

Effingham Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2003

This year is election year for the Parish Council. At the time of writing, there are vacancies on the Council, which consists of ten councillors, five for the North Ward and five for the South Ward. For the first time the voting will be entirely by post, so there will be no polling station.

Each Parish Councillor is elected to serve for four years. The Council meets once a month on the last Tuesday of the month at the King George V Hall at 8pm. All residents of the Parish are welcome and will be able to speak about any problem to do with Parish Council business.

During this last year the Government passed two very important pieces of legislation affecting Parish Councils. The first deals with the disclosure of interests, which consists of a form that every Parish Councillor must complete and sign. These disclosures are far more searching than anything signed by any MP and many feel this to be an infringement of their human rights. **No Parish Councillor receives a penny for their time or travelling expenses. If you are a Parish Councillor you work solely for the benefit of the village.**

The second piece of legislation concerns the auditing of the Parish Council accounts. Each year the Clerk prepares the accounts, which are then audited by an accredited auditor. This costs the Parish £350. The Government now requires these audited accounts to be sent to their accountants, who presumably look at them, sign them, and send them back to the respective councils, with a bill for £300. **This is a tax on each Parish of £300 per year.**

During the year Chris Simmonds, a Parish Councillor of many years' standing, has had to resign owing to the pressures of his work. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Parish Council, to thank him for all he has done for the village, and to thank also Valerie Chapman, and Peter Grobel, who will not be standing again. These latter two Councillors are both past Chairmen, and we are very grateful for all the work they have done. We are also sad that our co-opted Councillor, Neville Staunton, will not be standing for re-election owing to pressure of work.

At the end of March this year Edward Crouch will have completed fifty years service as Parish Clerk to Effingham Parish Council, and will be retiring. Last November he was awarded the MBE for his services to the village, and for his charitable work for Talking Newspapers for the Blind, and Rotary. We shall miss him a lot. He worked tirelessly for the village and it will be hard to envisage the Parish Council without him, but we have a most able successor in Susan Morris, who is to be our new Clerk. Susan is already getting to grips with the job, and we are all looking forward to getting our new Parish Room up and running in a month or two.

The year has seen many planning applications. The most outstanding in size is the re-development of part of Norwood Close by Mount Green Housing Association. This will involve the demolition of some very unsatisfactory houses, and their replacement with maisonettes, flats and bungalows. These will be affordable homes, although not all may be for Effingham residents.

A very unwelcome addition to normal planning applications is that of mobile phone masts. We are being increasingly targeted to accept more and more masts. At the moment we have two masts on Effingham Golf Club land, with permission for another at Effingham Junction. On both these sites applications for taller masts have been made, which have been opposed by your Parish Council and turned down by Guildford Borough Council. However, even more worrying are two current applications for masts in High Barn Road: one on the Water Company site, and one right at the top of the road on land belonging to High Barn Enterprises. Both have been turned down, but both are going to appeal. The latter mast is 22.5 metres high (74 feet 3 inches) and within 100 yards of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It will be visible for miles to the north, particularly from Strathcona Avenue and Woodlands Road. If you object to masts being placed in this sensitive area on the slopes of the North Downs, please get in touch with Guildford Borough Council Planning Dept. or contact Effingham Parish Clerk (Susan Morris, 01372 454911), for further information. Objections to these appeals should be made in written form by 23 April and 29 April 2003 respectively, so this information may reach you too late, but you can still make your views known to your local government.

As I mentioned in my report last year, Guildford Borough Council has purchased Effingham Common and Hooke Common, part of Effingham Commons. Following a village meeting, a group called 'Friends of Effingham Common' has been set up and an Executive Committee of eight local residents together with Mr R Perrins, Trees and Countryside Manager of Guildford Borough, was constituted. This Committee has met twice and will continue to meet regularly to deal with any matters arising. Guildford Borough Council have been successful in obtaining a grant from SITA and are starting on some much-needed drainage and upgrading of the bridleway and footpaths. There will be an AGM of the Friends of Effingham Common in the second half of May.

The Golden Jubilee Fete Day on 1st June was a great success, with beautiful weather and fun for all. The Golden Jubilee Committee were delighted that £3,800 was raised which, it had been agreed, would go towards new play equipment for older children on the KGV Playing Fields. The Committee received a grant of £3000 from Guildford Borough Council; Horsley and Bookham Rotary have agreed to sponsor one of the proposed pieces of play equipment, and Surrey County Playing Fields Association are sponsoring another. The Committee have applied for grants from Awards for All and SERPA. If successful, they will have almost reached their target of £15,786, which they are determined to do this summer. Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Mrs J E Page on 01372 454270. Pictures of the layout and pieces of equipment are on view at the KGV Hall and on the notice board at the entrance, as well as on the Parish Council notice board.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 April at 8pm in the KGV Hall. This is an occasion when any Parish resident can come and raise any matter, or ask any questions to do with Parish business, which the Chairman will endeavour to answer. Finally, I should like to thank the Clerk, Edward Crouch, and all my fellow Councillors, for their help and support in this very busy year.

Jessica Page