



SHERE PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the villages of Gomshall,
Holmbury St Mary, Peaslake, Shere
and a large part of Abinger Hammer

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

Chairman's Report

The financial position of Parish Councils gets ever tighter. In the last year costs have increased and Borough support reduced, for example, our toilet support grant was withdrawn. However, thanks to our Clerk's persistence and networking efforts and the modest discretionary financial contributions the Council has been able to make available, there are successes to be reported on several fronts over the last year, or to be anticipated in 2023/24.

There have been further 'patch repairs' using tarmac in the car park, to mitigate the impact of the numerous pot holes. This is a temporary fix until the full resurfacing takes place. Substantial amounts of the car park's boundary fencing posts and rails have also been repaired.

The Assistant Clerk persuaded Surrey County Council to replace the wooden bridge across the Tillingbourne in the Swimming Pool Field, with a new bridge using materials and a traditional design acceptable to all parties. The housing of the Well has been beautifully repaired and restored and now has a new glass roof, instead of lead, to provide an attractive feature in the listed Middle Street wall.

With the support of Councillor Bob Hughes our Surrey County Councillor, we were able to overcome resistance from Surrey Highways to re-establish the bollards on both corners at the Middle Street/Gomshall Lane junction in Shere. The line of the pavement on the Cuckoo Corner side has been reconfigured, to provide a safer pedestrian passage round the corner and to try to keep lorries away more effectively, from the exposed corner of the house roof, which has been subject to frequent damage from lorries. We are now also exploring whether it is possible, and advantageous, to ban lorries from turning left into Middle Street and right out of it.

Some Gomshall residents had expressed concern over vehicles parked on the bend opposite Colekitchen Lane which forced vehicles to go around the bend in the middle of the road. Surrey Highways agreed that these vehicles cause a danger and so will establish double yellow lines from just before Tanyard Hall around to the bus stop layby, opposite the petrol station. The Parish Council recognises the need for some double yellow lines but also appreciates the impact on residents who have no off-road parking. We are therefore in consultation with Surrey Highways to try and mitigate the reduction in parking by requesting that the bus stop on the corner with Queen Street is decommissioned, giving an increase in safe on street car parking further along Station Road. This may be possible as there is a bus stop by The Compasses which would suffice. We will hear shortly whether this will be possible.

The Peaslake play area now benefits from a great new log adventure and the Council is looking into alternatives to replace the much-loved tower, which has seen better days. A small group of mums whose children use the playground are being consulted on a suitable replacement.



The Clerk managed to secure a new assurance on the starting date for the promised traffic calming measures

for Holmbury St Mary, to which the Parish Council contributed £5,000. These have now been completed providing safety and environmental benefits to the residents.

Five new benches have been purchased by the Parish Council. Three have been replacements for dilapidated benches at Pitland Street in Holmbury St Mary, Goose Green in Gomshall and the field adjacent to the school in Peaslake; bought with a 50% grant from Guildford Borough Council.



A further bench was bought to replace the plank bench on Pursers Lane using funds donated from the Peaslake Gardening Society and topped up by the Council. The final bench which is on order is to go in the garden outside the Shere toilets, purchased with funds from the Shere and Gomshall Gardening Society and also topped up by the Council. Sadly, both societies have now closed but we thank them for their contributions. The Council has been exploring with Surrey Wildlife Trust and Friends of the Hurtwood their respective proposals for a long-term lease to safeguard Peaslake Farm fields from development, whilst increasing biodiversity and maintaining access for parking, for the annual Peaslake Fair. After consideration, Council elected to proceed with an agreement with Friends of the Hurtwood which will include provision for a flood management scheme, to slow water from the fields flooding into the centre of Peaslake. This lease is currently being drawn up.

With financial and staffing support, the Council is able to provide the Drop-in Centre which continues to prove to be hugely valuable and popular. With the moratorium imposed by Covid restrictions now over, the numbers involved are increasing, limited only by the number of staff, volunteers and attendees themselves, who are available to assist anyone to get

to and from the sessions at Tanyard Hall.

