

Chair report

Allotments

It is necessary from time to time to manage trees on the allotments and allotment borders to permit adequate light and to prevent spread of disease. The Parish Council has received a request from Richard Bennett (Chair of the Allotment Society) and David Hunt (grassed allotment that lies next to Poplar Cottage) to manage the trees alongside the stream and bordering their plots. Further details are available should anyone wish to see these, but in short some trees need reducing in height and others may need removing due to Ash die back. I understand that the Allotment Society approves this request. **I propose that CPC approves management of these trees to David and Richard who will contact GBC for approval where it is needed and who will manage and fund any necessary work – VOTE**

Note a tree fell across the length of Withies Lane on Sunday. SCC emergency team was contacted and came out that evening to deal with it. All concerned were very impressed by the speed of this service.

GBC – Financial review by Sue Sturgeon (MD)

Over the next few years central government funding to many regional councils will be cut completely. Instead councils must be self-sufficient and will be able to retain 'up to' 100% of income from business rates to make up for the loss in income. This might explain the emphasis on business growth and premises in Guildford, often to the detriment of housing.

There are some major issues with the policy which is a central govt. policy and much contested as I understand it, by local councils.

Wealthy councils such as Guildford will see the cuts earlier than their less affluent counterparts.

The taxes from business rates will go into a regionalized pot and I am not sure how big the area will be that will then be competing for the funds. So called 'successful' councils or ones taking on high levels of growth could see the burden of that growth without necessarily reaping the financial rewards to

provide the services they would like to support it IF there are a number of less successful councils in the designated area.

The full slide show is in drop-box.

Parish Council Review

The initial review of our procedures revealed the following:

We have fewer meetings than most other councils
We spend very few hours in meetings compared to other councils (who have monthly meetings and many sub-committees).
Progress is slower than we would like
Our meetings are longer than many councils

We would like greater communication and more updates about progress and CPC affairs
We would like shorter meetings
We would like a fixed time and place where residents and where we can contact the clerk.

We aimed to achieve this by

Setting up a temporary office for the clerk in Compton.

This has been achieved. As we will pay £50 a month and travel expenses of £11-12 a trip I suggest that we discuss the possibility of Joanna lengthening this time from 2 hours to at least 3 (as setting up and dismantling equipment takes a chunk out of the 2 hours. Consider 1.00pm – 4.00pm each Thursday.

Communication & understanding progress

It was agreed that all communications would be copied to the Chair and relevant Cllr. **This has improved but requires fine tuning** and needs to be discussed with the clerk.
It was agreed that the main thrust of the PC meeting was to make decisions and progress and that a clear running list should be the thread that links the meeting together (and the main focus). **This has been achieved in part**, as the running list is largely updated by Fiona with help from Cllrs who submit updates (by request). There are however a number of outstanding actions that are very outstanding and these need to be dealt with.

Shorter Meetings

This was achieved in July, but Sept was cancelled so too soon to claim achievement has been met. [*This was achieved in November] by combining the running list and the agenda]*

The lack of reports by GBC councilors and police has helped on one front but lack of information is not a good compromise and as both M Illman & M Parsons have only been able to attend one meeting so far this year and as neither have submitted any updates via a report I plan to write to both, copying Paul Spooner to ask that this be addressed.

As Cllr. Furniss attended the meeting this information was imparted to him.

The way forward

The majority of the Council works or has time-consuming commitments other than council business and hence to keep things ticking along it is necessary to ask the clerk to undertake tasks or to agree to sub-contract tasks.

As CPC will be without a chair person or vice-chair over the next few months it is likely that more requests will be made of Joanna.

Provide brief update of the situation re Chair/ Vice Chair leaving.

Currently Joanna works 12 hours a week and in order to ensure that tasks are completed in a timely fashion and that Joanna's work load is commensurate with the salary offered I have asked Joanna to keep a detailed diary of activity. Maryon Lordan (previous clerk who is clerking tonight) used to log all activity and this enabled the council to understand her workload and also to pay excess hours where it was called for. Maryon found that her hours were sometimes more and sometimes less but that on the whole, over the year, the hours evened out. Certain events cause considerable increases in hours and if this isn't matched with adequate resource, can result in a back-log.

Joanna is unable to be here tonight and I suggest that council and Joanna meet 'off-line' to review the best way forward, the management of the website, the running list, dropbox and communications (particularly those involving project updates and progress). It is helpful if all councilors have an overview of all council business. It is necessary for the clerk and the chair and the relevant councillor to fully understand all aspects of each project, which is why the running list and a central but secure admin centre (ie drop box) are so important.

I have upgraded to a paid subscription for drop box and will add a proportion of the cost to an expenses claim as this will provide a safety net for you all for the time being.

I have suggested that in the absence of a Chair that all correspondence goes to Joanna in the normal way and that ALL decisions are made via email and full council with a vote of 3 leading the way. To help, Joanna may suggest a solution and ask who supports this. If you have alternative suggestions, you must propose them. Likewise, if you feel that the decision needs to be made by full council, you must propose this. Joanna may also state that this is the case.

Website

I will show Joanna how to edit the site and have given her editing rights. Anything that can't be done by Joanna will be sub-contracted out by giving editing rights to another if another Cllr. wishes to do it or by asking me and I will note hours worked and bill accordingly.

Any comments on the website should be sent to me before the end of the month. I will then make the necessary changes and add the domain – it will be on comptonparishcouncil.co.uk

Everyone now has an email address called `name@comptonparishcouncil.co.uk`. This will forward to your usual email address. The catch all is `'clerk@comptonparishcouncil.co.uk'`

I will invoice for this work on completion. I have asked Joanna to look at whether we meet the criteria for 'transparency' funding, although our annual turnover may exclude us from this (£25k a year).