

## Chairman's Report 2015/16

I was a little surprised to be elected to the Chair a year ago. But pleased. Thank you for re-electing me this year. Give me another year or so and I will begin to get the hang of it.

One of the Parish Council's main function is Planning, and over the year we have dealt with I think 32 Applications, 23 for Observation and 9 for Decision under the Delegated Planning Agreement that we have with Taunton Deane Borough Council. The 2 decisions made earlier this evening were made under that Agreement. At our last meeting we resolved to renew that Agreement, under which the Parish Council, rather than TDBC, actually makes the decision as to whether or not to grant Planning Permission, in the case of those Applications which TDBC choose to delegate to us.

The Council has also been active in reporting possible breaches of Planning Control to TDBC, either as the result of information received from Parishioners or on the Council's own initiative. The effectiveness of TDBC in response has not been overwhelming.

The Council has responded to a number of requests from Parishioners relating to road markings and street signs, the work being carried out by TDBC, and have also made reports to County Highways about speeding and HGV usage of our roads.

The cleaning of the War Memorial on the hill, and the repainting of the old Telephone boxes have I think in small ways both contributed to the appearance of the Parish.

This year the Council nominated Mrs Sheila Coe for the Chairman of the County Council's Award for Service to the Community. The Council will always be pleased to hear from Parishioners about people who go that extra mile and deserve recognition.

I would not wish to pick out individual Councillors for special mention, because every single Councillor pulls their weight, but I have to mention Councillor Liz Christie who very willingly volunteered to take the lead on 2 important issues. The first is the Parish Website, control of which we have managed to wrest from the person who set it up. The website is still a work in progress, but progress is being made with it, and I hope that the Playing Field Association and the Youth Club will soon have their own pages on it up and running. If other organisations wish to have a page on the website, Liz can organise that for you.

The other project which Liz has been leading on is the procurement of a defibrillator, which the Playing Field Association have kindly agreed can be sited at the pavilion at the Sellicks Green playing field. Liz worked hard to put together an application for a grant, which was successful, and we will be hearing later this evening as to where we have got to as to the actual purchase and installation of the equipment.

Actually there is a third matter on which Liz has taken the lead and that is the Parish Emergency Plan, which was updated this year with the help of Community Council for Somerset Village Agent Trudi Morgan. Liz has taken over responsibility for the Emergency

Plan from John Cannon. A couple of other Parish Councils have asked if they could use our plan as the model for their own Emergency Plans.

Trudi Morgan has now retired as our Village Agent. She will I hope be replaced in due course. As Village Agent that is, not as my wife. We are grateful to her for the help she has given to the Council, and the Chair.

Having mentioned Liz Christie, I do need to mention the other Councillors.

Roger Neale has been a stalwart Vice Chairman. He has also been chairing the Almshouse Charity but is now retiring from that. Roger can be relied on to provide sound common sense in every situation.

As can Margaret Lee, another farmer. Margaret is also our link with all things Blackdown Hills, the AONB, the Blackdown Hills Parish Network etc.

Adrian Whatmore, another man of sound judgement, also carries the responsibility of being Footpaths Officer, not always a straightforward task.

David Edmondson, a former Chair, is our representative on the Playing Field Association, but takes a keen interest in all aspects of Parish Council business.

And then there is our Clerk, Richard Tyzack, who keeps us on the straight and narrow, tells us what we can and can't do, ensures that the paperwork for our meetings is in order, prepares the budget, deals with the audit and does a hundred other things that enables the Parish Council to function. We are dependant on and hugely grateful to him.

I have to record the resignation of 2 Parish Councillors. Sarah Wakefield has given enormous service to the Council over 12 or so years, many of them as Chair. Her good sense and ability will be sorely missed, but not entirely, as you will hear in a moment.

Keith Sanders has also resigned from the Council, after a number of years, feeling that his duties as a Councillor might come into conflict with his profession of Planning Agent. Keith will also be missed, particularly with regard to his knowledge of Planning Law and Practice.

We are very fortunate in being able to replace Sarah and Keith with two people who have expressed interest in Joining the Council, and whom we intend to formally co-opt when we resume the Council Meeting shortly. Welcome Rob Beckley and Eric Newcombe.

A word about the future. You may have heard about Neighbourhood Plans. These are plans that a neighbourhood like a Parish can formulate and which when accepted and ratified by local referendum become legal documents to which the Planning Authority must have regard when considering Planning Applications. You may have read about the Trull Neighbourhood Plan, which that Village are trying to deploy against the Consortium of Developers who are trying to change the face of Comeytrull, as the major development in that area has become known. You may also be aware of the not entirely welcome development that has taken place in our neighbouring village to the south, Churchinford. Well, Sarah Wakefield is concerned

that Pitminster is not saddled with the same sort of unwanted development, and I am hoping that she may be willing to head up a working group to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for our Parish. This will not be a Parish Council Committee, although the Parish Council will obviously be represented on the working group.

The development of a Neighbourhood Plan will involve a great deal of time and hard work, and so I hope that we will be able to attract the right people to invest the time and commitment to developing a Neighbourhood Plan which may give us a degree of influence if not control over future development in our Parish.

That is my report. If anyone would like to put any questions to me or to my fellow Parish Councillors, now is your opportunity.