



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Quality Parish Status

At the end of last year's Assembly I talked about the value of Denmead obtaining Quality Parish Status (QPS). At the start of the year the Council had just been re-elected. There are thirteen seats on this Council thus the twelve Councillors nominated were returned unopposed, nonetheless that was sufficient to meet that part of the Quality Status requirement. In fact, working on our application revealed that your Parish Council met all the requirements. Unfortunately, the external auditing of the latest accounts took much longer than in previous years and by the time they were returned our Clerk, Vendy Treagust, had decided to retire. As a qualified Clerk is an essential element in achieving QPS or application is currently 'on hold'.

Losses to village life

The Parish Council elected me to take on the role of Chairman, as Mike Webber had decided to retire from the fray after making valuable contributions over a period of nine years. During my time on this Council Mike and I had struck up a friendship and indeed he encouraged me in the role of Vice Chairman. It is right to say that Mike's death, in August so soon after he had left the Council affected members deeply.

It is also sad to record that Cllr David Griffen died in May soon after the election. He had fought kidney illness for many years. Nonetheless his short contribution to the Council was noted for his championing of local action on the environment.

Close to the Council's work was Clive Buckle. He was one of those few characters who are committed to the village and its life. His sudden death, also in August was a shock to everyone. The War Memorial Hall Committee that he chaired has re-grouped but loss of Clive's drive and energy, as Chairman of *Denmead Future*, the team that had been responsible for the Village Design Statement, has brought its work to a halt.

In February, the death Cllr Jeremy Ventham was recorded. Jeremy was a lifelong member of the village and for a period a Councillor, until his illness caused his resignation. His trenchant comments regarding the Council's projects and finances were important to discussions but when the gavel went down his affable personality returned

Our thoughts continue to go to the widows and partners of these people all of whom contributed to the work of the Parish Council.

During the year the Council lost three Councillors through resignation, but despite gaining four co-optees, its remains one member short. The vacancy has been advertised.

The Clerk to the Council

At the end of October Vendy Treagust, who had been the Parish Clerk for six years, retired. Vendy had a depth of knowledge drawn from her qualifications and practical experience. Her wise counsel, that had helped the Council through the building of the

Skate Park and the Pavilion, both major projects, was much valued. In November interviews were held for her replacement, a vacancy that had attracted both local candidates and ones from Cornwall and the Midlands. In a field of strong candidates, Tony Daniels, at the time the Clerk to Rowlands Castle Parish Council, was appointed to the post. Tony has settled in well, telling me that “no two days are the same”, and he is studying for his Certificate in Local Council Administration, a qualification which, when obtained during the coming year, will enable our application for Quality Status to be re-activated.

Stepping out!

During the past year the Parish Council has worked with the Forestry commission to obtain a grant for the Lottery funds (Awards for All), Onyx plc, Hampshire County Council to improve some of the paths in Creech Woods. This was completed in the autumn. In addition the Footpaths Committee ran two walks that used the footpaths of the Parish. These walks not only promotes healthy exercise and knowledge of the countryside and a little of the history of the Parish.

The Barn

The Barn (in Forest Mead) was until recently a storage area for the Council’s Landscape team. It is recognised as a village landmark (an old brick and flint building that was part of the Ashling Estate) but it is redundant for Council purposes. In past editions of the *Parish Scene* the public were asked to make suggestions as to how to re-use the building. Although time was spent researching the suggestions that were received, none proved viable. As a result this Council put in a planning application for it to be converted into two small dwellings whilst retaining the character of the building. A consultation meeting was held in January with residents in the vicinity of The Barn. Currently the application is being discussed with WCC officers.

Working together

During the past year the Councillors for Denmead, for the Parish, City and County Councils have continued to hold informal meetings and to work together where possible. Some good things do result: The re-surfacing of the Car Park was a very pleasant surprise(!) although the continuing problems with temporary ‘flash’ flooding as the drains don’t cope, even after they have been sucked out, is a continuing concern.

At all levels we have been working to ensure that phase two of the WCC village centre improvements goes forward. Difficulties with some owners were resolved earlier in the year but one particular person has had sufficient reservations about the project to choose not to take part. At the time of writing it is understood that that the funding, which has been on hold at Winchester for many years now has been lost. Although it has been said many times, the forecourt area is the property of the owners and shop-keepers, nonetheless, this Council will explore how the flooding, the dangerous potholes, exposed sharp bricks and other personal safety issues that are part of the current state of the area can be tackled.

'Live for the Future'
Winchester City Council's Local Development Framework

The consultation phase of the new Local Development Framework, the successor to the existing Winchester District Local Plan, began in December. It appeared at relatively short notice and responding took considerable resource from the other work of Councillors. WCC Members and Officers held a workshop in Denmead on 15th January which was attended by over 80 people. The Parish Council followed that up a week later by holding an extended session at one of our meetings at which 34 members of the public attended and many contributed. The Parish Council developed its own detailed option for Denmead and submitted it to WCC. It is understood that over 3,000 responses have been made from around the district and the outcome will not be known until October 2008.

Finances

The year-end accounts for 2007-08 will be published in the usual way when they have been approved by the Council and audited. I am able to report that the projected income exceeds budget due to prudent consideration of costs and services obtained during the year. It was a significant step when the account with Winnicotts for the building of the Pavilion was finalised and paid. The work of Nick Corry (of Harris and Porter, Quantity Surveyors) in securing the settlement of outstanding matters is recorded.

In December, taking into account the ever increasing responsibilities and pressures on its budget, the Parish Council set a precept of £309,747 for the year 2008/09. This is an increase of 2.75%.

Thanks

Firstly, the hearty thanks of the Parish Council are to be recorded to Bernie Reid who continues to edit the *Parish Scene*, creating four issues a year from material supplied by Councillors and the organisations that this Council supports.

It is fitting to end this report by recording thanks to the Office team who provide support to Council members as well as dealing with the regular workload, and thanks too, to the Landscape Management team who have effectively dealt with the huge task of dealing with our hedges, green lanes, open space areas and playing fields.

Cllr Neil Lander-Brinkley
Chairman