

Elvetham Heath Parish Council Annual Community Meeting Chair's Report

The formation of Elvetham Heath Parish Council was many things, exciting, frustrating, surprising and often mundane, but looking back over the first year I can do so with a certain amount of satisfaction and pride.

For myself and the other Councillors it was a journey into the unknown. None of us had any experience in the ways of local councils, but we survived, and we still manage to retain our enthusiasm going forward into our second year. I would like to thank our Parish Clerk, Jan Hyatt, for her patience and guidance during this period.

Our Parish Office is up and running at the Community Centre and is staffed by the Parish Clerk. We also employ a full time Operations Manager (Steve Mabbott-Say) who looks after the Community Centre and other parish facilities. The Key, is the hub of our community, and the Parish Council now has a presence there giving greater accessibility for the residents should they wish to contact the Parish Council. On the communications front we have set up a Parish Council website and face book page.

The budget for last year was based on figures supplied by Hart District Council. Unsure of the robustness of the figures we were cautious with our spending. However, the budget assumptions proved slightly pessimistic and we actually generated a surplus, which has allowed us to start work on a number of projects in 2011/12. (A separate financial report is with these papers).

The biggest change to facilities at Elvetham Heath has been the extension to the Community Centre. This now provides additional space to accommodate the increased number of children requiring early years' education. This project was funded by Hampshire County Council, and we are grateful to Little Elves Pre-school for securing the funding and overseeing the project. This additional space is now available to hire when not being used by the pre-school or after school club.

A new on-line booking system has been introduced for the very popular children's party bookings and tennis courts. This has proved to be very efficient and well liked by our customers.

Providing an opportunity for the residents of Elvetham Heath to come together is an important part of building a strong community. The Parish Council have put on a Photograph exhibition to celebrate the first ten years of Elvetham Heath, a table top toy sale and carols around the Christmas Tree and are at present working on the Village Fete.

We all want to keep Elvetham Heath a lovely place to live and the Parish Council has been working on re-negotiating all of the contracts inherited from Hart District Council. The largest of these is the grounds maintenance contract, which is complicated as responsibility for the landscaping is shared between Hampshire County Council through Hart District Council and Elvetham Heath Parish Council. We have also dealt very quickly with fly tipping issues and the excess use of Estate Agent boards in certain areas of the estate.

We are fortunate at Elvetham Heath to have some very good open spaces and sports facilities. Our playgrounds and Village Green are well used by the residents and the Village Pond and Nature Reserve are wonderful assets. We are also very keen to bring the sports facilities on Elvetham Heath up to the required standard. The junior pitch should be available by the end of the summer and estimates to refurbish the full size pitch are being sought.

The residents of Elvetham Heath voted to have a Parish Council solely for Elvetham Heath and not to become part of Fleet Town Council. I firmly believe this was the right decision and has given our community Councillors who really care about the place where they live.

Please let us know your thoughts and ideas of what you would like to see here at Elvetham Heath. We can't promise to do everything but would really like to hear from you.

Marilyn Robson
Chair, Elvetham Heath Parish Council