

Chairman's Annual Report

As this is my last report as Chairman, I will try and cast my mind back over the last 4 years to see what we, as a Council have achieved in that time.

Council recruitment. We currently have a dedicated team of six. Attendance rates are good and we represent most areas of the Parish. Our attempts to encourage younger members have not been so successful and it is an on-going problem for people who are working to be able to commit the time and energy to PC work. We currently have one vacancy.

Registering Land / Community Assets

We have successfully registered some of the PC owned land. This includes the Lodge and the cemetery although we still have to register zone five, which due to an administrative mistake by the Land Registry, is still outstanding. The memorial is also outstanding and is on Joanna's job list. Under the Localism act, we also decided to register the Club and Village Hall as Community assets, a task that has yet to be done but has also been added to the task list. Issues relating to the piecemeal method of consecrating the Cemetery in sections, will also be rectified when the Bishop visits Compton later in the year when the cemetery will be consecrated as a whole.

Agreement with Watts Gallery

CPC has worked closely with the Gallery in order to secure an agreement and prior to this to form a strong working relationship which resulted in us sharing a caretaker and benefitting from increased visitor numbers which saw donations rise from £4k to between £8k and even £11k.

The Chapel Lodge was renovated going from a bit of a wreck, to habitable and the return on investment has been 10 fold. As a Parish asset it would be difficult to sell but as a habitable dwelling in its lovely location, it has helped us to secure an agreement with the Gallery regards the long term management of the Chapel & Cemetery.

The agreement for the long term management of the Chapel & Cemetery has been signed by David and I on behalf of the PC and by Trustees of the Gallery. Solicitors cast their final seal of approval at close of day today (21st May 2014) and the agreement will commence from 1st June 2014.

This means that from that date. We will no longer be responsible for managing the cemetery or chapel (and associated buildings). They will be maintained and conserved by the Gallery who will in turn increase their marketing portfolio and raise funds. Funds from cottage rental and the donations box (and the Restoration Fund) will go to the Gallery, who will make an annual payment of £5k for the lease, which will ensure the net gain (presuming CPC were fully maintaining) remains the same. Reviews will be periodically carried out to ensure the donation is in line with inflation. CPC will continue as the Burial Authority and will continue to be responsible for all matters relating to burials and will receive income through this.

The agreements are the result of many many meetings with various parties and solicitors and it would be remiss of me not to thank Ken Miller and Ex Chairman, Martin Foran for their work and Joanna who has had to put up with my over zealous attention to detail on most things.

Village Hall

After a great deal of difficulty, CPC finally cleared up the issues relating to the agreement between the village hall management and ourselves. This resulted in the hall being removed from the asset register.

Funds

In 2009 CPC funds were at an all time low, due, in part to a very expensive legal battle and a particularly low precept. The precept was raised and the combination of the rise, the increased income (by reducing caretaker costs, renting the cottage and wider marketing of the Chapel) and reduced spend due to negotiation over asset management, meant funds rose steadily, from £4k to over £90k. Key projects have been earmarked.

Administration

Most files have been digitized and most of the important docs are now in DropBox. A central cloud storage ensures we have a copy of all important docs, it also ensures transparency in that we can all see exactly who is doing what, spending what and allows us to track activity to make sure projects don't fall off the radar. **I would ask, for the sake of continuity, that this is maintained, whether it is your cup of tea or not.**

Joanna, David and I have also worked hard to digitize the cemetery data. This was a big project, with Joanna and I trudging through the paperwork (Joanna more than me) to cross reference against the existing database by the late M Palmer. I produced a map, which references all 1000+ plots and David pulled all this onto an on-line database, which is now available under <http://www.ubiubi.org>

Various

David continues to facilitate the 'Compton Clearance' with a principal interest in the Common areas. A great example of making a difference.

The Cemetery Committee can be proud of their work over the years which has been recognized by English Heritage who listed the cemetery Grade II Star.

James & Peter keep tabs on the ever changing world that is planning. EG. we have seen the highly controversial Monks Hatch Garden Farm go from a myriad of enforcement notices to legal to a horse sanctuary, and garden grabbing, which was once frowned upon is now called infill in many areas and is permissible. Peter is also a Trustee of the Village Hall Committee and James planning background helps us see that not all development is objectionable.

Kanak's long service on the Council is to be admired and Kanak has been particularly helpful at the recent bus stop survey and Annual meeting . We have had three Annual meetings to date, with attendance rates of 65, 90 and approx 85. These are now a great social event as well as a source of information and well-attended events such as this help keep the community spirit alive well.

Karen, has only been with us a few months and has already demonstrated a fountain of knowledge of the Local Plan which we will all benefit from and now has one litter pick under her belt as well as more planning meetings than most of us have notched up altogether!

All Councillors work hard in their own specialist areas, all of which have levels of bureaucracy however the Local Plan is all encompassing involving, tourism, economy, infrastructure, housing, environment, transport, to name just six! So I am very grateful that we have had someone prepared to take a lead on this huge topic.

Our Councillors, James Palmer & George Johnson and sometimes Neil Ward attend our meetings and it is reassuring to know that they have a good working understanding of what matters to us in Compton.

Recent successes have included securing funding for a safety initiative in Down Lane, a review of our ditches and drainage in and around Polsted / Green/ Withies and replacement of the street lighting with conservation lighting. Unfortunately, we have not been as successful in obtaining any real solutions for the volume and speed of vehicles using the B3000, this being a key issue for most residents in Compton.

CSW and regular management of the VAS by Nick Palmer & David Haskins is the only traffic management we have, as well as occasional speed checks by the Police, which when carried out, make a noticeable difference.

Over the years there have been many changes in policing, in terms of police remit, numbers and area covered and we have seen many faces. The relationship between CPC and the police has generally been very good.

We employed a village caretaker, which has been a great success.

As a Parish Council we have not shied away from subjects that are difficult to deal with and continue to look at the fairly controversial topic of parking on the Green and how best to understand and inform residents about the importance and consequences of the Local Plan.

There are many community minded people in this village, some of whom received the award by the Mayor for Services to the Community. This year the award went to two people. Nick Palmer and David Haskins.

The 4 years in the Chair and the year as a Councillor before that, have been an interesting ride. I am staying on as Councillor and look forward to working with you all and with the new Chair person.