

Outside body: Strode's Foundation
Councillor: Siân Williams

I was appointed in June 2022

All new Trustees have been encouraged to read about The Worshipful Company of Coopers and about Henry Strode and how his legacy has been managed historically. The answer is “not well” and the history of Strode's College reads like the Barchester Chronicles. However, with the building of the current facility, at the start of the last century, Henry Strode's Legacy has been well managed for the benefit of Egham residents. Education and support for poorer pensioners / households being the key objectives.

Being “tapped” in to Planning Applications in Egham has helped on a number of occasions – notably when I saw an application from Strode's Foundation (SF) tenants to expand the area of land used for phone masts. Something that the Trustees (and landlords) knew nothing about. The building of Straits Garden has had some snagging issues, and I have received complaints from residents about the pot holes and lack of road markings on the junction with the High Street. It has helped to understand the responsibilities – SCC were chasing the Developer to “finish the job off”. Likewise, when the bins were left out creating a mess over Christmas, another Trustee was able to speak to the site manager on my behalf.

The really great thing about SF is the financial support it offers to both Strode's College and Magna Carta school – both Revenue and Capital. Following the Straits Garden development there is a generous capital investment on offer. The principles of the two establishments have presented ideas, and later quotes and the developments are progressing. SF also sponsor some students when they start at University, and the Worshipful Company of Coopers provides apprenticeships. Opportunities not always available in the state school sector.

The Principles of both Strode's College and Magna Carta School give presentations and provide reports at each committee meeting. It has been interesting to understand about the impact of COVID on different cohorts, and is a reminder of how disruptive Lockdowns and quarantining were to children. Mental Health problems were an issue pre COVID, but the demand for therapy and counselling has increased greatly over the past few years. It is sad to see how challenging our modern world has become to many children. It can be difficult for someone who left school in the 1970s to understand why this is, and I value being challenged to consider the stresses and difficulties that this generation are facing. It is all too easy to say “we managed OK in my day”. These children are our future and legacy – it is far more useful to understand the world they are coming of age into.

There have been discussions about Investment Strategies, with decisions to be made. The impact of the Truss/ Kwarteng government on investments was significant, although the increase in interest rates has been beneficial. There are decisions that the Trustees need to make about property and land investments and/or sales. At the heart of this is to remember that we are merely caretakers of Henry Strode's legacy and must ensure that it remains for future generations.