

Chairman's Annual Report

May 2008 – April 2009

Presented to Annual Parish Meeting May 26th 2009

I cannot believe that time has flown by and I am standing here again to review another year in the life of Standon Parish Council. As I set out to write the report and looked back on the year I realised as a Council we had achieved much of what we had set out to do and that in doing so hopefully brought the community together.

I was extremely proud this year to host what I believe to be Standon Parish Council's first Civic Service, at which we celebrated life in the Parish and those who dedicate their services to helping us in our Parish.

It is always great to be able to celebrate and recognise the hard work that goes on in the Parish and this year I was honoured to be asked to attend Roger de Claire School Fete. I also attended the May Day celebrations in Standon. I feel it is important for Parishioners to see their Councillors out and about in the Parish, rather than someone who they never see. Should you wish for the Chairman or any Councillor to attend your event, please feel free to contact them direct or the Clerk.

This year has also seen us build upon the success of the planning committee, setting up a new finance committee and several working groups, which have included Allotments, Community Centre and Standing Orders (rules on how we operate). A full list can be found on our website www.standonparishcouncil.co.uk and will be updated after tonight with any changes to membership agreed at this meeting.

Whilst mentioning the website, which was set up in the early part of the year, this has proved to be invaluable in providing a better link to Parishioners. Recent updates have included the posting of minutes and I hope we can continue to use the site as a key tool in keeping parishioners informed.

Due to the success of the website, regular reports in PS News with contact details and no parishioners attending the Saturday surgery for several months, it was with decided to stop the surgeries in April as there seemed little point carrying on when no one attended.

This year we raised the precept for the Year April 2009 to March 2010 to £60,000. Whilst the precept has gone up, this has meant we have managed to achieve two things. Firstly a dedicated PCSO, which is something we have been asked about by parishioners on many occasions. Stephen Whittaker is now covering the Parish and I am sure he will prove to be a great asset to it and I would like to take this opportunity to wish him every success in the role. We will work closely with him to ensure the needs of the whole Parish are met.

Additionally it allowed us to build up our reserves as recommended by our Auditor.

By passing on savings from last year, this has meant that the precept has only rise by around £5.87 a year on a band D property, so hopefully you will still think this is good value for money for the services provided by Standon Parish Council.

During the year we have continued all of our regular meetings with the highways department, police, footpath association, standon charities, the village hall and community centre to name but a few.

Again this year I must thank the management committees of both the village hall and the community centre who have given up much of their time ensuring these valuable assets to the Parish are maintained and run effectively. The parish Council this year also paid for the outside decoration of the village hall and part funded the new heating system for the community centre.

With regard to Highways we are still experiencing problems with Hertfordshire Highways and the service they give to the Parish, but though the highway meetings I feel we are starting to make a difference. Thanks must go to Hertfordshire Highways who listened to our concerns and have recently resurfaced the A120 at Wellpond Green.

As mentioned last year though you can all help by reporting faults you spot to the customer service centre via phone or web, again I have cards here tonight if anyone would like to take them with them. If however you then find the service falls below what you expect please let us know and we will take it up on your behalf.

Through the previously agreed travel plan this year also saw the successful installation by Hertfordshire Highways of the traffic calming in Station Road outside the two schools, parking restrictions in Station Road and Puckeridge High Street and the realigning of the South Road and Station Road junction. The plan also saw the installation of the new Puckeridge Gateway features recognising those who served on HMS Puckeridge and the installation of a flashing 30mph and school warning sign at St Thomas of Canterbury.

In previous PS News reports I made reference to re-establishing a Parish Plan, but so far there has been no response. A Parish Plan benefits us all and I hope through the Plan we can not only improve our community but also bring it together, working for the benefit of all those who live or work in the parish and give so much of their time and service to it. I hope it will also help us consider our community values, from our heritage, social and commercial life and the facilities we can offer for everyone in our Parish, something that was set out in the original plan. Hopefully by raising this again tonight we can get parishioners interested in helping or sponsoring this venture, as it will only be successful if we can engage both Councillors and Parishioners in drawing up the plan. If you are able to help please contact any member of the Parish Council or the Clerk, as per the contact details in PS News or on our website. The Plan is extremely important, as it will also allow us to use it as a tool, working with partners such as the County and District Councils and thus making a real difference to our Parish.

There is now a short video showing a résumé of some of the things I have covered in my report and some additional items that I have not.

VIDEO LINK

Hopefully tonight you will see that we have achieved a lot in the passed year and you feel that we have served you well. In conclusion please remember that we represent you and whilst we have limited powers, we will always use these to help the Parish and will do our best as unpaid volunteers. We are only effective though if you help us by letting us know your concerns relating to the parish, thank you.