

Chairman's Annual Report.

Most notable about the last year, has been the turmoil in council membership. Over the last 12 months we have lost 9 councillors due to them stepping down or not seeking re-election on May 3rd. I will name them all because it can be a thankless task and they are worthy of our gratitude for stepping up to make a difference. Thanks therefore go to Deb Carr, Yvonne Cooper, Alice Eastham, Roy Fabb, Mick Hoy, Debbie Jones, Lesley Minter, Leah Robertson and Graham Siggs. Graham of course tragically died soon after retiring. In particular I draw attention to Lesley, who has served for 11 years and Mick who has served for well over 30 years.

Disappointingly, following the uncontested election on May 3rd, we have only 8 councillors out of a possible 15. This includes 1 new councillor in Debbie Dew, to whom I offer a warm welcome. Whatever the reason for such lack of interest, the reality is that good decisions and effective actions stem from a wide range of views and experience. I therefore hope that more members will put themselves forward in the fullness of time.

The parish council has continued to be active on behalf of residents. In particular, the Time Bank has celebrated its 5th anniversary. A key part of this has been our excellent co-ordinator Lucy Bird. Unfortunately Lucy is moving away, so it is with a heavy heart I thank her for all she has done and wish her well for the future. We are currently interviewing for a new and enthusiastic replacement. Building on the success of the Time Bank, we launched the Changing Lives project last September with the support of our MP Shailesh Vara. The 2 schemes are complementary in supporting people and helping to nurture our community spirit.

The District Council Local Plan to 2036 has been through the final 2 consultation stages in the last 12 months. As a Key Service Centre, Somersham was always destined to be allocated a share of the required 22,000 homes. The parish council played a full part in considering the Plan, but has had to accept it can only comment, as Planning decisions are the responsibility of HDC.

The parish council continues to support our valuable Community Library, by paying for utilities. We will also be seeking to renew the lease on the building.

In most years we target a road safety issue and apply for some joint funding from the County Council. Last years bid was aimed at improving safety at White Post junction. The reconfiguration work was completed last autumn and has been well received.

Speeding drivers continue to be a source of complaint. The council now has its own Speed Indicator Device which will be moved around the village to remind drivers of their social and road safety responsibilities.

The parish council is now the proud owner of the telephone kiosk on The Cross, having purchased it for £1. It is classified as a Grade 2 listed building and is

undergoing some restoration work after which it will be made available for various community uses.

I would like to thank all councillors for their contribution over the last 12 months, Penny, our parish clerk and Megan her deputy, for efficiently conducting parish affairs. Also many thanks to all those who contribute to our community.

Steve Criswell.