

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2010

I have pleasure in submitting this annual report, being delivered in advance of the Annual Parish Meeting. An annual meeting is a statutory obligation, but perhaps more importantly it is an opportunity for all residents to promote ideas, offer suggestions and to put questions to their elected representatives. It is the time and place to air criticism and to express satisfaction.

As always it has been an interesting and challenging time for the council. In local government one has to have considerable patience as projects can take some time to come to fruition. However, I am pleased to report that progress was made on a number of issues. We finally saw the installation of three bus shelters in Cambridge Road, Chapel Hill and Maitland Road. This was funded from section 106 money relating to the development of Forest Hall Park. I was pleased to be present at the opening of the multi use games area at Mountfitchet Green in July. Excess speed by motorists is an issue for many communities including Stansted. We were fortunate therefore in securing vehicle activated 30 mph signs. These have been installed in Silver Street, Elsenham Road and Church Road and a fourth one will be shortly installed near the junction of Five Acres and Cambridge Road.

Stansted, like many communities in the south east, is subject to considerable development pressures. It is one of the responsibilities of the Parish Council to respond to planning applications and to make representations in the best interest of the village. We take this responsibility seriously and we are fortunate in that three of our councillors are also members of Uttlesford's Development Control Committee. We objected to a planning application to demolish the Total Garage in Cambridge Road and replace it with housing. We felt that this represented loss of a village amenity and were concerned about the scale of the buildings. The Council is concerned about the number of commercial dwellings which are vacant in the village. Some of these have been vacant for several years. We have written to the landlords of these properties expressing residents wishes that these sites are brought back into use. We offered our good offices in helping this to come about.

It is important that communities are proactive rather than reactive. As far as possible we should influence the future of Stansted. This is why the Parish Plan is so important. I should like to thank all those residents who submitted the questionnaires. These have been analysed and a presentation will be made at the annual parish meeting. It is our intention that the parish plan is completed this autumn and is submitted to Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council.

We have already started acting upon what residents told us in the questionnaires. Communication to residents needed to be improved. We have therefore established Stansted.net which is the dedicated Stansted Parish Council website. My thanks go to Oliver Treend, a former pupil at Mountfitchet Mathematics & Computing College, for his invaluable help. The web site is still in development and we hope to add a lot more to it during the year.

Residents told us that they wanted to see improvements to our children's play areas. This is a priority for us and we have contacted a significant number of play equipment manufacturers for ideas. However, any new equipment will have to be grant funded and members are currently looking for sources of money! In the spring there will be public consultation on our plans.

One of our best assets is the Windmill where the Parish Council acts as co-trustee. We were pleased to welcome Mrs Molly Clark as our new co-Trustee, stepping into the shoes of Peggy Honour who had served for many years. The restoration of the Windmill is well underway. The refurbishment of the Mill has been accomplished at a total cost of £190,000. A grant of £112,000 was secured from English Heritage, with a further £10,500 from Viridor and the Essex Heritage Trust.

The Parish Council has an ability to make a difference to the street scene. With the help of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and local residents we have nearly completed phase 3 of the enhancement of Bentfield Pond. Our next project will be the enhancement of Stansted Brook. Residents have congratulated us on improvements made by our gardening contractor. We have budgeted for a new flower bed at the entrance to Blythwood Gardens. A new footpath map of the village is currently being developed.

The Council has obtained planning permission for the lighting of the skatepark. This will provide better security for users. We have resolved to do refurbishment work on the Fountain at the top of Chapel Hill which is a landmark in the village. Before this can begin, we have received professional advice that the willow tree has reached the end of its life and needs to be felled. We will of course, plant a replacement tree, probably towards the end of this year, once the ground has recovered.

The Rochford Nurseries development (Foresthall Park) will be the largest that the Parish has seen. However, because of the economic climate work has not proceeded as fast as was anticipated. The Council in association with Churches Together has continued to issue a welcome pack to new residents. We have submitted a formal request to Uttlesford District Council for a parish boundary review. Currently the Foresthall Park development is split between ourselves and Birchanger Parish Council. We believe this to be unsatisfactory and would like if residents agree for the whole development to fall within Stansted Parish.

Stansted in common with many other areas has experienced its share of anti-social behaviour. Residents have commented to me that they wanted to see a more visible policing presence. We are the first parish council in Uttlesford, though by no means the first in Essex, to enter into an arrangement with Essex Police Authority where we pay half the cost of employing a Police Community Support Officer. We were fortunate in securing the services of Stuart Stranger who is an experienced officer. PCSO's work in support of regular police officers and provide a visible and accessible uniformed presence. Stuart writes a regular monthly report for the Council. We have also supported the work of Neighbourhood Watch.

The Parish Council has agreed a precept of £147,500 for 2010/11. This is an increase of less than 5%, in line with the Council's policy, and reflects the additional commitments we have taken on. At Band D the cost of the Parish Council amounts to £59.22 for the forthcoming year. This compares favourably with larger settlements in the District such as Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

Looking ahead I should like to see some significant progress made in the provision of our badly needed health centre. The Parish Council has been in contact throughout the year with the Primary Care Trust. They are well aware that the slow progress has been frustrating for many residents. Negotiations however, are still ongoing between themselves, the owner of the site, Essex County Council Highways and Uttlesford planners.

We have recently entered into discussions with Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau for provision of an outreach facility for the village. As a former director of this organisation I am very aware of the valuable services they provide.

Our Highways Working Party has met with residents of Grove Hill and Lower Street in an attempt to find ways to alleviate the parking problems these roads suffer from. I hope in conjunction with Essex County Council to see some real progress this coming year.

I should like to use this report to say thank you. Firstly to the many voluntary organisations who do so much to create a vibrant and caring community. A reception is held each year by the Council to recognise the work that they do. At our reception in 2009 I was very happy to make a presentation to Mrs. Peggy Honour. This was to mark her retirement after many years as a co-trustee of the windmill.

My fellow parish councillors have given me their advice, support and encouragement. I believe that we work well together for the benefit of the village. This fact is perhaps best demonstrated by our re-accreditation as a Quality Council – an award which we were the first Council in Uttlesford to achieve. My colleagues are all volunteers and are unpaid for their hard work. I should also like to thank County Councillor Ray Gooding for his regular attendance at our meetings. I am a great believer in joined up local government. There has been one change to the membership of the council. Since the last report Gaye Ellington resigned on moving away from the village. The Council recognised her contribution to the Stansted in Bloom competition and membership of the Birchanger Wood Management Committee.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who contributes to the success of the Council. Our Parish Clerk Ruth Clifford, and her Assistant Anne Court, can be relied upon to provide an efficient service. Gerard Frogley is invaluable in keeping Stansted clean and tidy, whilst our Handyman, Steve Sutton, looks after many of our maintenance problems.

Cllr Geoffrey Sell, Chairman - February 2010