

## **Chairman's Annual Report**

**May 2009 to April 2010**

**Presented to Annual Parish Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

It does not seem like two minutes ago that I stood here for the first time but this is actually my third address, which seems unbelievable. When I started thinking about this years report I thought have we achieved much this year and it soon became apparent through writing it that yes we had.

As in past years there have been ups and downs and we have had to cope with changes. This year saw the resignation of Anna Attard-Butler and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for the work on the Council. As no election was required Ruth Arikans was co-opted. She quickly got to work, joining several committees and has been a great asset to the Council, for which I am extremely grateful.

The website has continued to grow with the addition of extra pages and I hope you all find it a useful tool in keeping you informed as to what is going on in the Parish.

This year the precept remained unchanged as Parish Councillors were aware of the difficult financial times we were all facing. Talking of the precept we recently received a letter asking why the precept had risen over the last few years, particularly as the Parish Council managed on £19,000 in 1993/94. The answer in short is simple the general cost of living has risen as well as the Parish Council expenditure. In response I promised that I would provide an overview in PS News and a fuller explanation in my Annual Report, so I will now outline some of the cost areas.

Two of the major changes to that of 1993/94 are we now have a dedicated PCSO for the Parish PCSO Stephen Whittaker. He continues to provide an excellent service to Parishioners for which I am very grateful. Our contribution for his services is £14250 per annum. The second change was that we also added to our building stock by taking on the Community Centre, formerly we just had the village hall. Whilst the respective management committees from the hire fees meet the general running costs and the internal refurbishments, for which I am extremely grateful the Parish Council do still have some expenditure, including the outside building maintenance. In the last two years we have also contributed to replacing the heating system and paid in full for the rear windows to be replaced at the Community Centre and paid for the outside decoration of the Village Hall. This year's work will include the replacement of the ramp running up to the doors at the community centre to make it disability compliant.

Other expenditure includes our legal and audit fees, Public Liability Insurance, maintenance of common areas and playing fields, maintenance of and inspection of play equipment. Clerks Salary, printing, renting of allotment land, hire of halls, car park rates and maintenance, fees for Parish litter pickers, emptying litter and dog bins and the repayment of a previous public works loan.

In recent years we have also had to build up our reserves as recommended by the auditor.

All these costs, which have risen significantly since 1993/94 have to be met through the precept or other income, such as allotment rent, interest on deposit accounts or agency agreements, such is the case for the emptying of litterbins.

We always look at ways to save money and provide best value and I hope you feel £33.44 on a band D property per annum for the Parish Services is good value. Furthermore I hope you feel I have demonstrated tonight why costs have risen over recent years.

Throughout the year we have continued to cover all our usual meetings and committees, these have included Highways, police locality, footpath association, Standon Charities and the village hall and community centre management meetings. My thanks go out to both the management committees who do an excellent job in ensuring the efficient running of these important parish facilities.

The big achievement of the year has to be getting the community led plan off the ground. Hopefully you all filled out the questionnaire and tonight we will be announcing the winner of the prize draws. The Community led plan is important to our Parish. As I have mentioned before it is not just about getting extra funding for the Parish, it is about raising the awareness of issues with key stake holders, for example safety along the A120 with Hertfordshire Highways, providing a planning framework for the Parish that would help the District Council when considering plans for our area and much, much more. Through the plan also I hope we can not only improve our community but also bring it together, working for the benefit of all those who not only live and work in the parish, but also give so much of their time and service to it, allowing us all to consider our community values, from our heritage, social and commercial life as well as the facilities we can offer for all those in the Parish. Something the original plan set out to do.

There is now a short video showing a résumé of some of the aspects covered in my report and others that I have not touched on.

## **VIDEO**

Hopefully you feel that Councillors have served you well again this year through some challenging times where we have had to make tough decisions. As demonstrated tonight these do not always meet with the approval of all the parishioners all of the time. Something that sadly cannot be achieved, but remember we will work with parishioners to the best of our abilities as volunteers for the greater good of our community as a whole.