

St Martha Parish Council

Chairman's Report: PC Meeting Thursday 11 September 2025

Fire on Blackheath Common

On Friday 15 August there was a serious fire on part of Blackheath Common which required attendance by the Fire Brigade, Police and supporting services. An out of control camp fire started the fire. Sample Oak Lane was closed off for a time.

It affected approximately 5 hectares (12 acres) near Blackheath War Memorial and some of the fire damaged area is in St Martha Parish on land owned by the National Trust. Luckily no one was hurt, no houses were impacted, the War Memorial appears undamaged, as do a couple of wooden seats – which is surprising! The Fire Brigade monitored hot-spots overnight and over the following few days. Action to reduce the chance of fires being started are under consideration in Blackheath and by Waverley and it is noted that there have been a number of similar fires over the summer in Surrey. The Fire Brigade is asking parents to tell children about the dangers of wildfires. It only takes one spark! Wildlife in the area will have been impacted but the heathland will regenerate over time.

Consultation on Rural Speed Limits Area 3 Guildford and Waverley

Lane users and residents were invited to 'Have Your Say' in a consultation on Rural Speed Limits in the area. Over 1,000 responded, and it resulting in more objections than supporting comments, however Surrey County Council is setting aside the objections on the grounds of road safety and will be going ahead with the Speed Limit changes to a large number of lanes.

A response from Councillor Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, was received by a Chilworth resident, who had emailed him, (and copied in Sir Jeremy Hunt MP, Councillor Bob Hughes, the SCC Monitoring Officer and myself) concerning the poor implementation of the recent Consultation. Councillor Furniss justified the roll-out of the consultation and its legality and indicated there were no grounds for challenging it.

Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey

The Consultation ended on 5 August but the final decision on how many unitary authorities Surrey will have is the Governments.

St Martha Parish Council should start to consider if there are areas it wishes to take responsibility for after the reorganisation and begin to think about possible outcomes.

20mph outside Chilworth School

St Martha PC will be meeting with Shalford Community Council to discuss the possibility of 20mph outside Chilworth School and if so, the most appropriate way to implement it.

Footpath 469

Footpath 469, by the corner of Blacksmith Lane and Halfpenny Lane, has had major maintenance work undertaken in order to make it safer for walkers. Unfortunately, some of the new surface material has been washed away already and SCC is looking into installing something that will stay in place when heavy rain pours down the footpath.

Dormice at the Gunpowder Mills Site

The monitoring boxes will continue to be checked until early or mid-October, before hibernation sets in.

Upgrades the Tangley Level Crossing and Chilworth Station Level Crossing

There have been two community drop-in sessions in the area held by Network Rail to tell residents about the upgrades taking place at the two level crossings in Chilworth. There are concerns from residents about the increased length of the Tangley Level Crossing being down (a further 2 minutes) and what that will mean to the build up of traffic and pollution from idling cars. A Yodel bell alarm system is being kept at the Tangley crossing, but the volume will temporarily increase to 80db post installation and there is so far no indication of how long that will be for. The alarm system at Chilworth Station will be upgraded to a Yodel alarm system and the volume will temporarily increase to 80db there too.

I have so far been unable to ascertain how long the temporary volume increase for each alarm will be but I will continue to ask, and Network Rail pointed out that the increased delay at the Tangley crossing was necessary on the grounds of safety. I am querying, on behalf of a resident, night light pollution due to the continuous use of daylight spectrum lighting at night and the impact on wildlife.

New Parish Tree Warden

We are still looking for a replacement Tree Warden, after Simon Harrold cannot continue in the roll. He and the Tree Warden for Merrow are holding a Tree Walk on 1st November around the Gunpowder Mills and the Chilworth Manor area. It is being advertised in the October edition of the Chilworth Magazine and hopefully will be put on the St Martha PC website.