

Pitminster Parish Council Chairman's Report 2007/8

The Parish Council has had a rather quieter year this year than last as the new Council has settled down to its tasks and routines. Five Councillors were re-elected unopposed last May to serve for a further term of 4 years and we were joined by newly elected Jayne Hares. Former Councillor Richard Symes was co-opted back on to the Council where he has kindly served a further year. After an open invitation Councillors held a secret ballot between 3 candidates and as a result co-opted Blagdon Hill resident John Murray to complete the complement of 8 Councillors. It was a major disappointment for me personally as I mentioned last year and for some others of us that as less than 80% of our Councillors stood for election our parish cannot now achieve Quality Parish status as we had hoped. The Council believe that we have fulfilled all of the other criteria but the Council must now wait for the next election in three years time before satisfying this final requirement.

Of major note this past year was the disappointing result of the big lottery bid made by Duncan Mickle and his committee for funds to build a new parish hall at Sellicks Green. Undaunted by lack of success this time, the committee have nobly agreed to carry on the fight for funding and to make another lottery fund bid in due course whilst in the meantime seeking other sources of funding. As last year, the grateful thanks of the Council and indeed the whole parish are due to Duncan and his committee, including Cllr Basil Trump, for all the time, effort and care they put into compiling the bid.

As a Council we have continued our work on a number of projects. I set out some of them below:

1. HGV's through our parish villages and the closure of Corfe Hill. We have continued to correspond with Somerset County Council over the unsuitability of the re-routing of HGV's through our parish without any success. We are now asking (once again) for traffic calming measures in the village of Blagdon Hill. The Council is considering what other actions could be taken to highlight this issue.
2. Speeding traffic. A lack of willing volunteers to operate the speed gun and record results is disappointing particularly as traffic reportedly still speeds through Blagdon Hill. We really do need a lot more volunteers if the speed gun is to be used properly.
3. Village Signs. These have been erect and enjoyed by parishioners for some months now. They have been generally well received – particularly the ones for Pitminster.
4. Litterpick. Two further litterpicks have been held in October and March. Enthusiastic volunteers have cleaned up the roads through the parish but more volunteer helpers are always welcome to divide up the task. I would like to see a full turn out from our Councillors to support this if possible.
5. Newsletters. 4 more newsletters have been prepared and distributed during the year, 3 under the excellent editorship of Cllr Val Bacon and 1

- guest edited by Cllr John Murray. These are an essential mouth piece for the Council informing the parish of what is happening.
6. Planning matters. We have dealt with 23 delegated and 38 observation only applications both at our regular planning meetings (some of which are held separately from Council meetings) and at our site visits. We have again continued to report on breaches of planning laws where they have come to our attention and to request enforcement action where appropriate.
 7. Village Green in Blagdon Hill. A group formed as a result of views expressed in the Parish Plan has worked hard together and has arranged the purchase (with public donations from willing locals) of the old common land or village green area just below the Lamb and Flag. It is held under the playing field association trust which will protect it from development etc. There are plans to make it more accessible for public use.

Once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cllrs for their support and work over the past year. Thanks are due to Cllr Norman Rees for his continued stewardship of our footpath network and also to Cllr Richard Symes for running the speedwatch and for leaving a lasting legacy of his 5 years on the Council in the form of our lovely new village signs in Blagdon Hill and Pitminster. Cllr Roger Neale has been a helpful and supportive Vice Chair with many years service and much wisdom and local knowledge.

I have indicated an intention to stand down from the Chair this year after a 5 year tenure in order to let others take over running the Council. I hope one of our Councillors will step forward to take on the task, which I have much enjoyed. It has been a privilege and pleasure to work with you all.

Finally, as always, I would like to thank Richard our Parish Clerk for all his care and attention and for the great and unfailing support he provides to the Council and to the Chair in particular. Sarah Wakefield 22.05.07