



Little Chalfont Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report for the 2009/10 Council year.

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to our previous Chairman, Francis Wilkinson, who resigned last December, following his move away from Little Chalfont. Francis led the Council through some difficult negotiations with Amersham Town Council regarding the payment of some of that Council's reserves to our Parish Council. He was also responsible for ensuring we had our Village entry signs, cycle racks etc, and set up the Westwood Park working party which has been so successful in getting improvements planned and, in some cases, completed.

Alan Tate retired in October 2009. Alan was the first Chairman of this Council. He had previously been an Amersham Town Councillor and a Chairman of Chiltern District Council and we will always be grateful to him for seeing us through the first year when most of us were inexperienced and finding our feet.

This has been the first full Council year that we have had our Parish Clerk together with the Assistant Clerk in office and we have been considerably helped by this stability. Our Clerk, Janet Mason, also has the role of 'Responsible Financial Officer' and quite a bit of her time is concerned with preparing budgets, ensuring the accounts are kept in good order and ready for inspection by the internal and external auditors. Janet also negotiates contracts, liaises with outside bodies, prepares agendas and minutes of our main Council meetings and progresses actions arising from those meetings so helping to keep the Council's affairs in good order.

Karen Sterling, our Assistant Clerk, deals with hall and pitch bookings and normally looks after the Planning Committee ensuring that, in addition to preparing agendas and minutes, the relevant planning application documents are available for Councillors to view at meetings. Karen is also assisting the Westwood Park working party and has carried out negotiations with suppliers of play equipment etc.

I would like to thank both Janet and Karen for their commitment and hard work. They cheerfully deal with numerous issues and do their best to ensure all queries and complaints from members of the public are treated promptly and efficiently. Even if a particular problem is not the responsibility of our Council, the Clerks usually know someone who can help.

The refurbished Village Hall has been very well received by users and bookings are at a satisfactory level although some additional ones would help balance the difference between income and operating costs. A Village Hall management committee meets about four times a year and advises on matters concerning the Hall's appearance, usage etc.

The Farmer's Market continues to be held once a month and is proving popular. Negotiations are still on-going to make this a permanent arrangement.

The Council is pleased that its request to Bucks County Council for bollards in Burtons Lane, to stop inconsiderate parking on the road adjacent to the Village Green, has been met. We were also pleased to act as the co-ordinating body to allow replacement trees to be planted in Beechwood Avenue. This was achieved after consultation with, and help from, local residents and paid for by a donation from County Councillor Martin Tett's community fund.

As I have already mentioned, a working party has been meeting for some time with a view to improving the facilities in Westwood Park and thereby increase the number of people using this wonderful open space. In addition to several Councillors, we are pleased that Rob Rolls, representing the Community Association and Den Reed have joined that working party and made substantial contributions to our discussions. We were conscious that, although organised football and cricket are played regularly in the park, there was not much else to appeal to older children and teenagers.

Recommendations from the working party have resulted in the Council converting one of the four tennis courts to a half multi-user games area with a football goal and a basketball ring plus appropriate line markings. We are hoping that the other 'half' of this can be fitted when funds allow and a grant application has just been made which, if successful, would mean this could be sooner than originally expected. We are also awaiting news of our bid for a 'Playbuilder' fund grant. This would be for £50,000 and would mean that by this time next year a new adventure play area aimed at the 8 – 13 year olds could be operational. There has been considerable consultation on this matter with potential users as well as local residents resulting in widespread support for the idea. We have recently had talks with Bucks New University and are hoping that some of their students can carry out a survey and make suggestions for better use of the Park.

Negotiations on contracts for the maintenance of our open spaces have resulted in considerable savings to the Council. Amersham Town Council is still contracted to maintain the main part of Westwood Park but a company called 'Spruced-Up' is now looking after the garden part of the park, the Village Green, the area around the Village Hall, and Finch Lane pond area.

Finding suitable space for allotments continues to tax us but we are now in discussions with Paradigm Housing to see if some land they own could be a possibility.

The Parish Council has only one committee which meets regularly. The Planning Committee, chaired very ably by Cllr. Chris Ingham, meets every three weeks and discusses all planning applications made within the Parish boundaries. It then makes recommendations to Chiltern District Council which is the planning authority. Since August 2009 this committee has conducted a campaign, with help from the Little Chalfont Community Association, against proposals in the District Council's 'Draft Core Strategy' which allocated sites for up to 663 new homes in Little Chalfont. With public support our protests had this figure reduced to 450, but that is still a percentage increase nearly double what is proposed for any other community in the District. The campaign, which has included two leaflet drops to all households and most recently a strong protest by the Community Association, continues. In particular the suggestion that 60 homes could be built on the Donkey Field (off Burton's Lane) has met fierce opposition from many residents.

The Council is pleased to be able to support various local activities and organisations; the largest financial contribution is to the Community Library. We are delighted that a Youth Club (Chalfont Junction Youth Group) has started in the village using Bell Lane School premises and staffed by volunteers; the Council has made a donation to help with the running costs of this badly needed project and has a representative on the Management Committee. Other grants have been awarded to the Good Companions, Dial-a-ride and the Mayor of Chesham's Christmas lunch; additionally, financial support has been given to the hanging basket scheme in the Village centre and to Village Day, both organised by the Community Association. It has been agreed that the Association will be responsible for the majority of Christmas lights in the shopping area of the Village but the Parish Council finances the lights on the tree adjacent to the Village Green.

I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors for the time they give voluntarily and the hard work they put in. In addition to 11 Council meetings and approximately 17 planning committees each year, Councillors are involved in working parties, representing the Council on management committees of other organisations and attending various other meetings, training courses etc. Our Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Gary Smith, has used his financial expertise to help in preparing budgets etc. and in trying to ensure the Council invests in funds which bring a reasonable return. Gary is also our representative on the local Neighbourhood Action Group and the Denham Aerodrome Consultative Committee. In addition to being Vice-chairmen of the Planning Committee, Cllr. Lesley Hunt acts as an observer on the committee of the Friends of Little Chalfont Library. Cllr. Peter Martin was co-opted on to the Council in November to replace Alan Tate but this still leaves one

vacancy at the present time. We are pleased that Peter has joined us and his contributions to the Council's work have been very helpful. Peter acts as our liaison with the Community Association and attends most of their committee meetings as an observer. Cllr. Christine Gibbs serves on the Village Hall Management Committee and the GE Healthcare Liaison Group, Cllrs. Martin Dale and Lesley Hunt serve on the Westwood Park Working Party. In addition to my role as Council Chairman, I sit on the Village Hall Management Committee, and the Westwood Park working party. I am also a member of the Chalfont Junction Youth Group's committee and represent the Council on the Local Area Forum.

We frequently seek help and advice from our two District Councillors, Don Phillips and Mike Smith, and our County Councillors especially Martin Tett; our thanks go to all of them for their support.

Looking ahead, we hope that our final year before the next election for Parish Councillors will be one of further improvements for the Village. We always welcome comments and suggestions; you can write, phone, email or call in to the Parish Office. Additionally, all our Planning and Council Meetings have a ten minute opportunity for any members of the public to speak on any relevant subject.

Brian Drew

May 2010