



Thursley Parish Council

- Chairman's Annual Report -

At the elections held in May 2011 Sir Alan Traill and Mr Adam Adler decided not to stand for re-election. Councillors Ranson, Edwards, Malton, Mendelssohn, Scheffers and Hunter were elected unopposed. In July 2011 following a formal notice period Mrs Karen Tyler was co-opted onto the Council.

Following elections in May 2010, Cllr Ranson decided to hand over the Chair and Cllr Hunter was duly elected with Cllr Ranson being elected to the role of Vice Chair.

After almost two years as the Parish Clerk, Mrs Jo Ranson had announced her desire to stand down due to pressures on the farm and her replacement was sought. From the plethora of application Mrs Elaine Felton was chosen and she has, in the twelve months since her appointment, proved extremely capable and efficient. The Council takes this opportunity of thanking her for her efforts and hopes that she will continue in this role from her home in Elstead for many years to come. It is perhaps appropriate to bring everybody's attention to the fact that a Parish Clerk is a delegated officer of the Council with significant responsibilities and, contrary to popular opinion, is not the Chairman's secretary but reports and takes instructions from the Council.

Sadly, Sally Scheffers resigned from the Council in September but continues to champion the cause of the Village Hall as an enthusiastic and very capable chair person. Following this resignation and after an appropriate period of notice, Mrs Tricia Horwood was co-opted onto the Council. Both newly co-opted Councillors have, in the short space of time, clearly demonstrated a welcome level of enthusiasm and competence for the task/s in hand. With women now equalling more than forty percent of the members the Council has surely lived up to the aspirations of our current Prime Minister by having a respectful representation of women in governance.

Throughout the year we have received attendance at our monthly meetings by representatives of Waverly Borough Council – Bryn Morgan & Jenny Else - elected councillors for the Elstead / Thursley Ward; David Harmer of Surrey County Council and PC Rob Hawkes who have not only provided us with regular reports but also act as our liaison officers with the organisations they represent. Their respective support in our aims and objectives is greatly appreciated.



Early in the year councillors accepted various portfolios within the parish's responsibilities:

- Robert Ranson (Vice Chair) – Highways
- James Mendelssohn – Financial Responsible Officer
- Sean Edwards – Commons & MOD
- Jackie Malton – Police Liaison & Footpaths
- Karen Tyler – Broadband / Waverly Core Strategy Response
- Tricia Horwood – Village Hall representative & Web-site co-ordinator
- Peter Hunter (Chair) – Support & Substitute portfolio holder
and
- Nicki Bates – Parish Warden

During the latter part of the year the Council has reviewed its budgets and has been able to contain next year's (2012/2013) precept to a 2.8% increase.

The drain on our coffers has been eased by the goodwill of Mr. Richard Bates who has undertaken grass cutting around the village with no profit to himself. And now, despite a recent operation on his knee, has once again volunteered to carry out the mowing this summer. The village is indebted to him. Indeed the village is indebted to the Bates household, as Nicky continues to be a stalwart volunteer as the Parish Warden. Nicky quietly goes about her tasks never seeking praise or reward. The Council would like to thank her for her years of service to the Parish.

Throughout the year we have received a number of small grants that have contributed to the effective maintenance of village amenities. These have included

- Local Allocation grant funding from Surrey County Council which is being used to add an additional security gate to the recreation ground, purchase of a bench to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee, restoration of an existing bench and provision of Neighbourhood Watch signage.
- Community Grant Funding from Surrey County Council which has been used throughout the village to tidy edges and clean signage.
- A funding grant to the tune of £ [redacted] from Surrey County Council for refurbishment of facilities in the Village Hall.

The council is also considering the planting of a Jubilee Oak somewhere in the village, but are currently 'stumped' as to where it should go beyond the reach of vandals during its youthful years.



