

Arreton Parish Meeting 2017 – Chairman’s report.

This is the final report from this council before the election of a new council. So it is appropriate for me to look back to see what, if anything, we have been able to achieve.

As chairman I have tried to ensure that Arreton has not been overlooked as various ideas have been put forward, so I have ensured that somebody from our council has attended as many meetings as possible where items of actual or potential interest to the parish have been discussed. From the Solent Enterprise Partnership to Age Friendly Island our voice has been heard.

The housing development next to Hazeley Combe was proposed with, at least in part, the laudable intention of making homes available to local youngsters wanting to set up house in the village, as well as houses for people wishing to down-size. Many people in the parish were unhappy with the size, style and siting of the proposal and after careful consideration, we opposed the plans. The Island Council also opposed them. While the proposal was allowed on appeal, we were able to ensure that sensible conditions were imposed to ensure that the maintenance of the site did not become a burden on the local rate-payers.

To mark the anniversary of the First World War, we were able to raise some funds to restore the war memorial by St George’s Church. The work was carried out so well that we won the prize for the best preserved memorial in the Best Kept Village Awards in 2015.

Although the VJ Day event that we organised in association with Arreton Cricket Club in 2015 was not as successful as we hoped, the lessons learned have meant that we were able to organise a Family Fun-day last year that was much improved. This year’s event promises to be even better.

The state of the pavement in Arreton village was a cause of concern at one time with uneven surface and dog mess major complaints. Thanks to Island Roads the pavement is much easier to walk on. Thanks to the parish council providing a dog bin at each end of the village and the dog-walkers showing more responsibility, the pavement is much cleaner than it has been. The law relating to cleaning up after your dog does not apply to those of limited sight, which is sensible, so we cannot expect never to see dog mess.

The anaerobic digester at Gore has been a cause of concern to many people. Where we are able to see that the terms and conditions of the planning consent might not be being fully observed we have carried out regular visits and correspondence with the owners and the Island Council planners. However there are some areas over which we cannot exercise any control. For example, before I moved to Arreton I was aware that it was on a main road and in an agricultural area. So heavy lorries travelling to and from Wight Salads and tractors with produce travelling past the house did not come as a surprise. Peace and quiet being what you should expect in a country village is a myth put about by estate agents trying to sell houses.

This does not mean that we should accept everything that businesses and farmers try to do. We have pointed out to the police that some of the trailers going to Gore are seriously overloaded and causing problems for other road users. We are actively looking into getting the speed limit in Merstone reduced to 20 mph.

In the last year, the Parish Council met eleven times and has commented on 22 planning applications, an increase of almost 50% on last year. The Parish Council continues to be represented on local bodies such as the Arreton Trust, the Arreton Community Hall Management Committee and the Arreton School Trust as well as Island-wide groups such as the Waste Forum. We have also

continued to do our best to answer, or find the answers to, the questions and concerns of our residents.

In May there will be a new Arreton Parish Council. As well as the five people who have put themselves forward for election, we will have to co-opt three more to make up the complement of eight councillors. We are noticeably short of ladies and Merstone residents. That will give us two very experienced councillors, two from the election four years ago and four new councillors. It is to be hoped that they learn from the old council's mistakes and build on its successes. We can be sure that they will be doing their best.

Four of the current councillors will not be on the new council and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the work they have done for the community. Robin and Erica Oulton contributed their considerable knowledge and experience of what is practical, while Ian Roome and Gail Grisman brought fresh ideas. Both are vital to running a council and I have been very grateful for everybody's contribution. Robin and Erica are anticipating moving away, Ian has other commitments and Gail's health has let her down. I must also pay tribute to Mrs. Sheila Caws, our parish clerk, and Mrs. Pat Phillips, our parish registrar, for the professional standard of the work they have done for us.

I must also mention Colin Richards, who was our Island Councillor. He was a good friend to the council and to the people of Arreton. We have been very lucky with our Island Councillors during the past several years. Before Colin we had Erica Oulton. Although very different in many ways, they were both clearly motivated solely by a desire to serve the community. If our next Island Councillor is as good, we will be very lucky.

Mick Thirkettle, Chairman.