

Martlesham Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2018-19

I report on the year April 2018 to April 2019 which has been a year of considerable achievement and some frustrations. This report can only give a brief summary of activities so we recommend that you check the council website at <https://martlesham.onesuffolk.net/> for further details. The website is regularly updated throughout the year and news is published regularly in the "Martlesham Monthly" and "In-Touch" magazines. The Parish Council divides its work into three categories as follows:

Providing and maintaining parish amenities and recreational facilities (Accounts for 48% of costs)

This is managed by the Recreation and Amenities Committee which works as a directing body supervising delegated powers given to the Clerk and through working groups and volunteer activity. The main achievements include:

- The successful Village Fete in July.
- New Management Plan for the Martlesham Common Nature Reserve with ongoing maintenance & enhancement work during the year. A Common Open Day with launch of Friends of the Common. New relationship with 'Bug Life' developed.
- A successful Recreation Ground work party. Improvements to the appearance of the Recreation Ground.
- Martlesham trim trail being developed as a result of consultation on sports facilities.
- Extensive repair work carried out at the Harry Higgins Play Area to the safer surfacing and a new climbing net installed on the Multi-play Unit.

Responding to planning applications and public consultations, including neighbourhood planning (Accounts for 41% of costs)

This is principally managed by the Development Plans Committee, comments on minor applications are delegated to the Clerk while anything major or out of the ordinary is dealt with by the full committee. It should be noted that planning decisions are taken by the District Council which often go against the Parish Council's comments. The major achievements include:

- Following a referendum in May 2018, the Martlesham Neighbourhood Plan was formally made in July 2018. This is the culmination of many years of work by a volunteer team. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are supposed to be the basis on which planning applications are dealt with by the District Council.
- The Council has resisted infill housing development on Martlesham Heath; we are pleased that this has subsequently been refused by an independent Inspector on appeal.

Because the final planning decisions are taken by the District Council this is the aspect of the Parish Council's work which creates the most frustrations:

- The future of the Suffolk Constabulary HQ is now in question with the possibility of the land being sold for housing: The Parish Council was not consulted before the district council included this possibility in its Final Draft Local Plan. This is a major concern as development there is contrary to the Martlesham Neighbourhood Plan.
- There are already signs that the high standards of development of 2,000 dwellings on land south and east of Adastral Park, now known as Brightwell Lakes may not be fully achieved.

- Wickes, Evans Cycles, Home Bargains, Hughes, Boots, Mountain Warehouse, Card Factory, ALDI and Costa Coffee have all opened on the Retail Park, with planning permission being given to an inappropriate Travis Perkins application on Felixstowe Road.
- The Council shares parishioners' concerns about the problems of increased traffic & at times gridlock associated with the business and retail areas. We will continue to work with the local authorities and businesses to find solutions & make the voice of local people heard. We are pleased that after years of lobbying we can look forward to the introduction of two zebra crossings in the retail area, provision of which have been frustrated in the past. We are now hopeful that the District Council and County Council's Highways Department acknowledge there is a problem.

Financial management and administration (Accounts for 11% of costs)

This is managed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

- The Council's standing orders, financial regulations, and various policies and procedures were reviewed and updated as necessary. The IT systems were also upgraded with new computers, software and back-up facilities.
- Drafting of the annual budget for the Council and recommending the precept (the amount to be received from Council Tax) needed for 2019/20. Following the committee's recommendations, the Council set the total budget for 2019/20 at £137,406 and the precept at £143,641, this represented no increase on the 2018/19 council tax bill.
- The General Data Protection Regulations came into force on 25th May 2018 which involved a great deal of work.
- The Committee's detailed review last year of the current workload of the Council and the staff resources available resulted in an additional member of staff being employed.

Our plans for the future include:

- Building on the launch of the Common Nature Reserve with developing the Friends of the Common group and further enhancement with information boards, framed entrances, improvements to paths, tree work, encouragement of heather growth.
- Installation of trim trail exercise stations; to link the Main Road areas and Mill Heath with Martlesham Heath with further work to commence on next phase of provision of sports facilities.
- We will be considering how we can provide some of the facilities you identified were lacking or need improving through the Neighbourhood Plan process – we have called this Neighbourhood Plan Plus!
- Establishing a working group to develop a Community Orchard in the parish as a resource for the enjoyment of all.

I would like to thank the retiring Parish Council which comprised Jackie Bear, Chris Blundell, Leo Brome, Laurence Burrows, Stephen Denton, John Forbes, Ian O'Brien Baker, John Kelso, Richard Staines, Wally Welch, Edward Thompson, Michael Calver and Jane Drummond, with Eric Crichton who left during the course of the year. It is with regret that I note Messrs Brome, Calver, Kelso and Welch will not be re-joining the Council from May 2019 following the elections.

Thanks also go to the hard working and dedicated team in the office of Clerk: Susan Robertson, Deputy Clerk: Diane Linsley, Council Officer: Debbie Chappell, Administrative Assistant: Linda Woodhouse.