There is a varied programme of activities, trips and conversation, which are clearly very much appreciated by all. More people are always welcome and more volunteers would also be appreciated, to offer transport to people who might wish to come.



Even in the circumstances of tightening finances the Council has agreed to increase the number of staffing hours made available for these sessions. This is to enable the Drop-in Centre Coordinator to set up and run a Community Food Larder at Tanyard Hall (opening April 2023) which if proven to be of value, could be replicated in locations in the other villages if the demand is there. See enclosed leaflet for more detail.



There are so many worthwhile possibilities to help improve the lives of people in communities such as ours but as always it is down to people and money to actually deliver them. We have an excellent team – Our Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Drop-in Coordinator and Assistant but we also need active and involved Councillors to work with the staff to facilitate improvements, projects and support our village communities. Therefore, may I urge anyone who might be interested in becoming a Councillor to look at the excellent briefing information that Suzanne has

put together on the Parish Council website. <https://www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk/become-a-parish-councillor/>. Parish Council elections are on the 4th May 2023. Nomination packs are available from Guilford Borough Council. If you would like to know more details, contact the Clerk by phone 01483 203431 or email clerk@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Despite the above successes it is frustrating that we have to report a total lack of progress on the two major projects which we began the year 2022/23, hoping to successfully bring to fruition: The Peaslake Farm Affordable Housing project and the introduction of car parking charges in the Shere car park.

I think each warrants some words of explanation for this lack of progress.

Regarding the affordable housing project, by March 2022 Greenoak Housing Association had finally received full planning permission for the eight affordable homes to be built on the derelict Peaslake Farm farmyard site. They said they were about to start scheduling the building work and hoped they would be completed for occupation by Autumn 2023. As yet no spade has been put into the ground. Organisational changes, difficulties securing builders, material supply issues and increasing costs have 'prevented' any movement. Greenoak are now looking at how costs might be reduced to bring them nearer to their original estimates. This is all very frustrating.

Secondly, in last year's report I spoke of the Council's plans to introduce car parking charges for Shere Public Car Park, currently run and financed by the Parish Council out of the Parish precept (money collected by Guildford Borough Council on behalf of the Parish Council, via council tax).

The Parish Council was very aware of the community's concerns about the social and environmental impact of so many tourists arriving by car to visit the Parish, and the village of Shere in particular. The Council had also identified the growing proportion of the annual precept and community financial reserves, being utilised to pay for the direct and indirect costs of welcoming so many visitors and catering for their needs and demands, which include, car park repairs and maintenance, extra rubbish bins and toilet cleaning etc.

The Council consulted Shere residents on the issue and discussed how to fund the growing financial burden. Having debated it, the Council unanimously concluded

clerk@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

that introducing a professionally administered, technology led, car park charging system was the most fair and practical strategy. A strategy capable of keeping the impact on Parish residents to an acceptable minimum, focusing as much as possible on securing parking income from the many visitors who use our living space and facilities for enjoyment and recreation but who also support the businesses by spending substantial sums on food and refreshments during their visit.

The current car park involved four parties coming together in 2008 and signing an agreement on where the car park should be built, how it should be financed and constructed and who should then manage the facility and assume responsibility for its maintenance and repairs.

This agreement requires these four parties to agree any changes to the originally established free parking, which would be the case with the introduction of a charging regime. The Parish Council anticipated that all four parties would recognise the benefit that charging would bring to the local community as a whole, which would enable us to proceed immediately.

The Parish Council and Guildford Borough Council both formally considered the proposals and accepted the plans. However, the other two parties, the Trustees of Shere Trust Properties and Shere Recreation Ground Association, who hold the freehold of the land on which the car park is built, have withheld agreement.

