-face meetings, although the Parish Rooms were not deemed large enough to comply with Covid social distancing requirements and an alternative venue had to be found. We were fortunate to be able to hire St Michael's Church Centre for the majority of our planned dates and thus were able to continue with much of our planned business. With respect to the future, decisions on the venue will be taken on a 'meeting to meeting' basis, and will be taking into account the Covid situation at the time as well as personal preferences etc. This should be of help financially, as the hire of the Church Centre for every planned meeting for the whole year would run into hundreds of pounds – an expense we could do without.

The Committees.

My thanks must go to the Chairmen of the 3 Committees who oversee the functions of the Parish Council, Laurence Burrows, Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GPC), Ian O'Brien Baker, Chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee (Rec & Am), and especially to Jane Hall who took the reins of the Development, Environment and Transport Committee (DETC) in the autumn of last year, and has been tackling this exacting brief with much gusto!

Their reports are available separately to this, and these include much of the minutiae of the work of each Committee and highlights the areas in which the Council is working for the best interests of the parishioners. Suffice to say that the efficient running of all the Committees much depends on the Chairmen.

The Staff.

In order to get some 'succession planning' in place as some members of staff approached possible (well earned!) retirement dates, a trial was put in place last September whereby Diane Linsley, previously Deputy Clerk, took on the role of Clerk. This enabled Susan Robertson, previously Clerk and Finance Officer, to take flexible retirement, allowing her to continue in the part-time role of Finance Officer. Additionally, Council Officer Debbie Chappell was offered more hours to cover taking the minutes at Council meetings, administration of Facebook pages and websites and the increased administrative burden of the DETC as the planned major development projects finally get under way. Linda Woodhouse, our Admin Assistant, still continues to work quietly in the background ensuring the wheels continue to run smoothly. The trial was a success, and the new roles were made permanent at the March 2022 full Council meeting.

The Precept.

Several remarks have been made (although mostly indirectly) complaining about the increase in the Parish precept. Although to some, when given as a percentage this may seem large, in reality the 'per annum' increase for a Band D council tax property equates very closely to the cost of a pint of Guinness in any of our village pubs! (Other beers are available of course!) As an example, the increased income from the precept does not cover the extra expense over the last year of making good the damage caused by vandals to Council property and the cleaning of graffiti from our Parish assets. I know for a fact that it is not my children or grandchildren who are responsible for any of this current spike in anti-social behaviour – perhaps an increase in personal responsibility for some would not go amiss.

The Future.

Recent events, such as the surge in energy prices and the war in Ukraine have combined to cause shortages, in many things, not seen in many years. I can only hope there is no return to the rationing – of food clothing, fuel etc – that I remember from my childhood! Rest assured, the Parish Council will be doing its best to help in this new 'cost of living' crisis. Martlesham Climate Action has already got much in place to give parishioners energy saving advice, and its repair hub is invaluable for getting extra life out of items most people would have previously discarded – check the MCA website.

There are a few simple things that we could all adopt straight away to help save energy, such as when driving on roads limited to the national speed limit (70 mph), why not drive closer to the 56mph speed that most vehicles are designed for, and tested at, to give maximum efficiency. When this was adopted in The States during the 70s and 80s this simple idea was shown to give up to 10% saving in fuel costs compared to driving at (or above) the maximum speed limit all of the time. Remember, just because you are driving a company car, or white van, and not paying for the fuel used, your company will be – these extra costs will invariably be passed on to the consumer – i.e.us!

Finally, a plea. There is only a finite amount of time and effort that a volunteer is willing to put into 'Council work'. If you feel you can give anything to help fill our (currently 4) vacancies, please contact the Clerk for further details.

Mike Williamson

MPC Chairman