



Mickleham Parish Council

July 2025 Report

Starting my first report as Chair of the Mickleham Parish Council by apologising to the many individuals and the one business who kindly contributed to the leaving present for David Ireland. I was all set to hand this over with a speech of thanks to you all, but was torpedoed by the NHS, who carted me off to hospital in a blue-lit ambulance that afternoon. East Surrey A&E, having told me that my condition was an emergency, then spent ten hours doing nothing and eventually discharged me the following morning. I would like, therefore, to thank through these pages everybody who contributed, and to thank David for his calm and effective leadership of the Parish Council over the last several years.

David was my second chair. My first was Richard Roberts-Miller. All of us old, pale, male and semi-retired. But there is some diversity. David is a vicar and I'm an atheist. Richard saw it as a weakness to spend any money. David was much more willing to spend on what he saw as appropriate causes. I'm probably somewhere in the middle. Like David I have an instinctive desire to spend money on what I see as in the interests of the community, but I am equally very conscious that we are spending taxpayers' funds and must spend wisely. The fact is that costs have gone up enormously in the last two or three years, such that we have to spend more just to stand still, and as of now there are no funds for discretionary spending.

The Parish Council spends most of its budget on statutory governance requirements, hedge trimming and property maintenance. It would be nice to have money left over to contribute to village activities and road maintenance, and we have done some of that over the last few years. Right now, however, it looks like we won't have those discretionary funds for a year or two, unless we significantly increase our share of your council tax. That's not my decision, but one which we will be discussing as a full council at our upcoming meetings.

Key ongoing matters include tenancies in Norbury Park. We have succeeded in obtaining a one-year stay of execution for Nick Bullen, who had been served notice to quit. Thanks are due to a number of people, most obviously Kirsten Johnson, Mandy Jillings and County Councillor Marisa Heath. We still have to get the paperwork signed, and hope that it is not simply for one year.

Where we have not yet made any headway is in Surrey County Council's determination to evict all residential tenants in Norbury Park. For reasons that are completely unclear to me, and indeed to everyone outside Surrey County Council, they want to evict all residential tenants and then to sell their properties to the highest bidder. One tenant is perfectly prepared to buy their own property at the market price without being evicted. Others want to stay as tenants in cottages that they have occupied for years. It isn't even a sensible policy from the perspective of Surrey County Council. One cottage in Norbury Park is on the market for £500,000 when the tenant had offered £575,000 last year, before being forced out. What kind of economic logic is that?

Another ongoing saga is motorbike noise and Ryka's café. The village resonates with exhaust noise every weekend and now, every Wednesday. At the time of writing, we have nearly enough signatures for our petition for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and acoustic cameras to go before Mole Valley District Council in full session, and we have support from at least one County Councillor (Hazel Watson). There has been some police action, but the key issues are twofold. One is installation of cameras and enforcement of the new PSPO. The other is for Surrey County Council to exercise some control over their tenant Ryka's. Their car park is, as its name suggests, a place for parking cars and not a place for great big motorbike events. One initiative that is bearing fruit is the Speed Watch, organised by Angela Ireland. It's noticeable that when they are out the bikers avoid Mickleham!

With our funds so limited I would urge everyone to bear in mind that Parish Councillors, and the Trustees of both the Recreation Ground and the Village Hall, are all unpaid volunteers. The What's App group is full of people with ideas but very few doers. It's very easy for somebody to say do this, do that, but we have limited resources. You could try doing things yourselves.

In that context we are lucky to have at least one business in Mickleham which recognises a significant corporate social responsibility. RGS Surrey Hills, as we now know it, provides facilities for our cricket club and our badminton club, at discounted rates. They also trim the hedges in Dell Close, although they have no obligation to do so, and loan equipment to our choral society. It would be nice if other businesses similarly helped the community. For example, it would be lovely were the Running Horses to prune the hedge that they have planted at the corner of Swanworth Lane and Old London Road and thereby restore the sightlines of drivers emerging from Swanworth Lane.

Clearance of bins in the recreation ground is a long-standing issue which resurfaces every summer. There's a Kafkaesque situation whereby the contractors, Amey, periodically fail to remember that their contract extends to the refuse bins as well as the dog poo bins. We are on this case but, for some reason, both Amey and Mole Valley District Council have to be reminded every summer. We are also on the case of the trees in the Rec that are overgrowing the footpath.

Renovation of the swings in the children's recreation ground is going to be a big issue. It's such a great resource, but it costs a lot to run. We are going to move heaven and earth to try to allow this wonderful facility to stay open. There may well be some community fundraising needed here.

I close with a mention of the late David Ottridge, who sadly died recently. David ran the (very complex) finance side of the Parish Council with a light touch for many years, and the amount of work that he put in every month was extraordinary. He will be much missed, and our thoughts are with Mari and Kiah at this difficult time for them. RIP David and thank you.

Will Dennis
Chair