

## **Shalfleet Parish Council**

### **Chairman's Report for 2024/5**

As a Councillor, you give your time to help the community. This I have been pleased to do over a period of 40 years.

I decided two years ago to step down from Shalfleet Parish Council at this year's elections, to encourage younger people with new ideas.

Councillors have the responsibility of deciding how public money is spent to help the community and environment. In a time of government cut backs above local councils, local parish money should be used to help our people.

The last year has been a challenge due to the inaction of other councillors, who have failed to do what is required of them.

Shalfleet Parish Council was at no time was 'defunct' and everything has been done correctly, both legally and ethically, by me and Vice Chair Thomas Cowley, to ensure SPC tries to support the quality of life for its parishioners.

**Resigning in-term does not meet the responsibilities of looking after the community, nor does failing to turn up to meetings.**

Shirley Stables, Pam Broadhead and Alan Ingram resigned and gave up in June 2024. Alan Ingram later expressed his regret at taking this action and has attended regularly to keep an eye on proceedings. His knowledge of Standing Orders has been appreciated.

The June meeting was therefore inquorate: no decisions could be made.

Jonathan Hill joined us in July as a councillor new to the area and new to parish council meetings, and I was unanimously elected as chairman for the 17<sup>th</sup> time.

Chris Beane, Jane Timbrell and Jacky Laurie and joined the Council in August although Jacky Laurie was on holiday for the September meeting. At September's meeting it was unanimously agreed to **advertise for a new clerk**. Creation of an advert was delegated to Councillors Beane and Timbrell, who failed to do this.

At the October meeting only Cllrs Hill, T. Cowley and I were qualified to vote as Cllr Beane, Laurie and Timbrell had failed to complete the election process by either not returning election expenses or Registers of Interest. This is their personal responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the Clerk to make sure the councillors and council are acting legally. The Locum Clerk failed to do that, so did Tina Bailey.

Cllrs Beane, Laurie and Hill walked out before the November meeting after I stated that Cllr Beane was legally disqualified from the meeting for failing to return his election expenses. That meeting was also inquorate so no decisions could be made, again.

Instead of coming to the December meeting, the new councillors released a libellous 'press statement'.

I called two Extraordinary General Meetings in January, following correct procedures, in an attempt to get some of the council's business done. This included **setting the precept**, which is how public money will be spent in the next year. As part of this it is important to hear from community groups about support they need in the coming year.

### **Ian Boyd, responsible for Isle of Wight Nature Recovery**

programme spoke to a meeting well-attended by members of the public. Cllrs Beane, Hill, Timbrell and Laurie, failed to attend, neglecting their responsibility to the people of the Parish.

In February, Tina Bailey working with Cllr Beane, failed to call the meeting correctly. I had to call another Extraordinary General Meeting in February for the vital purpose of setting the precept, which was held at £51,700, reducing the precept on most council tax bills by 7.3%.

As councillors, we have a duty to consider the needs of the young, so it was pleasing that the grant towards equipment for the Active Children programme at Shalfleet School was supported, following an earlier grant to the Play and Stay group at Shalfleet.

Without a clerk: not my choice, I called Extraordinary General Meetings for March and April, to rectify some of the errors made by the Clerks and Cllrs Hill, Timbrell, Beane, and Laurie. I was able to appoint a Responsible Finance Officer to try to bring back SPC finances to functionality and follow Standing Orders correctly. An IWC Environment Officer was appointed to inspect and ensure the safety of play equipment as the clerk and locum clerk had failed to put this measure in place.

The SPC website had been stripped of legally required documents, as directed by the Locum Clerk, in August. Vice Chair Cllr T Cowley has now recovered much of the web site so that it once again complies with the **council's legal requirement to provide details of councillors, their register of interests, and documents explaining how the council should work.**

Although the Council has a responsibility to look after the environment and enhance its biodiversity, the new councillors blocked the planting of a grant-funded Community Orchard which had been widely supported by young families and staff at Shalfleet Primary School.

They also blocked grant- aided planting of trees on Bouldnor Mead, which was supported by local people and dog walkers who appreciate the need for **more woodland to mitigate climate change and provide shade in hot summers.**

I cannot finish this report without any reference to the campaign of lies and misinformation issued in press releases by councillors who failed to attend meetings, although they held the majority.

Their unsupported allegations and hearsay reflect badly on them.

May I remind you that neither the Council nor its Chairman have great powers so must rely on any influence that can be achieved. One such influence was when I invited the Leader of the IWC to our October meeting to hear our concerns about the unwanted proposed double yellow lines in Newbridge. As a result, Newbridge remains free of any further double yellow lines.

Lastly I would like to let you know that the Community Led Housing project for houses at Crossways, on which I have been working for some years, is likely to go forward.

This will please local families who are looking for truly affordable housing.

Sarah Tyrell was presented with this year's Shalfleet Parish Council's Community Award by Chair Steve Cowley, for going above and beyond expectations in carrying out her voluntary work for the community, as Tree Warden.



Walking the footpaths of the parish regularly she reports on problems with woodland, veteran trees, and hedges and suggests plans for their upkeep, safeguarding the unique character of our landscape.

Councillor Steve Cowley

Chairman, Shalfleet Parish Council