

St Martha Parish Council

Chairman's Report: PC Meeting Tuesday 16 December 2025

Shalford Community Council Meeting – November 2025

Debbie Toynbee and I attended the Public Session of the November Shalford Community Council Meeting. Debbie highlighted the fact that two areas of the Tillingbourne School playfields had been included in GBC's 'strategic sites' as possible areas for housing development. It was thought that the proposal had come from the Learning Partners Academy Trust.

As Adrian Cansell had been unable to attend the November St Martha Parish Council Meeting, I gave some members of the Community Council and its Clerk a copy of my last Chairman's Report which highlighted such things as the upgrades to the Level Crossings on the North Downs Line, the SCC proposal for changes outside Chilworth School, and a PC consultation regarding part of the A248. I also gave a quick oral summary to the Council (under the Public Session) which further included an update on Jessie's Seat.

Jessie's Seat

I fed back to Network Rail and Coombes the contractors the Parish Council's thoughts about replacement memorials. The remains of the yew that was partly destroyed at the site is still alive and NR is nurturing this and also hoping to have something new at the site of the accident and signpost it along the line for the benefit of rail users. Network Rail seems happy to provide a memorial wooden seat at the Station and the PC will be asked to view any designs. They have also asked if the PC knows of any local people/companies who might make the seat. The positioning of the seat outside the Station may need some careful consideration.

I am still pursuing the matter of the maintenance and use of the Gatekeeper's/Points Hut at the Station with NR.

Rail to Ramble Podcasts – Whistlestop Arts

The Rail to Ramble podcast team came 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). I was also recorded for a few minutes outside St Martin's Church Blackheath.

Fire on Blackheath Common

Councillor Bob Hughes and I had an informative meeting with 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. We are now having another on-line meeting on 16 December – this time with Marli Holland, Rural Affairs Officer of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. After that, there should be something concrete to report back to the Parish Council and other interested parties.

Road Repairs in Halfpenny Close/Blacksmith Lane and urgent need of Kerb Repairs

There has been a further complaint about road and path repairs at the end of Halfpenny Close. The complaint has been that the contractors are only doing temporary repairs that deteriorate almost immediately they are completed. This seems to be an ongoing problem so the PC needs to consider contacting SCC again highlighting this as it isn't satisfactory, or good value

for money for our residents who pay their Council Taxes. There has also been a complaint about the kerb in Halfpenny Close. It is crumbling outside numbers 18, 19, 21 and 33 in the Close and I believe has been in a poor state for a considerable length of time. Perhaps the PC can contact SCC about this at the same time.

Meeting with Sir Graham Wrigley

I had a site meeting with Graham Wrigley on 9 December at the field below St Martha's Hill that he has just bought. It was good to hear about his plans for the field and the continued access for the public along the Permissive Right of Way and a cleared pathway up the field to the seat at the top. The Parish Council will no longer have responsibility for the steps at the east corner of the field, or any of the fencing and signage posts. Graham will remove the remains of the old kissing gate put in by the PC when the field had livestock.

He mentioned the possibility of volunteers from time to time doing work on the field and a couple of Parish Councillors have already put their names forward.

Upgrades to the Tangle Level Crossing

There has been a banner placed by a resident on a garden fence near the Tangle Level Crossing in Chilworth inviting people to switch off their engines whilst waiting for the level crossing barriers to lift in order to reduce air pollution. I have asked how long it is anticipated that the banner will be in place.

I will ask Network Rail if it could put a notice on their own fencing asking drivers to switch off their engines whilst waiting at the barriers. It would be good if Surrey Highways could consider putting a sign in both directions further along the A248 to ask drivers not to leave their engines idling. Residents are concerned about increased air pollution. I have asked Bob Hughes if he can help in this matter.

Some residents have leafleted 300 flyers around the area and are beginning to get email responses from other concerned residents. They are then going to get an email group together to provide regular updates. At some point they are considering a meeting with residents, authorities and Network Rail to discuss:

1. The consultation process

The original consultation meeting at the Village Hall 2 years ago which they think was lacking transparency.

2. Resident's experiences

Feedback responses received from the leaflet drop.

3. Network Rail's plans

What is in the pipeline to improve the situation?

A resident said they are also considering doing an air pollution survey - having joined a clean air survey with Friends of the Earth back in 2017 when the results were positive. They would then compare the results.

NR still hasn't put in baffling round the lighting at the crossing to reduce light pollution but say they are actively planning to do so soon.