

Welcome

Good evening ladies and gentlemen – thank you to attending the Wonersh Parish council annual meeting – we have a full and, I hope, interesting agenda but I would just like to make a few introductions.

Cllrs

Our Clerk Lisa Davison, who joined us a few months ago and is proving an invaluable asset to your Parish council.

Apologies – Cllrs Payne – who is unfortunately ill and Cllr Marley who is away on business.

-----

It has been a busy, often frustrating but one hopes in the end rewarding year for the council – some of the time we were operating without a Clerk, with your Councillors taking turns to complete the work – and we were all indebted to Kevin Garvey who came out of retirement to be a temporary finance officer – (thanks Kevin)

You are all aware that cuts in the budgets available to local authorities has seen many councils, including Waverley and Surrey, having to reduce the available funds to Parish councils and to projects within the Parish. From the surveys and comments we receive as a council we know that there are many aspects of Parish life that concern everyone –

The Parish survey and vision for Wonersh project are being explained later in the agenda so I do not propose to go into them in any depth here but it is obvious that were budgets not being cut then all levels of local government could meet the needs of the residents – with that in mind we are currently negotiating with Waverley to assume responsibility for some of the maintenance of the green areas of the Parish – Cllr Mike Band will address this issue later, together with the proposals that we, the Parish council, take on the community room in garden close, Shamley green.

Several Cllrs had a good number of meetings with the Waverley staff and – as a result – we agreed to enter in negotiations with the borough authority to take over some of these tasks – unfortunately there will be no reduction in the budget that Waverley prepare – it is a simple case of them reducing services but – if we take over there is at least some way that we will have control over the standard – I will however say that it has resulted in us increasing the budget to cover the anticipated costs – as I say there will be no corresponding reduction the Waverley council tax!

We employed a new Clerk this year – again my thanks to Kevin Garvey – Lisa lives locally with her partner and young family and, and I know I speak for all Councillors, is proving her worth – getting used to the systems we have but – even with a very steep learning curve, Lisa has been an asset to the council and therefore the Parish.

Life as a Councillor is never dull – as a group we meet monthly in a formal meeting, there are various committees, working parties, planning, allotments, common land etc.

This year has been busy and we have been faced with some issues that have required not only a detailed study but often an immediate plan of action – an example would be the problems of drainage between the Platt and the common in Wonersh.

The pipes collapsed in places and we are in the process of making repairs and awaiting the results of our endeavours – of course now it won't rain for weeks – however, we are hopeful that we have made a long term solution to the problem.

Whilst on the subject of maintenance and the commons land – this year we have following the example set by a neighbouring Parish and employed a maintenance team on a retainer – being proactive rather than reactive and, to date, the scheme seems to be working well.

As a council we have liaised with our neighbours on planning, the problems that the increasing traffic causes and made comments, where appropriate on the plans that our neighbours have in place – be them local plans, neighbourhood plans or simply concerns on planning matters etc.

We are all too aware of the issues that the Parish has with regard to traffic, parking and speed.

The lack of a VAS (speed sign) in Shamley Green is a concern we share with the SGVA– Cllr Band is – after negotiations with surrey county council reached an impasse, looking at the options open to the Parish council and, whilst there are no guarantees, I am confident that a solution will be provided sooner rather later.

It would be unfair to blame Surrey County Council for everything! We have an excellent working relationship with Cllr Victoria young – through the Lengthsman scheme the council – were able to receive £2700 to fund programmes to finance various projects. Surrey County Council officers have also proved invaluable in helping with the schemes to repair the drainage I mentioned earlier.

So a busy year – I can assure the residents that the Councillors have tried to be diligent in the exercise of their duties, we are all volunteers, many of us work or have interests outside the council and we do – just a many of you will – get frustrated that we have no magic wand. We work under very strict guidelines re budgets, expenditure and costs – we simply cannot spend.

Next term we will look to improve the website – ensure the newsletter is circulated electronically as was the plan this last year – we continue to look of ways to improve the Parish, the facilities that we offer – the playgrounds etc. and also to resolve issues where we have to reply on our partners in local government for guidance and often for finance.

This coming month there are local elections – for a variety of reasons – a number of Councillors are standing down. I would especially like to recognise the work of Cllr Peter Maggs – Blackheath has the right to one Councillor, Wonersh and Shamley green 4 each. Whilst we all look to ensure that the whole Parish benefits – peter has represented the interests of his home village with considerable energy – peter is leaving the council and to date there is no candidate to represent the village of Blackheath on the new 2019 – 2023 council. I know you have an active village association and whilst I am sure that the interests of the village will be considered by all – your own Councillor would be an advantage. I will ask for volunteers tonight but – please – if you would consider being co-opted onto the new council.

Finally – my thanks to all the Councillors – from surrey, Victoria young, from Waverley Mike Band and Michael Goodridge and to my fellow Councillors who have put in a great deal of effort this year – a special thanks must go to Councillor Anne Powell-Evans – Anne has been involved for many, many years as Clerk as Councillor and as an active member of many associations – her experience, knowledge and willingness to help make our Parish a better place will be very difficult to replace –

she has helped me no end, at times cajoled me, at times some might say scolded me but always with the interests of the Parish at heart.

Anne know that local government is not easy and at times things do not move as quickly as possible or that we would like – she will not be surprised therefore to hear that the little thank you that we started planning some time ago – has not arrived or at least some of it has – just not all of it

So – when we do finally get things delivered Anne – we can meet and I will make a small presentation – however – it is important tonight that your work as a Councillor is recognised – and one that everyone should appreciate – I should also mention Glyn Powell-Evans who has supported Anne's work.