

Annual Parish Meeting

7pm Monday 20 March 2023

Parish Council Chairs Report



Introduction

I am pleased to present my latest report as Chair of the Parish Council having been honoured to be re-elected at the Parish Council Meeting in May 2022.

As this is the final year of the current Parish Council, before elections on Thursday 4 May 2023 to elect a new Parish Council, I considered it appropriate to give a brief review of the achievements since May 2019, when the current Council took office.

My main aims are to ensure that we serve all areas of the Parish, provide the best services possible, endeavour to progress Community Projects, and to continually improve our communication processes, all within the very limited resources available.

Key Achievements during 2022/23

- Queens Jubilee - Publication of Village Events Programme - Coordinated by Cllr. Jo Head to whom I convey my appreciation.
- Cockhaven Road Junction - improvement of the grass area with landscaping, greater safety features for pedestrians and developing a welcoming area to our village. Planting will be undertaken in the Autumn.
- Purchase of a Thermal Imaging Camera for the Community
- Remembrance Events - Greater Community Participation
- Parish Information Boards - A joint venture with Bishopsteignton Heritage
- Play Parks - Two additional attractions - one for each Play Park are in the process of being finalised, planned to be in place during the Summer.
- Teignbridge District Council - Local Plan 2020 - 2040, major input to the Final Local Plan issued for consultation - 23 January - 13 March. This follows previous significant input over the last three years since the publication of the initial draft. I wish to thank many organisations and parishioners who have contributed to be Parish Council response.
- Lawns - Scout Building - ongoing communication with Scouts in their preparation for submission of planning application to TDC.
- Footpath adjacent to school - planning for sections to be resurfaced in the Spring.

Key Achievements over the Three Years - May 2019 - March 2022

Looking back one of the major achievements was the Parish Council operating very successfully with all meetings on Zoom during COVID restrictions from April 2020 to May 2021!

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, Cllr. Kate Benham with input from 'Action on Climate Teignbridge' ACT, and Elaine Cawthraw Chair of the Residents Association and also Bishopsteignton Scouts.

I must also thank Cllr. Jon Watson for his enthusiasm and determination as the Lead Member of Climate & Ecological Change, in advising on BPC Climate and Ecological opportunities, and identifying suitable projects, resulting in Parish Council resolutions. The most recent development being the Solar-Powered Vehicle Activated Signs to help achieve reduced vehicle speeds through the Parish on the A381. There is a continuing objective to develop greater communication with residents in a two-way dialogue, where the opportunities are available.

The role of the Asset Management Committee, being the driver for many enhancement initiatives of our 'Green Spaces' has once again been significant, enthusiastically led by Cllr. Robert Gateshill. This includes tree planting at the Village Green and the Lawns, landscaping and many works at the Cemetery including the Garden of Rest, restoration of the gates and relaying the footpath. Kate Yeo, John Parkes and Hilary Davies have been magnificent "hands on" workers making a significant contribution. We also very much appreciate the general maintenance duties undertaken by Paul Walton across the Parish.

- Review and provision Benches, including for people in wheel chairs, particularly at the Lawns.
- Replacement of Bus Shelters with better visibility shelters and eco features.
- MUGA - replacement of floodlights and provision of new Basket Ball Hoops.
- Cockhaven Play Park - Significantly improved drainage, in advance of new equipment being installed and also at Lawns.
- The contribution of BERT, operating in line with the Emergency Resilience Plan is a significant contribution to the community, with the input by Healthy Living Group and,
- A number of additional defibrillators have been installed thanks to Cllr. Gill, Eddy Stephenson & Russell Edwards. Further locations are being considered.
- Bishopsteignton Healthy Living Group & Care Watch. I wish to thank Eddy Stevenson for his leadership of the Healthy Living Group for the last ten years and similarly Liz Durham who has led Care Watch for a number of years. We wish Alan Williams, new Chair of HLG and the Co-ordinators in Care Watch every success.
- Projects at The Lawns: Outdoor table tennis table, Swap Shed with library, food, clearing and pet supplies.
- Food Box in Fore Street and Book Swap at The Village Green.
- Other projects come to mind: Bishops Avenue Car Park, Air Ambulance Night Landing - Michaels Field, New Boundary Stone & Bench - Ideford Common.

Clearly the above and issues below considered by the Parish Council have been many and varied, in a very demanding, but rewarding and satisfying period. A summary is shown below:

Ongoing Tasks vital to the Parish

Numerous Planning matters considered as a consultee, necessitating a good understanding of Planning Regulations, although the BPC has been disappointed at the lack of impact, on some of the planning decisions by TDC. Communication is being undertaken with TDC by a Joint Town and Parish Councils Working Group, with BPC being represented by Cllr. Nicolas Shaw, which again is very much appreciated.

- A Strategic Planning Process for BPC Priorities, Routine ongoing responsibilities and Project Management.
- Police & Community Together Monthly Surgeries (PACT) for community participation. Thanks to Clarke Orchard and Saul Bunce, also to Cllr. Reg Gill for organising the events.
- Highway Issues - Always a significant matter - Regular communication with Devon County Council, Highways, to report issues - road defects with quarterly meetings with Highway officers, including County and District Councillors.
- Children Play Parks - Lawns and Cockhaven Close - Equipment inspected regularly and repairs undertaken as necessary.
- Funding Bids to various bodies and organisations for village projects.
- Greater Publicity of the Parish Council fund for Community Projects.
- Teign Estuary Forum - Annual Meeting.
- Parish Council 2023/24 Budget and precept to Teignbridge District Council, again considerable work required and on all financial processes including significant documentation for audit, new accounting systems etc.
- Teign Estuary Trail - I must thank Roger North and now Hannah Clark of DCC, Estelle Skinner of TDC and Judith Sharples of the Campaign Group for their contribution to the joint meetings of

BPC Members and members of the TET Campaign Group. The project reached a significant stage in December 2021, with the Planning Application being agreed by Devon County Council. The major challenge is achieving the required funding and land acquisition.

- Parish Council Policies and Procedures - During this period numerous changes and developments have been undertaken to operating procedures, including GDPR requirements, significant use of social media, new financial systems, Tablets for all Councillor communication, meeting agendas, reports, minutes etc. - resulting in a significant reduction of paper, and more efficient and effective working.

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 significantly the Clerk to the Council. I therefore wish to acknowledge, and convey my considerable appreciation and thanks, on your behalf.

How the Parish Council Operates

In addition to the monthly full Parish Council and Planning Committee meetings, members serve on other committees: Asset Management, and Finance. In addition, there are various Working Groups and other groups where representation is required: Teign Estuary Trail, Teign Estuary Partnership, DCC Highways Liaison, and other groups required for specific projects e.g. Climate and Ecological Change with various Community representatives.

The responsibilities and work of Parish Council and its members continues to 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. Their support and assistance we receive cannot be underestimated and is very much appreciated.

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 have often undertaken Public Rights of Way surveys and various Litter Picks. 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 and financial 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, 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 Councillors and on behalf of the community.

I would also like to acknowledge the opportunity to work with Bishopsteignton Heritage as opportunities arise and therefore to convey thanks to John Parkes current Chair, Ken Irvine previous Chair and current and past members.

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

A final plea, a rewarding opportunity! It is Election Time - Thursday 4 May, Need new Councillors - application deadline 4pm on Tuesday 4 April. Please spread the word!

Conclusion

I wish to thank two other people who have made a significant contribution to the community in recent years: Rev. Jane Frost and John Patton Chair of The Village Festival. Good wishes to their successors: replacement for Jane to be advised, and to Jim Lockhart - new Clair Village Festival. I trust 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

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March 2023