

Annual Parish Assembly 2006 – Chair’s Report

In the last year we have had just one or two changes on the Parish Council, welcoming Val Hamilton back and also our brand new Parish Councillor, co-opted earlier this week, Richard Penson. Richard replaces Patrick Pope, who moved to Otterbourne in the new year. Patrick had been an active Parish Councillor since 2000, helping to relaunch our newsletter in its current form and also worked on the current format of the website. He had also represented the Parish Council on the Eastleigh District Association of Parish Councils.

We continue to work on preparing for a submission for Quality Parish status. Our regularly delivered newsletter will be part of our submission and an examination of the requirements in this area means that we will be making some changes to the format and production timetable of the newsletter. We are also planning to produce a Parish Annual report following this Assembly for a more limited distribution than the newsletter which goes to every household within the parish.

We have continued our regular support of village groups and organisations and other organisations, and in the last year have given grants to the Memorial Hall, Community Centre, Bishopstoke Carnival, 1st Steps PlaySchool and HomeStart among others. We have recently decided to support the Methodist Church in their plans for improvements to the facilities they offer for community use.

An important part of the work of the Parish Council is representing the best interests of Bishopstoke. As part of this we are consulted on many subjects ranging from every planning application within Bishopstoke to strategies of the other statutory authorities covering our area. We regularly comment on BT proposals to remove public phone boxes and in the last year have represented residents’ concerns on the possible loss of the old oak tree at the entrance to Stoke Park Woods and also local traders’ concerns over vandalism at Riverside.

On the practical side, we continue to clear rubbish from Bishopstoke Channel from time to time and last did so a couple of weeks ago.

Work continues on plans to restore the turbines at Shears Mill in partnership with Bishopstoke Society. The Clerk is in regular discussions with Environment Agency, Hampshire Mills Group, Eastleigh Borough Council – both as landowners and also over our bid to be a demonstration of renewable energy – and Hampshire Wildlife Trust – in partnership with whom we are doing a lottery bid. Their bid is for restoration work on Itchen Navigation.

Our major project this year has been the improvements to Bishopstoke Beach & old St Mary’s churchyard. This was a partnership project with Hampshire County council under their Villages Initiative. I’m sure the improvements will be appreciated by all those who enjoy this feature of our village over the summer.

Finally looking forward to the coming year - Work has now started on the long-awaited Brookfield Youth Centre and should be complete around September. The Parish Council has supported youth work by participating in the BIFOHH Youth Project over several years now; we look forward to being involved in the funding and management of the new Youth Centre and have included funding for this in our precept.

The other new project we are considering becoming involved in is support of the new PCSOs who should be deployed in the Eastleigh area by the end of the year. This comes about through the coincidence of a new Government initiative that Hampshire Police will be implementing and also discussions at EDAPTC on general problems over low-level nuisance behaviour, mainly from some young people, and what

Parish councils could do to tackle this within their own area. I am therefore very pleased to have Inspector Kelly Whiting with us tonight, who will be speaking later on the changes to Neighbourhood Policing and the part that PCSOs will play in this and also the opportunity for involvement of other organisations such as parish councils.