CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL, 10.03.2014.

E&OE.

Some of work and key meetings since last Parish Council on 13th January 2013 - 10th March 2013.

Whilst there are a number of key meetings in the interest of our local council I have included a few of the other community meetings attended that have local relevance. This period was of course preoccupied with the appalling weather conditions and the heavy flooding in parts of the UK which also threatened villages in Sussex. With the Environment Agency shortly relinquishing responsibility in this area the Parish Council will work with the Principal Local Authority and in partner continue to monitor the local situation. It encourages community and householder co-operation to maintain free flowing ditches and water pipes throughout the village.

January:

14t.h School Staffing Appointment, Interview Process, Preparatory Meeting. - This is an unexpected vacancy that will arise in Year 5/6.

23rd. Tel call appointments in Mentor Support of local government national post applicant and in response to lead enquiries. - These arise from time to time.

27th Meeting with Carol on Clerk/Chairman Parish Business. – Part of our task

29th Meeting with Mrs Alex Webb, recently appointed Chair of Itchenor Society. - First of proposed joint meetings to maintain dialogue and keep community developments under periodic review.

February:

2nd Attended Itchenor Society Village Lunch - excellent community social event.

3rd Benefice team Meeting. One of a series of monthly meetings chaired by the Rector to review Church and community developments in the three Parishes of West Itchenor, West Wittering and Birdham. As well as conducting services and range of duties the Clergy and Lay Team maintain pastoral contacts and visiting in the villages.

3rd Evening, Attended Child protection, 'Safeguarding' Refresher Course - part of requirement for any ongoing work of staff, governors or volunteer helpers associated with young people.

5th PCC Meeting at Birdham confirmed agreement to substantial building project for hall and rooms adjacent to St James' Church to accommodate Youth, Church and Community Programmes

13th Guest at 'Facing the Future Conference' at Cowes Yacht Haven. IOW. (Crossings on the one day lull between the storms!!) It was a full programme with attendance from every parish in the Island and over one hundred attendees; there was a strong programme of speakers.

As NALC Vice president I was invited to note the whole conference and draw up a review of the day's events and offer some personal observations before giving the Closing Address to Conference.

A DCLG Senior Civil Servant, Mick Duggan, gave a talk on the importance of Neighbourhood Planning and provided an overview of national developments. The rest of the programme included –SSALC County Officer, Trevor Leggo, speaking on the merits of Clustering and Capacity Building; Cane & Company on Councillors liabilities, duties and risks; Steven Lugg, Hampshire C. A. on Working Together; Ken Browse from NALC & Howard Midworth from SLCC on work in common; Ian Davidson of Hedleys Solicitors on legislation and legal duties; - I have a copy of the latter guidance notes.

24th 9.15am Chaired Staff Short-listing Meeting at Birdham (Area Catchment) CE Primary School for appointment of Class teacher /Leader Year 5/6. resulting from announcement of forthcoming retirement.

11.0am Chaired Staffing Committee review of policies and meetings schedule for year.

25th Itchenor Road closed for three days, whilst road repairs take place..

27th SERCAF,(South East Region County Association Forum) at Crowmarsh Gifford District Council Offices, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. I attended on behalf of West & East Sussex, SSALC meeting with County Associations of Local Councils incl. Berkshire, Bucks, Surrey, Milton Keynes, I of W, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Kent, E & W Sussex. – n.b. SSALC is on the move and by 1st April, 2014 its new address will be Sackville House, Brooks Close, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2FZ

Part of the meeting was devoted to discussion of the forthcoming appointment process for a new NALC Chief Executive and motions for National Council. - The other formal business included developments in the southern counties and agreement to commend that the Quality Parishes Scheme should be rebadged and re-launched as a Charter of attainment for local councils, still linked (as our Parish Council is) to the General Power of Competence.

March:

3rd. MPP, Selsey. The Manhood Peninsula Partnership was chaired by a former CDC Officer and attended by a County Council Representative together with key representatives and agencies including the Environment Agency, National Trust, RSPB, WSCC Rural Team, CDC Economic Development manager, Manhood Wildlife & Heritage Trust, CHC, Natural England etc.

The agenda covered Medmerry Project Update, Green Links across the Manhood, Chichester Harbour AONB Activities, Operation Watershed, Natural England Update on Solent Disturbance and Marine Conservation Zones, Coastal defence strategy plans and updates, the renewed Leader Fund.

If there are requests I will make the papers available, as they are minuted, through passing a set to Carol.

I have a copy of the CDC Economic Development Strategy 2013-2019. It is entitled 'Creating a Prosperous and Sustainable Economy' and provides a thoughtful analysis of key aspects of the district and aspirations for its economic sustainability.

3rd Evening , attended London Reception at CCLA Senate House, Near Mansion House, London drawing on President and VP, former Chairmen etc to address colleagues including Senior Staff and Councillor colleagues, national and regional Local Government representatives on retirement of NALC Chief Executive.. This included having to give a Brief Speech and Present a Gift from all the membership.

John Findlay observed that there had been radical changes in the role of local councils and in the recognition of our sector. He went on to record how much he appreciated the support and enthusiasm of Government and all the political parties for the key role of 9.000 member councils and the 80,000 councillors who work so hard for their local communities... ..... It is to be noted that a new appointment will very shortly be confirmed.

6th 1.30pm Briefing & Planning Meeting of Parish Clerk, Chair & Vice Chair

3.0pm Attended Neighbourhod Planning Meeting composed of Parish Council and Community Representatives, chaired by Cllr Susan Taylor.

4.30 Attended School Governor Main Meeting at Birdham.

10th 7.0pm. Chair Parish Council

Shortly Forthcoming -

11th School Post Interview Panel, -all day.

Attend for WSALC, with County Officer for Local Councils, 'What next for Localism?' National Conference (26.03.2014}. Alistair (WIPC) also attending.

1st April, attend National Council, London. Newly appointed Chief Executive to be in post.

Other information of l.g.interest -

N.b. Some Authorities have held back the **Council tax Benefit Support grant** which Ministers have acknowledged should be due to Parishes. A Ministerial Statement has been made in The House and a meeting with CLG Minister Brandon Lewis MP reiterated the position. The Minister has undertaken to approach directly any billing authority where the grant might be withheld. Assurance has also been given that there will be no unpleasant surprises on **capping and referenda** albeit the Minister was watching the situation as far as our largest councils were concerned where their precept exceeded that of the district council.

Under the **Sustainable Communities Act a legal order** has now formally come into operation which encourages parishes to make direct proposals to the Secretary of State at the DCLG.

The grant agreement between the DCLG and NALC has been signed to encourage the **creation of more Parish Councils** in England.

Eric Pickles has spoken of the **parish sector as 'localism's magic wand'.**

Queen's Park: the inspirational home of London's first parish council has prompted interest in other urban areas and **Gloucester, Birmingham and Bristol are reviewing parishing in their cities.**

M.Chater

Cllr Michael Chater OBE

WIPC Chairman.