



BISHOPSTEIGNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting - 30 March 2026

ANNUAL REPORT OF CHAIR

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 2025

My main aims continue 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 limited resources available.

Key Achievements during 2025/26

Completing a review of our Strategic Plan. This agreed and published document conveys the Council Objectives in a meaningful way. Ongoing monitoring with progress to be reviewed every year.

Formation of the Climate Impact Action Committee, consisting of Councillors and parishioners. This is a development of the Climate and Ecological actions which are ever present in our decision making, and in seeking opportunities to communicate and work with parishioners. The participation of parishioners is very much appreciated, especially input from the Parish Wildlife Wardens.

A major outcome has been the declaration for the Parish to become 'Pesticide Free', for BPC work undertaken.

The refurbishment of the former telephone kiosk on Fore Street, for future community use as a Wildlife Hub for sharing seeds, plants and general information about biodiversity and gardening to benefit wildlife. This is a good example of environmental improvements we can make together with the community.

Granting £2,350 in small grants to various organisations across the community.

VJ Day 80th Anniversary Commemorations on 15 August 2025.

Supported the formation of the Bishopsteignton British Legion Branch, with significant input from the Parish Council Clerk and Councillors.

We've used funding to replace the old wooden gates at both playgrounds. The new brighter aluminum versions will require less maintenance and are in accordance with accepted best practice.

Giving Thanks

I now wish to mention and commend the contribution of several parishioners who regularly give time to undertake tasks for the Parish Council, hence the community:

Peter Hepworth (Tree Warden) for his constant support and advise on tree related planning applications.

We are so fortunate to have the Bishopsteignton Healthy Living Group in the village, which includes Care Watch, Memory Cafe and Singing for memory, led by Alun Williams and Eddy Stephenson, as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. So, once again, I wish to thank everyone involved for their significant contribution.

First Bishopsteignton Scouts, who undertake various tasks, including the public rights of way surveys and various litter picks.

Defibrillator training provided by Cllr. Lewis Myers and the team who check monthly that the defibrillators are functioning correctly.

The many who plant and maintain the flower troughs by the toilets, bus stop and car park on Fore Street. Planting work at the parish cemetery by Kate Yeo with help from Hilary Davies & Carol Stapleton, and at Cockhaven junction which is Kirstyn Watson.

I must also pay tribute to the commitment of the many other volunteers providing a great service to the village, through all the excellent Organisations and Groups.

The contribution of BERT, operating in line with the Emergency Resilience Plan for its regularly reviewed, is a significant contribution to the community.

I must thank Estelle Skinner of TDC, Laura Allington and other officers of DCC and Judith Sharples of the Campaign Group for their contribution to the Teign Estuary Trail Stakeholder meetings.

We appreciate the relationship with our District Councillor - Andrew McGregor, our new County Councillor - Tony Dempster - and many other elected members and council officers of both DCC and TDC we communicate with. Their support and assistance is very much appreciated.

The responsibilities and work of the Parish Council continues to be ever-changing, providing members with major opportunities to engage with parishioners and influence the services we provide. It is therefore important to appreciate the commitment and time freely devoted to the community, on what is an unpaid basis, by Parish Councillors.

For the Parish Council to function effectively the Clerk of the Council plays a significant and pivotal role, carrying out many administrative and financial duties: as 'Proper Officer & Responsible Finance Officer', and providing guidance on the operation of the Council's democratic processes. The parish is indebted to the work of the Clerk, therefore I wish to thank Kim Ford on behalf of all Councillors and on behalf of the community.

Looking to the future...

The Parish Council shall continue to work in accordance with its strategic plan and its Mission Statement:

Our mission is to improve the lives of Bishopsteignton residents through ethically delivered initiatives and services aligned to the needs of the parish.

The following issues shall be prioritised:

- **Retention of the Bus Service:**

A major issue being pursued by the Parish Council is that of illegal and inconsiderate parking. Consultation has been conducted with DCC Highways and Police to work together for the best possible solutions. It is essential that this practice ceases, as the current situation is putting the existence of the Village Bus at peril and creating a danger the public in general.

- **Local Government Re-organisation:**

Whilst out of our hands this is a matter which could potentially have an impact on the responsibilities of Town and Parish Councils. The Government Review of the Structure of Local Authorities, to one of Unitary Authorities, replacing the current structure of a County Council and District Councils. Proposals from each County affected by the proposed changes were submitted to Government in November 2025. A consultation is ongoing, with a decision anticipated in the Summer 2026, resulting in traditional arrangements for new Unitary Councils from April 2027 with full implementation from April 2028.