As can be appreciated matters pertaining to planning applications are often contentious and raise more public interest than most other issues with often vibrant expression from interested parties. The Council endeavours to maintain an objective view on all matters related to planning focussing on the property and its relationship to the immediate environment rather than the appellant. In October members of the Council together with members of Elstead Parish Council attended an informal get-together with members of Waverley's planning department headed by Mr Matthew Evans. The event was sponsored by Cllr Jenny Else and entitled, "Building Bridges". Those of us who attended found that the evening achieved the objective. Councillors attending came away with the distinct impression that planners at Waverley wanted and were receptive to the views of Parish Councils as they were considered to be much closer to the respective environments. It was also made clear that it is the duty of a parish council to ensure that all matters related to planning issues were properly observed in order to protect the whole community and the Council should not hesitate in being proactive where appropriate.

Apart from our major highway, the A3, roads in our Parish continue to be a constant source of concern and Cllr Ranson proves to be a fearsome proponent of proper maintenance by Surrey County Council. With two harsh winters the Parish has had its fair share of potholes to contend with and with county council budgets stretched beyond their tax payer funded coffers it is difficult to maintain the desired standards of repair. SCC's back-log of repairs is now equal to some three normal budgeted years. The Council continues to press for a solution to the slippery road surface in parts of The Street and Highfield Lane where many horses and their riders are coming to grief without icy conditions prevailing. The highways department of SCC has promised to give the matter their early attention if only with a temporary solution.

Thursley, like so many other rural communities, is not blessed with very fast broadband speeds and Surrey County Council launched an initiative in 2011 to try and improve the situation throughout the worst affected areas within the county by funding technical improvements to geographic areas that would otherwise not be commercially viable for the major service providers. Thursley bridges the two exchanges of Haslemere (01428) and Farnborough (01252), neither of which facilitate broadband speeds above 2MB for their users in this parish. SCC hope to be able to improve these standards to at least 5-10 MB speeds for most dwellings in our parish and Cllr Tyler took on this portfolio entitled 'Superfast Broadband', in order to co-ordinate the Council's response to SCC and act as the Council's conduit on all matters related to this matter.

In an attempt to jump into the 21st century the Council has decided to both send out alerts to parishioners via e-mail circulation and also to develop a dedicated website through which it can keep a large proportion of the parish fully informed of activities. The Clerk is charged with e-mail distribution and Cllr Horwood has undertaken to co-ordinate the development of the website. Once this is up and running the Council intends to publish a quarterly newsletter as well as provide on-line access to approved Minutes of Meetings.



The MOD, as owners of Hankley Common, has decided to close the public car park at the DZ citing interference with operational requirements. A very active protest group was formed in Elstead and a well attended public meeting was held at the United Reform church in Elstead in February. A primary objection by most locals who use the common for dog walking was the proposed location of the alternative car park at the site of the old Canadian army camp on the east side of the Thursley Road. Thursley Parish's portfolio holder, Cllr Edwards, has been able to report that after many discussions between the MOD/Land Marc Services and local community groups a better positioning of a replacement car park has been achieved with a siting on Hounmere Lane slightly to the south of the crossroads with Truxford Lane. Once again, the strength of moderately voiced public opinion wins the day.

The unreasonable use of BOATS (Byways Open to All Traffic) by out-of-town enthusiasts, both of the two-wheeled and four-wheeled variety, continues to be a source of annoyance and increasing danger to pedestrians within our Parish. These adventurers not only disturb the tranquillity of the area with the sounds emitted by their vehicles' exhausts but they are increasingly posing a danger to local walkers and rambles alike. The problem we face here in the community is that, due to the closure of BOATs in other counties the 4x4 and trail bike enthusiasts migrate to our area in order to exercise their skills of navigating rough and undulating terrain. The problem for our disturbed community is that there is nothing unlawful about this type of activity as the term states "Open to All Traffic". Perhaps a good example of where the law is often referred to as a four legged animal akin to a mule! However, I am pleased to report that there are moves afoot by both county councillors and honourable members of parliament to effect changes that may see this particular piece of legislation redefined in order to lessen its kinsman ship with the lesser equine breed.

