



# West Horsley Parish Council

## Chairman's Annual Report for 2023/2024

The Council has been through another busy year during which the Village has experienced considerable flooding, disruption due to numerous road closures, and significant housing development. It has also had several memorable and enjoyable times as described below.

As my fourth year as Chairman comes to end, I account to our residents as follows:

### Staff and Councillors

Elections were held in May 2023 and this time we had 11 positions to fill; previously we were nine. Catherine Young did not stand for election, but we welcomed Carole Mattock with two positions left vacant. Since the election Peter Colbourne-Baber has stood down. We have since welcomed by co-option Clare Clinton and Stephen Skinner and have one vacancy available. Being a Parish Councillor is a worthwhile civic duty and we hope to attract someone to join us soon.

Our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, Julia McClung, has continued to ensure the Council operates with ever increasing efficiency and ensuring that it remains responsive to residents' needs and enquiries. Our Deputy Clerk, Jane McKenzie, left to pursue a new career; we thanked her for her very valuable service, especially her persistence in getting the authorities to deal with the flooding and potholes. We welcomed Karen Young replacing her in October 2023. Karen is administering the Planning Committee and supporting the Roads Task Group.

### Finance

Our precept went up from £86,148 to £97,055; a 9.97% (+ £5.69) increase for a Band D property. This helped to afford the planning and legal advice in the Rule 6 application for the Wisley Development Appeal Hearing. It enabled us to make improvements to the Village, issue e-bulletins giving residents important information, and increase the garden maintenance contract.

We submitted requests for Section 106 monies from the major housing developments currently underway. Whilst we await reimbursement, these monies will have funded the refurbishment of the tennis court, the provision of two vehicle activated signs and the new iron Village sign on the Village Green. We have applications in for improvements to the Village Hall; improvements to infrastructure, including traffic calming measures, are applied for by Surrey and Guildford Councils with the NHS likewise for local health services.

With thanks to Surrey County Councillor Dennis Booth, the pavements from Cranmore Lane to the A246 and from Long Reach to the Railway Bridge have been cleared of vegetation making them wider and cleaner to walk on. His Highways Fund gave £4,000 for this purpose and his Community Fund allocated £1,000 towards new Village gateway signs. Guildford Borough Council also gave matched funding for the wooden signs that have been installed by our Village Warden at the tennis court, orchard, playground and green.

The two projects submitted to SCC's *Your Fund Surrey* initiative were withdrawn following changes to the criteria and the Fund being distributed in a different way. The Fund has been allocated to SCC Councillors and a new bid for fencing around the playground will be made.

## **Planning**

Our Planning Committee is now well established and has been kept exceptionally busy. It has worked with neighbouring Parish Councils on the Appeal against the Wisley Development joining with East Horsley PC as a Rule 6 party; the outcome is still unknown. It has considered 76 full planning applications, 38 associated with 'discharge of conditions', 10 for work with trees, and 14 other. 28 were objected to mainly on the grounds of non-compliance with policies in our adopted Neighbourhood Plan. To date, Guildford Borough Council has approved 92 applications, refused 31, with 15 still awaiting a decision or in progress. The outcome of our submission to extend the Surrey Hills National Landscape (previously known as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is still awaited.

## **Youth Council**

Our Youth Council excelled last year. I am delighted they will be making their own presentation to the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2024 on all their activities over the past twelve months. The highlights have definitely been the Good Neighbour Scheme with The Raleigh School, the Fun Run and the Clothes Swap. Their commitment, enthusiasm, creativity and organisational skills are a joy and demonstrate the very best in our village youth.

## **Initiatives**

On Coronation Day, 6<sup>th</sup> May, we lit our beacon again at West Horsley Place. Despite the rain, many people came to join in the celebrations raising a toast to King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

In September, we held the second of our Community Forums relating to the consequences of the major housing developments on our local infrastructure. This time the focus was on health services. Over 90 people attended to hear from representatives of the Integrated Care Board, the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust, and our GP surgery. After two hours of discussion, the meeting ended somewhat reassured that the impact of the increased population would have no adverse effect on the availability of healthcare locally.

After a couple of years in the planning, it was an absolute delight to invite over 150 people to the Great Stone Hall at West Horsley Place for the inaugural, biennial Awards for Service in the Community. Over 30 nominations were received across the categories of individual, group / organisation and youth. My thanks to Clare Matthias and the Judging Panel, who had a most difficult task, and Mary Cresswell, HM Vice Lord Lieutenant for Surrey, who presented the awards. Congratulations to all the nominees and a special shout-out to the winners: Kelvin Hayes, individual; The Whippets, youth; Horsley Wheel of Care, organization; Jules Cranwell, Chairman's Award; and John Whitlock, Lifetime Achievement. It was a joyful evening of celebration and thanks for so much given by so many to the benefit of our Village community.

## **Finally, A Word of Thanks...**

I hope, on reading this, that residents will feel we have listened to and taken on board the issues that concern and affect daily living and found our channels of communication helpful. My thanks to the Village Hall Management Committee, its Administrator and Facilities Manager for maintaining the asset to a high standard, to the Community Speed Watch Team for continuing to help make our roads safer and to the Trustees and Staff at West Horsley Place for their collaboration and help in hosting several of our events. The Council and I are truly grateful. I am indebted to the time, effort and commitment given by fellow Parish Councillors and our Clerks and to our County and Borough Councillors: Dennis, Catherine, Dawn, and Ruth. Thank you.

***Cllr Elaine Best, Chairman  
April 2024***