

Parish Magazine – April 2025 Issue

Annual Parish Meeting 8pm 3rd April 2025 at Tanyard Hall, Gomshall – this meeting is a more relaxed and casual event. It allows members of the public to mingle with councillors, hear the report from the previous year and ask questions. Our guest speaker is **The Worshipful The Major of Guildford, Councillor Sallie Barker MBE**. The council would like to answer as many of your questions as possible, so if you have a question, please get in touch by emailing clerk@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk. These questions will be compiled and as many as possible will be answered at the meeting – Please come along, refreshments will be provided.

Tenders – The Council is inviting tenders for the following three-year contracts:

- Grass Cutting and Larger Projects
- Routine Maintenance
- Old Fire Station Toilets Cleaning
- Tanyard Hall Cleaning

Please see our website for the full details or email clerk@shereparishcouncil.gov.uk

The deadline for the tenders is **12 noon 19th May 2025** and must be delivered by hand or post to **Shere Parish Council Tanyard Hall 30 Station Road, Gomshall GU5 9LF** – clearly stating the name of the tender on the outside of the envelope. These will then be opened by the Responsible Financial Officer and a member of the council after the deadline.

Part pedestrianisation - The Square, Shere – the work was carried out by Surrey County Council (SCC) to make a pedestrianised area in The Square, Shere. This is in place for up to two years but a decision as to whether it will be made permanent will be made by SCC after six months. Please give your feedback online using the following link:

<https://www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/the-square-shere-prohibition-of-vehicles/>

The Skudges – Leased from the Diocese, this is the field, play area and land adjacent to Peaslake school and goes all the way down to the Pursers Lane, along the side of the steps. The school wanted to use the area behind the playground for a forest school. Therefore, Shere Parish council has agreed to the following works:

- **To install palisade fencing from the back of the play area to the stock fencing to create a safe useable area**
- **Clear the brambles and low branches**
- **Remove some of the lower branches from the fallen tree and create a path around it for access.**

Holmbury St Mary Parking Area (opposite garage) – this area has been resurfaced and made level with the road making the whole area easier and safer to park on.

Next Full Council meeting – Annual Parish Meeting 8pm Thursday 3rd April 2025 at Tanyard Hall 30 Station Road, Gomshall GU59LF

All meetings are open to the public and there is an opportunity at every council meeting for members of the public to address the councillors.

Dates for the meetings can be found on our website - <https://www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Follow Shere Parish Council on social media: Facebook – Instagram – NextDoor or see our website

See what your Parish Council does - view the minutes and news from every council meeting since January 2012 by going to:

<https://www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk/meetings-and-news/>

An update on the Parish Council's longstanding vision of the Affordable Housing Project on Peaslake Farm farmyard:

It had taken until 15th December 2021 before this much needed and welcomed project was given Planning Approval by Guildford Borough Council.

As at March 2024 actual building work on the project had still not begun. The reasons for this were numerous, including continuing disruption from Covid, inflation and supply problems impacting building supplies, and late identification of soil contamination in need of costly remediation. But a regrettable consequence of these problems was that Greenoak, the Housing Association the Parish Council had chosen to appoint to carry out the project, notified us that they were withdrawing from the contract.

The Council confirmed its continued support for the development, the Planning Approval for which still had 9 months to run before it would automatically lapse if no start had begun on the building phase. It was therefore agreed to contact English Rural, the housing association that was our second choice in the selection process to appoint a 'partner' to explore whether they would be interested in taking over the Borough-approved project.

After consideration English Rural concluded that the project as approved was, in the new circumstances, not economically viable for them – largely because of the uncertain exceptional costs of land remediation measures. They were therefore not interested in taking over the current Planning Approval.

It was clear that if we still wished to see some affordable housing provided on this site, we would need to be more flexible in our demands and expectations. This would be necessary in order to be able to bring costs and financial viability criteria into alignment, whilst still taking into full account building regulations and environmental concerns, including those relating to flood risks both current and future.

The Peaslake Farm Steering Committee met, identified and recommended flexibility on five elements for Council's approval. These were:

1. Acceptance of an increase in the number of units on the site from 8 to potentially 12, subject to planning guidelines on site density: - to spread fixed ground work costs over more properties.
2. To accept latest affordable house building standards rather than adopting 'Passive House' standards – improving cost to benefit ratio
3. Accept mixed tenancy in the development- i.e. some units built for sale or shared purchase rather than only houses for Housing Association tenancy – improves the builder's margins so making the project more viable
4. Consider /evaluate 'curtained' piling to raise clearance height of property foundations and to accommodate safely, contaminated top soil – to provide security from surface water flooding risks, and reduce costs of soil removal.
5. Revise expectation for land value – to help reduce capital costs of project

With flexibility offered on the 5 aspects above, and the help of a Community Housing Facilitator further meetings with English Rural, and between English Rural and a specialist building company – Stonebond - were organised.

Stonebond specialises in partnering with Housing Associations to carry out mixed tenancy site developments at the completion of which the majority of the houses- those which are not for mixed tenancy - are handed over to the Housing Association on pre-agreed terms.

First feedback from discussions between English Rural and Stonebond was that they could see the possibility of a viable project – but further detailed evaluation was necessary – which is still ongoing

If conclusions are positive, we begin the whole design and planning process again, including community consultation and oversight of all advisory and regulatory bodies, to gain Planning Approval

If negative the project is unfortunately likely to be shelved for the foreseeable future

Building and Flooding concerns

Recently in some Peaslake Community Council meetings concerns have been voiced about future flooding in Peaslake being exacerbated by any projected building on the farmyard.

Building a modest number of houses on the yard will have no impact on the volume of water draining into the water courses that carry water through the village centre. Also, the photographic record of the recent flooding in Peaslake showed that if the stream that runs through the fields and farmyard does overflow its banks - in this case because of a blockage in embedded pipes - the water flows across and down a part of the yard and on to the road to rejoin the route to the centre of the village. This 'natural' overflow route could easily be more directly channelled to the ditch beside the road. So, problems in the centre of the village should not be exacerbated.

However, we do take the flooding concerns - and the problems in the village - very seriously, and will work with Surrey County Council and any builder to try to ensure that whatever is done on the farmyard is 'neutral' or 'beneficial' as regards addressing the flooding problems in Peaslake.

Chair R Davey (on behalf of Shere Parish Council)