

Ditton Parish Council



# **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2011



## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2010/2011**

Welcome to my report on the work of the Council during financial year 2010/2011. It has been another busy year for the Council and in this report I have endeavoured to give you a snapshot of the work undertaken by the parish council during the year.

### **Donations made**

During 2010/2011 this Council gave donations totalling £2,025.00 to the following charities and organisations:-

Ditton Pop-In-Club; Age Concern; Victim Support; Ditton Heritage Centre, Children with Leukaemia; Kent Air Ambulance; Heart of Kent Hospice; High Spirits Variety Group; Ditton Junior School; Ditton Infant School; Y2 Crewe Summer Scheme

All donations are funded through money raised by volunteers at raffles held at Parish Council functions and not through the precept.

### **Parish Rate**

Every year the Parish Council is required to estimate how much money is required to run the Parish for the following financial year. To facilitate this, during October and November each committee undertakes a review of its income and expenditure and sets its budget for the following year. The committee budgets are then recommended to the Finance and Administration Committee which scrutinise them, suggest any changes required, and recommend them to Full Council for approval in January each year.

It has been a very difficult task this year and we have had to bear in mind the current economic climate and the impact any increase would have on all our purses. No increase was made by this Council last year and with very careful budgeting and no loss of services we have had to make only a small adjustment this year and managed to keep the increase to just 4p per week.

### **Review**

The review committee, set up in 2009, is still active and continues to look at ways to make operational and financial savings.

### **Policing**

Our neighbourhood Police Officer, Becky Ballard, took maternity leave this year, but we were left in the safe hands of PCSO Robert Sayer and Community Warden John Newton. John joined us last year as a temporary community warden support officer and has been very active in the parish since he arrived. John was the leading force in the Cedar Youth Room project which he continues to support, giving his time freely. Since working in the parish, John has decided he would like to remain in Ditton as its permanent Community Warden and applied for the post. This has now been confirmed and I am pleased to report that John will be with us for the foreseeable future.

Crime in the parish has been at an all time low recently and we thank the police and Warden for their part in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Ditton.

### **Cedar Room Youth Project**

The Refurbishment of the Cedar Room is now complete and the Youth Centre is now a great asset to the community. My sincere thanks go to Community Warden John Newton, Floyd Risby (Chair of the project Steering Committee) and all members of

steering committee. It has been a long and hard road for them with disappointments along the way, but their commitment to the project has been unswerving and without their dedication it would not have come to fruition.

My thanks also go to the youth of the parish who set up their own committee to assist with the project and take an active part in fundraising for equipment and also for their help with the internal cleaning and decoration of the Youth Centre. Their efforts have been rewarded with a great meeting place which will be the envy of many other parishes.

### **Twinning**

Several twinning events took place during the year and the link between the two villages continues to prosper. More twinning exchange visits are being planned for 2011/2012 and the Mayor, Town Band and Town majorettes will be visiting Ditton in June to attend the Church and Parish Council joint family day on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2011..

If you would like to take part in exchange visits, please contact the Twinning Association or the parish office. All visits whether at home or in France have to be fully funded by the participants, however, a contribution towards providing refreshments for French visitors may be available from the Twinning Association upon application.

### **Events**

The parish Council held four dances during the year, raising a profit on ticket sales of £3,456.99. More dances are planned for 2011/2012, the first being our Spring dance on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

The Church and Parish Council joint family day held last June was, again, a great success and enjoyed by all those who attended. This year's family day will be held on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Ditton Quarry Nature Reserve**

Ditton Nature Reserve continues to be well used by residents and is also used for educational purposes. During the heavy snow in December, it became a winter wonderland for children and an ideal place for them to enjoy their sledges on the natural slopes in the reserve. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers involved in the management of the Quarry Nature Reserve for their assistance in looking after this valuable asset.

### **Emergency Plan**

The Emergency Plan is almost nearing completion. Kent County Council Emergency Planners, who are working with the parish council on this project, are currently finalising the plan. It is anticipated it will be completed in the very near future.

It is intended that the Plan will be activated in an emergency situation when the emergency services are unable to get through and it will remain activated until the emergency services arrive and take over. When it is ready, copies will be available through the parish office.

### **Staffing**

During 2010 the Clerk, Sue Kavanagh, announced that she wished to retire at the end of June 2011 and with this in mind reorganisation of administration staff was inevitable.

Nicola Greenaway, who joined the parish council in October 2002, has been working alongside the Clerk over the past year learning all aspects and responsibilities of the post. Nicola successfully completed the Certificate in Local Council Administration last year and

was promoted to Deputy Clerk on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. Nicola will take up the post of Clerk of the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 and administrative assistant, Mandy Davis, will become the new clerk to the Open Spaces & Amenities and Planning Committees on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011. I wish them both every success in their new roles.

On behalf of the Council I sincerely thank Sue for all her hard work over the 27 years she has been with the Council, her experience and knowledge will be greatly missed by us all and I take this opportunity to wish Sue a well deserved and long and happy retirement.

### **Projects for 2011/2012**

With a curb on spending and the need to rebuild general resources, no major projects have been planned for 2011/2012.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors and the parish council staff for all their hard work, dedication and assistance over the past year, also our partners and all the volunteers who have assisted the council during the year.

Mike Porter  
Chairman  
Ditton Parish Council