We are fortunate to enjoy a relatively low level of crime in our parish though whenever the thief does strike it causes considerable heartache to those directly affected. As with so many rural communities throughout the country we no longer have the sight of the friendly 'Bobby-on-Beat'. However, our local bobby, PC Rob Hawkes, aided by PCSO John Francis show their presence as often can be managed considering the extent of their motorised beat. The periodic surgeries held at the Three Horseshoes are proving to be popular and useful for not only villagers but also the constabulary alike.

Our relatively new villager, Mr John Dawson, stepped up to the plate early in the year to act as our Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and has demonstrated an exemplary level of enthusiasm keeping us all informed of criminal intrusions into our otherwise tranquil lives. We trust he will continue in this role to the continued annoyance of 'Burglar Bill'.

Under the able stewardship of David & Sandra, The Three Horseshoes continues to blossom as the daily centre of village life with the faces of outsiders becoming ever more prevalent. Their award for being [.....] was well deserved and has certainly added to the pressures on the culinary skills of David and his kitchen staff who's lapses are as rare as the roast beef!



As part of central Government's intention to pass down more and more responsibilities to local government, Waverly Borough Council are busy setting out their own local Development Framework and towards this end have issued a draft to their Core Strategy in relationship to future policies pertaining to planning and development. The public at large, together with town and parish councils, were invited to comment on this weighty document drafted in February 2012. Thursley Parish Council's response was co-ordinated by Cllr Tyler and a copy is attached hereto.

Certainly the most significant event in the Parish of Thursley this past year, indeed perhaps the most singularly significant event in the history of Thursley's environs, has been the opening of the Hindhead Tunnel and the rejoining of the two areas of Hindhead Common. This has been a major project undertaking by any international standard and the finished works are competitive with anything to be found elsewhere in the world. It is certainly now the most superior of all tunnels in the United Kingdom as well as being the longest road tunnel, of which more than sixty percent lies within this parish. The benefits the tunnel has brought to our community are immeasurable as we no longer have the 'rat runners' avoiding the Hindhead crossroads at busy times of the day, though there are still some adjustments to be made to traffic management on the occasions of road accidents. Viewed from afar the entire project would seem to have been extremely well managed by both the Highways Agency and the main contractor, Balfour Beatty, for which they are to be complimented. One person deserves a special mention, the Highways Agency's Project Manager, Mr Paul Arnold, who was named in the recent New Year's honours list and awarded an MBE for his 25 years of service solving the notorious bottle neck at the A3/A287 crossing, though not all of the original coloured routes were favourites of Thursley!

The achievements and celebrations of the Hindhead Tunnel have, however, recently been marred by the rumour that Waverly Borough Council are considering acquiring the northern portion of the construction site headquarters used by Balfour Beatty, as a permanent site for gypsies and travellers. This would seem a totally inappropriate location for such a facility, especially when considering that it is within the Green Belt and an area designated as an AONB. The Council's current position is that the land known as, 'Hindhead Hill Farm' should be completely returned to agricultural use as determined by the Inspector's Report to the First Secretary of State and the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs following the Public Inquiry of 2004. On 16th April 2012 the Council passed a resolution that the Highways Agency should adhere to the recommendations of the Inspector, which were unopposed by Thursley Parish Council at the time of the Inquiry – see copy attached.



As the current/past chairman of Thursley Parish Council I take this opportunity of reminding all in our community that councillors, together with many others serving the needs of the community, are unpaid volunteers who freely give their time and effort towards the betterment of this parish and its environs. These people strive with the very best of intentions to provide and achieve the best for their neighbours. However, I am constantly reminded of, and would hasten to remind others of, the words authored by Abraham Lincoln and adopted with modification by the late Sir Winston Churchill:

*“You can please some of the people all of the time
and all of the people some of the time,
but, you cannot please all of the people all of the time”*

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