Chairman's Meetings Report re community events to West Itchenor Parish Council for the period from 11th November to the meeting on 13th January, 2014.

Whilst this is the period of seasonal fall-off of key local council meetings, it is a period of increased local community events which Councillors connect with. For information I have highlighted some associated community events relevant to the parish. Also the Parish Council and community at large were alert to the concerns over flooding across the County and again putting pressure on capacity to clear floodwater and sewage outflow within the village. This has reopened the national debate about appropriate sites for building development and ensuring planners meet all conditions in advance of allowing building work to proceed.

SERCAF (SE Region County Associations Forum Meeting at Wokingham, Berkshire (14th Nov.)
This meeting was attended by Councillors representing each of the County Associations of Local Councils of East & West Sussex, Kent, Hampshire , IOW , Surrey, Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire. After covering the routine set agenda business the meeting concentrated on the then forthcoming Agenda of NALC in preparation for discussion on the Chief Executives Appointment Process and the contribution of County Association's elected members to the Strategic Review. SERCAF also debated the means to impact upon CLG as the requirements of local councils became more demanding in the interests of meeting the democratic needs voiced by their Parishes, post 2015.

Birdham Primary School preliminary meeting with Headteacher to discuss developments prior to attending School Governors Meeting (21st Nov.).

Visit to above at invitation of pupils to see work Exhibition (22nd Nov.).

Dedication of new Church Organ at WW, part of WI, Birdham & WW Parishes United Benefice (24th Nov.) (N.b. Organist broke national continuous playing record)

Chaired School Governance HT Performance Review with Team & Schools Inspector (25th Nov.) After a morning of scrutiny and systematic review of evidence the Panel commended the Headteacher and his progress in leadership of the School.

Funeral of Dulcibel Jenkins McKenzie (Itchenor celebrated parishioner at West Itchenor Parish Church & Memorial Hall (29th Nov.)

Staffing Committee Meeting at local area Birdham Primary School (4th Dec.) Covered School Performance, Safer Recruitment Training and a range of Major Policy Reviews including Child Protection.

(Reports and Minutes on completion are available via The Clerk from the School Office.)

First Meeting of West Itchenor Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, Chaired by Cllr Susan Taylor, Lead for Planning Committee (5th Dec). Susan away until March and left arrangement for me to deliver her report at the next WIPC.

Manhood Peninsula Partnership Meeting at Selsey Centre (9th Dec.) included attendance by representatives of Environment Agency, National Trust, WSCC, CDC, Harbour Conservancy, Natural England, RSPB, SALC Parish & Selsey Town Council. Topics discussed included Medmerry Project Update & Green Links, public access and handover to RSPB ; MPP outreach , Chichester Harbour AONB activities

& priorities; Pagham Harbour Update; Coastal Defence Strategy; Natural England re Solent Disturbance & Marine Conservation Zones.

Additional Information available from Jane Cunningham, MPP Project Officer c/o Health Protection & Envt Management CDC, East Pallant House, Chi PO19 ITY. Copy of Minutes when published available from above.

National Council of NALC (National Association of Local Councils) at Royal National. London. (10th Dec.)

Following standard opening business and the Report of the Chief Executive, who is retiring after a decade as chief officer, there were elections for the Major Offices of the Association and these were followed by Election to the Main Committees. Cllr Ken Browse, my former NALC Vice Chair was re-elected Chairman. Having been confirmed as Vice President for the next three years, I and another colleague acted as Verifiers to speed up the protracted balloting process. Subsequently there were key committee reports to be received, reference to the previous Annual General Meeting and consideration of motions received from County Associations.

As a result of the P.M.'s launch in 2011 of the Open Public Services White Paper emphasising the developing role of our sector and the need to create new local councils we now have the Ministerial Statement of the CLG's New Council's programme. NALC is to promote, manage and support the programme with funding to County Associations to promote the programme locally.

CLG Minister Brandon Lewis MP had, before the Christmas Recess, reiterated at the House of Commons Despatch Box that all billing authorities should pass on the Council Tax Benefit Support Grant to their local councils. This is still not being applied by some billing authorities in spite of similar agreement from Shadow Local Government Minister Andy Sawford MP.

N.B. Whilst Ministers hold that the principles of capping /referenda have always applied to T&PCs the Ministers have NOT implemented them, always saying they were keeping the position under review. It is evident that the 'de minimus' might be the £70 level element at Band D (the lowest level at which a town or parish council element of Council Tax exceeds that of a district council). CLG has reiterated that no decision has been taken. Certainly smaller local councils taking on an increasing burden of community services due to the cut-back in funding for Principal Authorities are clear that there is a limit to what can voluntarily be taken on without the assurance that resources will be deployed to meet additional local public need.

The Order relating to parish councils being able to make electronic payments has been laid before Parliament as a Legislative Reform Order and after voting in both Houses and Ministerial signing should hopefully be completed at the end of this month.

Chaired Special Meeting of Parish Council to consider CDC Local Plan (16th Dec.). See Separate Minute Local Primary School, Birdham, Carol Service, 20.12.13. A packed event of children, teachers, parents and community members that did great credit to the school for the quality of preparation and delivery.

Benefice Team Meeting (6th Jan.) Review of community needs and provision including three Churches and Churchyards, Schools, laity, children and safeguarding.

WSALC (West Sussex Association of Local Councils) Ltd Board Meeting at Billingshurst Community & Conference Centre (8th Jan 2014.)

Members from across the county found routes avoiding the worst of the consequences of flooding, especially across the plain by Pulbrough Brooks. As the TV and Newspapers report there are some severe difficulties for householders and businesses of stricken communities. Whilst credit must be given to attentive officials and volunteers from Parish Councils and Community Groups who have sought to alleviate the worst of the suffering, the debate has reopened about the impact of additional housing developments that have ignored sustainability requirements.

A full agenda covered SALC Finances and Staffing together with the proposed move from AIRS Offices. There was key discussion about the future operation of NALC and particularly the national process to select a new Chief Executive. Reports included the recent and upcoming Events and across county Training Programme including for West Sussex Planning Event 25.02.2014 @ Lodge Hill; New Councillor Training at Lodge Hill on 12th June, 2014; Chairmanship Briefing Session at Lodge Hill on 25th June and Clerks Networking Day at Pulborough on 7th October. There was discussion about a sequel to the highly successful October meeting at Boxgrove of WSALC in collaboration with WSCC. Reference was made to the SSALC presence at the South of England Show at Ardingly on 5-7 June 2014 when a Parish Council presence will be there each day fostering interest ahead of the 2015 Elections. Agreement was given to the updating of the Local Council Protocol established with the Sussex Police and satisfaction was expressed at the special relationship with the Chief Constable and his senior team. It was agreed to encourage communities to access grants made available to renovate parish war memorials.

(I have spare copies of the Training Dates and Minutes for the former meeting on 11th October, 2013. Minutes for above first meeting of the New Year will be available from the WSALC Office.)

General: Appreciation must be recorded for the level of commitment by the WIPC Clerk and Members over the year , which allow such a small but dedicated group to achieve so much for the interests of the village. The strong level of personal motivation and willingness to pursue agreed endeavours is a growing strength to the benefit of the parish and community interests.

N.B. A Meeting between Mrs Alexandra Webb, newly elected Chair of the Itchenor Society and myself is arranged for 29th January, 2014.

Michael Chater