

Bishopsteignton Annual Parish Meeting - 22 April 2021

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

This is my third Chairman's Report, having been honoured to be re-elected as Chairman of the Parish Council at the Parish Council Meeting in May 2020.

My main aims have been to ensure that we serve all areas of the village, provide the best services possible, within the many constraints we face, endeavour to progress several of the long-held aspirations of the Community and Parish Council and to continually improve our communication processes, all within the very limited resources available.

Key Issues during the year.

This year, as everyone appreciates, has been dominated by the implications of COVID. In addition to the precautions and sacrifices required by everyone, all meetings of the Parish Council, formal and otherwise, since April 2020, have been required to be undertaken virtually.

The process of conducting meetings via Zoom, although many would feel, not as enjoyable as meeting 'face to face', have been a great success, attracting many members of the public. I must give thanks to our Clerk, Kim Ford, for undertaking the considerable organisation involved, and to all Councillors for adapting well to the new requirements. This also applies to our County and District Councillors and members of the public participating in our meetings.

The COVID Emergency has often required the Clerk and Members to act a short notice to ensure that the PC was complying with the latest regulations, e.g. toilets MUGA, Lawns etc.

The contribution of BERT led by Chair Elaine Cawthraw, linking with over 70 volunteers, Bishopsteignton Care Watch led by Jacqueline Pester and succeeded by Liz Durham and the Healthy Living Group led by Eddy Stephenson, has been tremendous and so very much appreciated by the community.

Climate and Ecological Change has been ever present in our decision making, and in seeking opportunities to embrace this critical requirement. We have been very appreciative of the opportunity to continue to work with Kate Yeo and her colleagues in Sustainable Bishop.

Similarly, a new development, has been the opportunity to work with Action on Climate Change in Teignbridge (ACT), for which I am very appreciative.

I must thank Cllr. Kate Benham for her tremendous drive, enthusiasm and determination in her input on Climate Change to the Parish Council. This has

resulted in the development of the BPC Climate and Ecological Action Plan. I know that Jon Watson, as the new Chair of the Joint Steering Group and PC Working Party will ensure that this work will continue and flourish.

The issues considered by the Parish Council have been many and varied, in a very demanding, but rewarding and satisfying year.

A summary is shown below:

The role of the Asset Management Committee has been significant, led initially by John Parkes and since July by Cllr. Robert Gateshill, both have been the drivers for many enhancement initiatives of our 'Green Spaces.'

This includes tree planting at the Village Green and the Lawns, landscaping and many works at the Cemetery including Garden of Rest, restoration of the gates and relaying the footpath to start soon. Kate Yeo, and John Parkes have been magnificent "hands on" workers making a significant contribution. We also very much appreciate the general maintenance duties undertaken by Paul Walton.

A competitive tendering process leading to the award of contracts for three years from 1 April 2021, for Green Spaces, General Maintenance & Cleaning, has been undertaken.

Commencement of the redevelopment of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)

New Notice Boards in Fore Street by Methodist Church and Village Green

Review and provision Benches, particularly at the Lawns

Planned replacement of Bus Shelters in Summer 2021

Other Issues

Crew Coffee vendor, John, part-time at the Lawns has brought a great opportunity for meeting up at the Lawns.

A Strategic Planning Process for BPC Priorities, Routine ongoing responsibilities and Project Management introduced

Numerous Planning matters considered as a consultee, increasingly requiring detailed consideration, necessitating a good understanding of Planning Regulations, but the BPC has been very disappointed at the lack of impact on some of the planning decisions by TDC

Teignbridge Local Plan Review - Considerable input by BPC

The completion of repairs to the Methodist Church Drive and the War Memorial Railings following two vehicle accidents, required much input from BPC

BPC Surgeries for community participation, will commence once again when COVID restrictions allow.

