

## Chairman's Report 2010

This, my first annual report as Chair, is a combined report and Newsletter. Of necessity, it will be quite long but I hope you find it informative and, hopefully, interesting.

As I was only co-opted to the Parish Council in March 2009 being elected Chair in May came as a bit of a surprise and I have to record my thanks to my fellow councillors and Richard Tyzack, our Clerk, for their support and advice throughout the year.

It is my intention to achieve Quality Council status for your Parish Council and build on the good work of my predecessor. The point of a Quality Council is to demonstrate that not only are we doing a good job but that we are fully involved with the community and providing a meaningful resource as well as addressing the issues that affect a rural area such as Pitminster and the surrounding hamlets. To qualify for Quality Council status we have to, amongst other things, have an election for at least 60% of Council. Our next election is in May 2011 and over the next year I hope to have encouraged some of you to feel that it would be worth coming forward to stand for election.

I am changing the working of the council by asking individual councillors to hold "portfolios". These contain the areas we have identified as relevant to our business and by asking each councillor to take responsibility for their portfolio I hope it will make it, not only easier for you to contact the relevant person, but also make council work more interesting for councillors. A list of councillors, their contact details and their portfolios is attached.

Whilst many of you have e-mail addresses I know that there are many who do not and so our Newsletters will continue. If there are more of you who would like to receive information electronically than do at present please let Richard Tyzack know your details. The Neighbourhood Watch bulletin goes out by hand to 240 of the 400 or so households in our area and around 70 receive the Bulletin electronically. I would like to build on this and thereby put our council at the heart of the community communication network.

As you know the Parish Council is the lowest rung of democracy in the UK. I like to feel that we are locally accountable and capable of reflecting the views of our electorate in honest and objective ways.

The following points summarise our involvement last year.

### PLANNING.

We determined 36 planning applications under the delegated planning agreement that we have with Taunton Deane. and approved all but 3. This agreement is the only one in the country and we are only one of three councils in Somerset that has, or wants, this responsibility. Council feels that we are best placed to represent local people when it comes to planning and we hope to continue. However, TDBC have imposed a £80 fee on us for the attendance of an officer at each planning meeting. If the current arrangement is to continue we will have to consider the need to raise the Precept next year to reflect this additional cost. We hope that you will accept this as a small price for ensuring these decisions can be taken locally.

Copies of Planning applications can be inspected at Blagdon Hill Post Office.

### FUTURE OF BLAGDON HILL SCHOOL BUILDING

Please see the attached statement from Paul Birbeck outlining the decision taken and the reasoning behind it.

Whilst we were not party to this decision we have had good discussions since and are very hopeful that there will be real cooperation leading to the School becoming a useful community facility. It is evident that both SCC Taunton Deane wish to foster this partnership working with the community. There will be an Open afternoon at the school on June 23 - see below.

### WEBSITE

Richard has been working hard on this and we have it up and running. You can access it on [www.communigate.co.uk/twc/pitminster](http://www.communigate.co.uk/twc/pitminster)

Whilst he is doing a very good job Richard could do with some expert advice and if there is anyone who would like to help he would be pleased to hear from you.

## HIGHWAYS/SPEEDING

This area of our business continues to exercise us, and you. Sadly it is as much a reflection of the age in which we live as anything else but your Council strives to make progress on your behalf, even if it feels we are banging our heads against a brick wall. Despite numerous attempts by Council and individuals to bring pressure on Highways for something substantial to be done in Blagdon Hill especially all our efforts seem to fail due to lack of money. The accident waiting to happen hopefully never will but Speedwatch and hand held cameras are no substitute for a physical barrier such as a "gate"; this is deemed too expensive and too difficult to administer. Excess speed is endemic on all our roads, as horse riders and walkers can readily testify. We will continue to press the case for something to be done.

The other issue this winter was ice and snow and the lack of gritting and snow clearance. Council will be addressing these issues with Highways before the autumn. Pothole notification should be made to the relevant authority or to us.

## NORMAN REES

As you know Norman has stepped down from his 16 year stint as footpath officer and to mark his tireless efforts we are going to name a footpath in his honour. It is the one that runs from Curdleigh Lane to Feltham. We hope to arrange a ceremony on a "warm" summer evening.

We are grateful to Mark Barnes for agreeing to act as his replacement. Anyone noticing any problems should contact him or Basil Trump. Landowners on whose land a footpath crosses are responsible for keeping the paths clear and accessible at all times. Council has a small budget for repairs and SCC has another small budget to help with stiles and bridges.

## LITTER

Since we have stopped the twice yearly litter picks I am grateful to all residents who keep our paths and lanes free of litter. The main problem always seems to be on the through roads and is another sign of our disrespectful times.

## NOTICEBOARDS

Once the purchase of the three red telephone boxes has gone through ( for £1 each) we will be using these for Noticeboards. Three local residents have kindly agreed to be responsible for one each. We will retain the main one in Blagdon Hill and the one in Duddlestone.

## PARISH PLAN

Next year it will be 5 years since the Plan was published and there is need to review it. Council has it on the agenda each month and will link up with interested parties in the next few months to start this review.

## RICHARD TYZACK

In recognition of Richard's invaluable work as Clerk to the Council we nominated him for a Somerset Chairman's Award for Service to the Community and I am pleased to report that he duly received this recognition at a ceremony honouring similar achievers in February.

## COUNCIL MEETINGS

Our list of meetings for the year is attached and members of the public are always welcome with time for questions and comment. The meetings do not go on too long and we aim to finish by 9:30. We usually then adjourn to a pub!

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Blagdon Hill Fete & Dog Show: June 12th at 2pm  
Angersleigh Church Fair: July 31st at 2:30pm  
School Open Day: June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2 - 4 pm