

Parish Council annual report.

During the course of the year we said farewell to Councillors Basil Trump and Susan Johnstone. Cllr Trump had been a councillor for many years and was instrumental in keeping our foot paths open and accessible. He was also very active as our representative on the Playing Field Committee and was a familiar figure as he walked 'Woody' around the village. Cllr Johnstone tragically died of cancer. She had only been a councillor for a few short years but had already made her mark with her energetic representation of the Council on the Blackdown Hills AONB committee. We shall miss them both. I am pleased to welcome Margaret Lee and Richard Morgan who have been co-opted. I am indebted to my fellow councillors for their hard work during the course of the year and ensuring that our Council fully represents the interests of the local population.

Equally, all councillors appreciate the hard work and professionalism shown by our clerk Richard TYzack who keeps us in order and ensures that the Council runs efficiently and in a timely manner. Council continues to have a contract with Taunton Deane Borough Council for delegated planning and over the course of the past year we have made 11 decisions and 21 observations on planning applications.

At the time of writing this report I have no further information to bring you on the results of the Parish Plan questionnaire that was distributed to every household in the autumn. It has taken longer than anticipated to analyse the returns but I can assure everybody that this information will be made available for discussion as soon as possible.

I believe it is important that Pitminster has its own website. One parishioner has attempted to drive this forward on his own but has not had the necessary popular support needed to make it a success. The Parish Council will be attempting to rectify this over the next year. I see this as an important part of engaging the whole Parish as well as the more outlying hamlets of our community who do not feel, due to the peculiar geography of the Parish, that they belong to Pitminster.

What were very successful in the summer of 2012 were the celebrations last June in honour of Our Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. These demonstrated what a community working together to make something successful can be achieved when they really want it to happen. There was the popular summer ball organised by the Playing Fields Association; an equally well attended village tea party, initiated by the Parish Council, but organised and made successful by a small group of ladies in the village; a Jubilee beacon at Leigh Hill farm on a cold un-summerlike evening and the vibrant Street Party in Pitminster village.

Another success, again initiated by the Parish Council, was the reopening of the Post Office at the Lamb and Flag following the closure of the village shop. Hopefully, local people will embrace this new venture and ensure that it becomes a success.

The twice yearly parish litter picks are also successful and demonstrate what local people are prepared to do to help ensure their community remains neat and tidy. I know that many people litter pick as they walk around the village and along foot paths on a regular basis but the 20 or so people who turned up still collected an enormous amount of rubbish.

The awful weather of 2012 has played havoc with our roads and lanes. Whilst the Highways department has been very supportive when we have reported potholes etc I believe that the local population and in particular landowners who own hedges and ditches should be prepared to maintain them more effectively and so to try and alleviate some of the flooding problems that we have seen. One parishioner in the Pitminster area has demonstrated beyond doubt that maintaining ditches is the single most important thing in preventing flooding. Highways have a legal responsibility for the state of our roads but homeowners also must bear some of this responsibility. I am pleased to see that reported crime in our district is significantly down from the past two years. The challenges for 2013 will be the implementation of the Parish Plan; a website; consideration of a Neighbourhood Plan and doing all we can to maintain the character of our beautiful Parish and its surroundings.

Cllr David Edmondson, Chair, Pitminster Parish Council. May 2013.

