

St Martha Parish Council

Chairman's Report: PC Meeting Thursday 13 November 2025

Local Government Reorganisation for Surrey

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed has confirmed the dissolution of Surrey County Council and its 11 Borough and District councils and the creation of two new unitary authorities covering the following areas:-

- *West Surrey Unitary* : Waverley, Guildford, Woking, Surrey Heath, Runnymede, and Spelthorne
- *East Surrey Unitary* : Mole Valley, Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge

The new unitary authorities will have responsibility for all services including waste collection, planning, adult social care, children's services and highways.

St Martha Parish Council will need to begin considering the implications of these changes and how best to support our residents in the future.

Planned Road Safety Outside Chilworth C of E Infant School and Nursery

Recommendations arising from a report concerning road safety outside the school has led to the commissioning of a design for an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing and the removal of the layby to widen the pavement outside the school gates. The road would be raised to the same height as the pavement with ramps either side. It is in the early design phase with the work to be carried out in 2026 or early 2027. An informal consultation over the proposals will possibly be held in January or February 2026 and letters will be sent to residents in the Dorking Road and surrounding roads advising them of the proposed scheme and they will be invited to 'Have their Say' on an online questionnaire. There is no confirmation yet as to whether street lighting would be required outside the school for this scheme. There is currently no street lighting in St Martha Parish.

Investigations into whether a 20mph speed limit for a length along Dorking Road and New Road will also form part of this scheme.

The safety of the children is paramount; however, it would be hoped that the voice of the residents of the Parish will also be listened to so that the most workable outcomes can be reached.

In the meantime, Andrew Pearson, Co-Chair of the Board of Governors of the school, has written to SCC asking if there can be some restrictions to the layby outside the school so it can be used for school purposes only, or even some hatching to protect the entrance to the school staff car park.

As more parents are parking along the road outside the school, St Martha PC has asked if parents could be reminded that the pub car park is available for parents at drop and pick up times. The school has agreed to send a reminder to parents and again at necessary intervals.

There are also proposed changes under consideration for the road near Tillingbourne School.

Consultation on the stretch of the A248 from Lockner Farm to Roseacre Gardens

This public consultation has now closed and the information will be used to inform the Parish Council going forward.

SALC AGM – Thursday 13 November

By the time of the PC Meeting, I will have attended the SALC AGM and will give an oral report at the PC Meeting and send round any electronic copies of presentations when they become available.

Upgrades to Level Crossings along the North Downs Line

On 5 November I attended an on-line meeting with Network Rail, County Councillors, Borough Councillors and other stakeholders to discuss the upgrading at the Tangley Crossing, Chilworth Station Crossing, and other crossings along the North Downs Line. The discussion covered the continued problems that have arisen from the upgrades – mainly due to the longer times the barriers are left down - causing traffic build up, increased air pollution, and in some cases added complications with adjacent lanes or driveways. Light spillage has also been mentioned as an issue with the new lights at the Tangley Crossing.

Network Rail produced data and statistics they had collected and explained why the barriers are down for so long at certain times. The reasons are mainly due to current safety requirements: - for example, the length of time and distance trains need for breaking at signal points; overlap time of trains with additional time needed for safety; rail treatment trains which run at a slower rate (4 of these on the North Downs line); and seasonal trains clearing leaf fall which take longer to get to the crossings than the standard train etc. etc.

NR will be producing an overview to go round to residents who have sent in comments, to explain what is happening and why. Some of the longer delays at the Tangley Crossing won't happen again. The Brook level crossing is having particular difficulties.

I raised the matter of the back-up of traffic causing issues for those entering or exiting Blacksmith Lane; the frustration experienced by drivers, cyclists and runners; cars running their engines and causing increased air pollution; children going to school and what added delays mean to them; light spillage including day and night time lighting at the Tangley Crossing. NR is looking into the lighting issues and I asked if they could also look into the lighting at Chilworth Station at the same time as there have been comments about this in the past. There appears to be very high levels of lighting (but that might be essential), the large lights are often on all day so perhaps the sensor needs looking at, and there are problems with some of the platform lights.

NR were meant to do a risk assessment before and after the upgrades and they are going away to look at this as well as consider talking to SCC Highways about road issues and NR will discuss other matters raised at the meeting.

Jessie's Seat

Further comments from the Parish Council and discussion on the possible proposals after the damage to Jessie's Seat would be welcome. *Everyone is keen that the Parish Council should have a strong say on behalf of the community.* (I am still discussing the possible maintenance and use of the Gatekeeper's Hut with Network Rail.)

Pay Phone at Chilworth Station

I have asked BT again about the reinstalment of the pay phone at the station and when an engineer will be sent to sort out the matter. The replacement parts have been ordered but the engineer hasn't received them yet. There seems to be a delay in providing the parts from the

central store hub. They will update me when there is further news. I have asked if they can give this priority as the mobile phone network can't be relied upon at the station and in the case of an emergency the pay phone might be needed.

Rail to Ramble Podcasts – Whistlestop Arts

The Rail to Ramble podcast team will be coming on Wednesday 26 November to interview Debbie Toynbee (St Martha PC), Sara Grisewood (Community Rail Partnership) and Sarah Sullivan (architect and expert on Arts and Crafts). Debbie will be talking about the Gunpowder Mills and surrounding area, Sara will be talking about the railway, Sarah Sullivan about Blackheath and its buildings of interest and hopefully a bit about Blackheath Common.

Visitors' Map outside Chilworth Station

Work on the visitors' map for the Station is ongoing by artist Claire Watson and should be completed fairly soon. The final location of the map is still under discussion. Debbie also has been running her eye over the draft artwork and narrative with particular regard to the Gunpowder Mills and surrounding area.

Electronic Time Tables

GWR and the Community Rail Partnership is looking into the possibility of electronic bus and train timetables near the Station. Something I raised earlier with them. It ideally needs an electronic timetable at bus stops covering both directions along the Dorking Road.

New Signage opposite the Percy Arms Pub

Surrey Hills hasn't completed the new signage for their post by the Station bus shelter but they have assured me it is at the top of their list.

Fire on Blackheath Common

Councillor Bob Hughes and I will be speaking on-line to Simon Bacon, Operational Performance Support for Surrey Fire and Rescue, on 28 November to discuss the findings of their review after the Blackheath Common fire.

New Parish Tree Warden

The Parish Council is delighted to welcome Mark Dawkins as the new Parish Tree Warden, taking over from Simon Harrold. Simon and the Tree Warden for Merrow organized a Tree and History Walk on 1 November, exploring the village's history of gunpowder production along the Tillingbourne and sharing insight into notable trees in our corner of the Surrey Hills.

Chilworth War Memorial

I laid a wreath on behalf of St Martha Parish Council at the Annual Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial on 9 November. Michael Lunnon, a past Parish Councillor, kindly put up the Silent Soldier at the end of October and will take it down at an appropriate interval. A dead tree has been removed from the garden area and the stump will be ground down in due course. Damage to the Memorial stonework is still outstanding.

Dormice Project

The project, monitoring whether there are currently dormice at the Gunpowder Mills Site, has now ceased. Sadly, there has been no evidence of dormice found so far but plenty of evidence of other small mammals like wood mice. Debbie Toynbee will report on this.