Highway Issues - Always a significant matter - Regular communication with Devon County Council, Highways, to report issues - road defects, speeding etc. and quarterly meetings with Highway officers, including County and District Councillors

Children Play Parks - Lawns and Cockhaven Close - Equipment inspected regularly and replacements made, as necessary. A replacement programme of equipment currently being considered.

Funding Bids to various bodies for village projects

Teign Estuary Trail - I must thank Roger North of DCC and Estelle Skinner of TDC for their significant contribution to the joint meetings of BPC Members and members of the TET Campaign Group. The project has reached a significant stage with the completion of the consultation process and subsequent report issued in March and the forthcoming Planning Application.

Teign Estuary Forum - Annual Meeting

Parish Council 2020/21 Budget and precept to Teignbridge District Council, again considerable work required and on all financial processes including documentation for audit, new accounting systems etc.

Parish Council Policies and Procedures - Ongoing update and new where required, including GDPR and new email addresses.

None of the above could be achieved without the dedication, commitment, help and support of the Vice-Chairman, all members of the Parish Council and the Clerk to the Council. I therefore wish to acknowledge and convey my appreciation and thanks.

How the Parish Council Operates

The Parish Council Membership at April 2020 was 10 out of 11 seats filled. During the year Robert Gateshill, Jo Head, Nicholas Shaw & Martin Tucker were Co-Opted following resignations of John Parkes, Trevor Davey & Suzanne Nicholson.

In addition to the monthly full Parish Council and Planning Committee meetings, members serve on other committees: Asset Management and Finance & Personnel. In addition, there are various Working Groups and other groups where representation is required: Teign Estuary Trail, Teign Estuary Partnership, DCC Highways, Teignbridge Association of Local Councils and other groups required for specific projects.

The responsibilities and work of Parish Council and its members continues to considerably increase and is a significant challenge, however, this increasingly provides a major opportunity to engage with parishioners and influence the services we provide. It is therefore, important to appreciate commitment and time freely devoted to the community, on what is a voluntary basis, by Parish Councillors.

We also have an excellent working relationship with our District Councillor - Andrew McGregor, County Councillor - Ron Peart and many other elected members and council officers we communicate with. The support and assistance we receive cannot be underestimated and is very much appreciated.

I now wish to make a special mention of Trevor Davey who had served for 27 years, and being Chairman on four occasions, who resigned due to significant business pressures, and to Trevor, Suzanne Nicolson and currently Robert Gateshill serving as Vice-Chairmen to myself. Cllr. Keith Lambert is now our longest serving Councillor approaching 10 years.

Most services are provided by various contractors, who again we are greatly appreciative of, often dealing with urgent work at very short notice. Volunteers from the village and surrounding areas also play a vital role to our community, which is always very much appreciated. We are also fortunate that members of the Parish Council regularly volunteer and assist with various activities throughout the village.

We are again very appreciative of Trevor Davey continuing to cut grass and hedges around the Forder Lane area.

I wish now to mention and commend the contribution of Peter Hepworth (Tree Warden) and youth organisations such as Scouts, who also undertake the annual Public Rights of Way survey. I must also pay tribute to the commitment of the many volunteers providing a great service to the village through all the excellent organisations and groups.

For the Parish Council to function effectively the Clerk to the Council plays a significant and pivotal role, carrying out many administrative duties: as the Proper Officer & Responsible Finance Officer, and also providing guidance on the operation of the Council's democratic processes.

Increasingly significant matters can occur requiring input from the Parish Council, including sadly the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh where procedures were required for the PC to act, including the book of condolence. The parish is increasingly indebted to the work of the Clerk, therefore I wish to thank the Clerk to the Council on behalf of all members.

I would also like to thank the Community Centre Management Committee for providing suitable office space and as a location for our meetings.

Conclusion

I hope you will find this report interesting and helpful in providing information on the range of matters dealt with, and how the Parish Council operates to provide the best possible service to parishioners, within the democratic framework applicable to Local Councils.

Cllr. Henry Merritt
Chairman Bishopsteignton Parish Council

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