

COMPTON and SHAWFORD Parish Council

Chairman's report 27.4.2005.

I am able to report a year of steady progress and consolidation. The Council has met each month except August, and meetings have without exception been good humoured and businesslike, with members reporting on their areas of responsibility and bringing forward proposals for action. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow members for their co-operation, support and wise counsel during the last three years.

In April 2004 the Council considered a request from a parishioner for street lighting to be installed in a residential road in Shawford. After some deliberation, members felt that the rural ambiance would be to some degree spoilt by street lighting, and unless a compelling case was made on road safety grounds this development should be resisted. This position was taken before any cost or feasibility considerations were made.

The matter of aircraft noise and our representations to the Airport management and Eastleigh Borough Council has been a recurring feature in the last year, and will require the attention of this Parish Council and residents for years to come. I would like to record my thanks to Mr Robin Tice and Mr John Bevan for their valuable advice on this matter, and further to Cllr Murray McMillan for the representations he has made on our behalf.

Throughout the year the 'shakedown' of the new Jubilee Pavilion has been ongoing, with our tenants, Compton and Shawford Sports Club reporting various teething troubles, and the building contractors, Wilding Butler, responding well to our requests for corrections to defects. The 'snagging list' is now down to a handful of items, and I'm sure these can be dealt with shortly, and the balance of construction monies held by us under the contract can then be paid. Recognition must be given to Cllr Nick Campbell-White for the significant time and expertise he employed helping with this sometimes complicated matter. The issue of additional car parking at the pavilion has had to be addressed, the Council is aware of how unpopular it would be if there were to be significant regular car parking on the edge of the field on busy weekends. Following an advertised public meeting the Council have agreed to extend car parking provision at the pavilion, on the lines suggested as necessary by the Sports Club, with the work taking place as funds permit. Members of the public will have noticed that the old pavilion was demolished and removed in June. Subsequently the land was leased to the Tennis Club as had been agreed, and has since been available for construction of their third court.

Planning, and our representations to Winchester City Council as the local Planning Authority, has occupied much of the time and energy of your Parish Council during the past year. We strive to take a consistent approach, supporting those proposals that represent reasonable in-filling and developments in keeping with their locality, whilst vigorously opposing applications for high density developments which will attract significant increases in traffic or are visually out of keeping with their surroundings. Unfortunately our view of these matters is not that of the planning authority, and our results in influencing these issues have been mixed. However, there have been some successes in moderating proposals, our efforts continue and our expertise grows. I am grateful to other village organisations who have co-operated with the Council in their efforts, we have consequently been able to present a united position in many cases.

It is most unfortunate that in the current climate we find ourselves having to fight our planning authority as well as developers, but there is no doubt that the planning department know that they will not get an easy ride when presenting unsuitable proposals in Compton and Shawford, and a number of moderated proposals have already been approved.

It was interesting to hear at a public meeting in the scout hut recently of the curious attitude of the authority to the Compton Street conservation area. It seems we will have to watch very closely developments in this area.

The Open Spaces Fund is administered by Winchester City Council on our behalf, and contributions are collected from developers and held to our account. In the past the fund has been used to purchase play equipment, playground fencing, and a significant sum towards the Jubilee Pavilion. The Parish Council now feel that, as a rule, it would be wise not to use these windfalls for the provision of devaluing facilities, but allow the fund to grow so we can acquire a significant asset (probably recreation land within the parish) for the permanent benefit of future generations, just as our predecessors did with the Parish Hall and Memorial playing fields. These plans are in their early stages, and by no means finalised; public input would be appreciated.

The Council has continued to monitor footpaths, report fallen trees and other work to the necessary authorities. Information from members of the public to the Council Chairman or Clerk are always helpful in these matters. We look forward to the experiment involving cattle on Shawford Down, and trust walkers will not be unduly inconvenienced by the limited fencing.

I would like to record the thanks of the whole council to Mike Langford, the Parish Clerk, for his hard work and patience through the last year. It is not easy in these days of bureaucratic interference in the smallest organisation loading up the paperwork, and the inherent difficulty in working with part-time volunteer members who have other demands on their time.

Thank you for taking the time to read these brief resume of the Parish Council's year; many matters will be discussed in more detail at the Annual Parish Assembly on 27 April in the Parish Hall, when questions on any subject will be invited. I do hope you will be able to attend.

George Beckett, Chairman.