- **Multi Use Games Area at The Lawns**

Despite some regular use this facility has become forgotten and looks a little unloved. It is in need of refurbishment, especially resurfacing. A process is currently being undertaken to determine the way forward for resurfacing and associated Line Marking, in addition to ongoing maintenance. Every effort will be made to improve this venue for its current regular users and hopefully it will appeal to a wider audience, encouraging greater community use towards improving health and wellbeing.

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
Chair,
Bishopsteignton Parish Council

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Appendix - How the Parish Council Operates 2026

In addition to the full Parish Council meetings, which are held bi-monthly, members serve on other Committees: Asset Management, Climate Impact Action, Finance, Planning and Strategy & Governance, Emergency Resilience (known as BERT). In addition, there are various Working Groups, and other groups where representation is required: Teign Estuary Trail, DCC Highways Liaison, and other groups when required for specific projects.

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.

Ongoing Tasks vital to the Parish

Asset Management

This committee is the driver for many enhancement initiatives of our 'Green Spaces', including managing the various contracts. This work has once again been significant and enthusiastically led by our Vice-Chair Cllr. Robert Gateshill.

This includes management of the MUGA - Used by a variety of sporting groups and parishioners, which we are always seeking to increase. Ongoing regular care as well as some additional maintenance because of vandalism sadly.

Also, children's playgrounds at Lawns and Cockhaven Close -Repairs are undertaken as necessary because of regular equipment inspection.

Keeping tabs on the Teignbridge Local Plan 2020 – 2040.

The Parish Council has contributed to this process on an ongoing basis, as necessary. Final agreement is expected by TDC in early summer. However, the Government has set increased targets for new homes; TDC from 720 to 1088 additional homes per year. This requires further work by TDC on a revised Plan by October 2026. The impact on the Parish being the previously published proposals for Bakers Yard and two fields opposite, known as V2 and V3. Once this is finalized the Parish Council can work towards a revision of the Bishopsteignton Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Finance & Budgeting

Parish Council 2026/27 budget and precept demand to Teignbridge District Council, again considerable work is required and on all financial processes, including community grants, significant documentation for audit, resulting in a 4.4% increase.

To put in context, this is an increase of £4.79 per year for a Band D property.

Publicity and administration of the Parish Council community grant fund available for community projects

Planning

Numerous planning matters considered by the PC committee as a consultee of TDC as the local planning authority, necessitating a good understanding of Planning Regulations.

Teign Estuary Trail

Working with Estelle Skinner of TDC, Laura Allington and other officers of DCC and Judith Sharples of the Campaign Group in Stakeholder meetings, which I am pleased to Chair, to push this project forwards. These meetings consist of Members and Officers of DCC and TDC, BPC Councillors and members of the TET Campaign Group. The TET is being progressed in the sections from Morrison's to the Passage House, Newton Abbot. Priority is being given to the section from Bishopsteignton to the Passage House.

Scout Building at The Lawns

There has been ongoing communication with Elaine Cawthraw - Chair of Scouts and TDC officers and Members for many years, following planning application approval in June 2023. However, despite the efforts of the Scouts Organisation and BPC, it has not been possible to progress, due to TDC not being willing to discuss the way forward regarding the Covent, relating to the Lawns.

Working relationships with other authorities

TDC has established a Town and Parish Forum to improve working arrangements with Town and Parish Councils. Regular attendance at the events hosted enable councillors and staff at local councils to network, keep up to date with sector changes, and improve best practice.

Police Monthly Surgeries (PACT) for community participation. Thanks to Saul Bunce and Cllr. Reg Gill for organising and attending the events.

Highway Issues - Always a significant matter - Regular communication with the DCC Neighbourhood Highways Office to discuss general highway matters.

Council Governance & Strategy

Parish Council Policies and Procedures – Regular reviews of policies in line with sector statutory legislation and revisions to operating procedures such as the Strategic Plan, significant use of social media, Financial software and the Cemetery management software.

An opportunity is being undertaken by the Clerk and Chair of BPC, to be involved in an initiative to seek closer working between Bishopsteignton Heritage, the Community Centre Management Committee and BPC for the wider benefit of the community.

None of the above could be achieved without the dedication, commitment, help and support of the Vice-Chair, all members of the Parish Council, current and past, and significantly the Clerk to the Council. I therefore wish to acknowledge, and convey my considerable appreciation and thanks, on your behalf.

The Clerk's Report produced for every Parish Council meeting and published on the BPC website and posts on Facebook are excellent ways of keeping up to date on current matters the Parish Council is undertaking.

March 2026