For some months they maintained there should not be any car parking charges and the car park should remain totally free for all. They expressed the view that charging would 'not be in the best interest of the charity'. After further discussions they modified their view, saying any 'charging' would only be acceptable to them if actual payment was to be entirely voluntary and any revenue that might be generated over what was needed to cover direct car park repair costs, should all be passed to the recreation ground.

This stance has led to a current impasse which has prevented any progress to date on pursuing this project. A project that the Parish Council remains convinced would be in the best interests of the precept paying Parish community, allowing the precept to be kept lower than would otherwise be the case.

We are currently still following the process set out in the original agreement for resolving disputes and hope 2023/24 will see progress on the matter.

Roy Davey (Chairman)

01483 203431

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Thanks to:

Parish Councillors, Suzanne Hoyland (Parish Clerk & RFO), Samantha Robins (Assistant Clerk), Jonathan Duffy (Drop-in Coordinator) and Angel Katryniak (Drop-in Assistant) for their time, hard work and dedication. Robert Hughes (Surrey County Council Councillor), Richard Morris (Guildford Borough Councillor) and Diana Jones (Guildford Borough Councillor) for their advice, help and regular attendance at meetings.

Thanks also to:

The Council Contractors - Christopher Rapley, Graham Rapley and Thomas Gruber (and team).

And finally thank you to The Dabbling Duck team who open the toilets daily for the Parish Council.

Parish Council Information

Shere Parish Council is a non-political Council and Councillors are entirely voluntary. This means that the Councillors do not claim any remuneration for their work.

Shere Parish is the largest geographically, within Guildford Borough and serves four villages: Gomshall, Holmbury St Mary, Peaslake and Shere and a large part of Abinger Hammer excluding the village centre. The Parish is unique in the amount of land it owns and leases and is a popular attraction for tourists, and film companies. These influence the Parish greatly regarding the facilities it can offer and the character of the environment it seeks to preserve.

At least nine Full Council meetings are held each year as well as many other committee meetings. All council/committee meetings are open to the public and there is at least one adjournment during each meeting to enable members of the public to ask questions or to address the Council. Meetings are held around the Parish in the village halls. Dates and times of these meetings are published on the village notice boards and on the Council's website. A short report of each Council meeting is published in the Parish magazines and the full Minutes of all recent Council and committee meetings are available on the Council's website, together with the contact details of individual Councillors.

Routine Services provided by the Parish Council

Much of the Council's work each year involves the management of ongoing services across the Parish and involvement in statutory consultation processes. The Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications in the Parish and liaises with other

authorities e.g., Police, Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council. It is also a consultee on a whole range of policy documents from other authorities.

How to contact Shere Parish Council for assistance or information:

Council Office: Tanyard Hall,
30 Station Road, Gomshall, GU5
9LF. Tel: 01483 203431

Email:

clerk@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Please note that correspondence to the Council should be sent for the attention of the Clerk, Suzanne Hoyland, at Tanyard Hall.

For full contact details of your Shere Parish Council Councillors (as of March 2023) please see the council website <https://www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk/list-of-officers/>

North Ward (Shere & Gomshall)

Candace Brooke - 01483 203267

candace.brooke@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Jonathan Cross - 01483 203443

jonathan.cross@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Roy Davey - 01483 202443

roy.davey@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

James Hutton - 01483 203800

james.hutton@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Mike Keeble - 01483 202869

mike.keeble@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Penny Tompkins - 01483 203288

penny.tompkins@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

South East Ward (Holmbury St. Mary & a large part of Abinger Hammer)

Bob Andrews - 01306 730693

bob.andrews@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Christopher Carlisle - 01306 621209

chris.carlisle@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Raymond Smith

raymond.smith@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

South West Ward (Peaslake)

Paul Carter - 01306 731616

paul.carter@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Beverley Harrap - 01306 731009

beverley.harrap@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Geraldine Reffo - 01306 775023

gerry.reffo@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Marion Taylor-Cotter - 07803 893648

marion.taylor-cotter@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

