

## This Year;

It has been an interesting time for the Parish Council. We started the year with 10 Councillors being ably led by our Chairman Diane Rickers and with John Counsell as Vice Chairman. Sadly 6 months or so in we lost Alan Rickers who had worked so hard over many years and Diane our Chairman. A few weeks later we lost John Counsell and Mareike Beyer. All of whom were a substantial loss to the Council. Fortunately, Mareike has continued her work as one of our Flood wardens. This left the Council with just 6 members and no Chairman or Vice Chairman. But thanks to the co-option of 5 new Counsellors, John Rundle, Caroline Bowen, Malcolm Hunt, Richard Rundle and John Whitehead, we were able to continue at full strength. Thank you all for your commitment and invaluable support. However, it is still my intension to step down as Chairman at the next Annual Council Meeting.

## Planning;

We started the year to hear that Somerset Council had at last refused the application to build 81 houses on Clare Field, North Cadbury. Very good news but whether there will be further applications for this site in the light of current Government Policy is unknown.

Councillors have attended 26 planning applications meetings so far this year, 16 in North Cadbury, 7 in Galhampton and 3 in Yarlington.

The largest and most contentious being the Manor Farm application in Yarlington.

The Council was also asked to comment on the Shatwell Yard application, although not in our Parish, it does affect residents in Yarlington.

More recently there is a proposal by Origin 3 to build 36 houses on land north of Brookhampton.

Discussions between the developers, the Parish Council and residents are taking place and there will be ample opportunity for all to have their say before a decision is made perhaps in early summer.

## Flooding;

The effects of the severe flooding in 2023 and subsequent events continue to be of prime importance to the Parish. Mareike and Maria Viney have worked tirelessly as Flood Wardens on our behalf to bring us up to date with what measures are being put in place such river height gauges to warn residents of imminent flooding danger. This work will no doubt become more and more important as our climate continues to change.

The section 19 report on flooding has been published and although it has received some criticism is a source of data for future planning.

North Cadbury Village Hall Committee has put in place their emergency plan, with Galhampton and Yarlington to follow shortly. These will form the Parish Council Emergency Plan and need to be constantly reviewed as situations change.

## Highways maintenance;

Chris Jose has had the unenviable job of keeping track of pot holes and road damage in our area. Getting problems rectified is difficult with Somerset Highways being so strapped for cash. Our continuing thanks go to him and to John Rundle for stepping into the role during Chris's recent illness.

## Public Rights of Way;

Nick Garrett continues to monitor our many ROWs with the help of Susan Fone, keeping them in a serviceable state for the enjoyment of the public. The ROWs in our Parish are a delight and the importance of their maintenance can't be overstated.

## SC Councillors;

Our thanks go to the continuing support from both Henry Hobhouse and Kevin Messenger for attending so many of our Council Meeting and passing on news and information from SC. They also remain a very helpful source for advice when we need it.

## The Newt;

Communications with the Newt have been very good with Zoe attending nearly all the Council meetings, giving news of progress on various estate projects and also listening to any issues the Council and residents have had with activity on the estate. The Council is very grateful to Zoe for her contributions.

## Antisocial Behaviour;

Unfortunately, antisocial behaviour across the Parish is still present with cars being driven at high speed with no tax or insurance. Co-operation with and from the police is vital to control this before a serious accident occurs.

## Neighbourhood Plan;

A considerable amount of work had been done by Alan Rickers and John Counsell in the first half of the year to monitor the policies and look at the various projects. A working group has now picked up where they left off to make sure the plan is up to date.

## Local Community Network;

The Council continues to attend and support the Local Community Network although the benefit to us as a Council seems to be disappointingly minimal. However I thought the latest meeting in Henstridge was somewhat more helpful.

## The Role of a Parish Clerk;

A brief reminder of what a Parish Clerk does

- ensures that the council conducts its business lawfully
- administers all the council's paperwork
- ensures that meeting papers are properly prepared and the public is aware of meeting times
- implements the council's decisions
- oversees the implementation of projects
- supervises staff (if any)
- keeps property and asset registers and other legal documents
- keeps up to date by training /qualification

Typically a Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer and

- manages the budgets and all aspects of any business transaction
- completes VAT returns
- Annual returns for assessment by external auditors
- Tax returns
- Accounting responsibilities (Cash flow etc)
- Risk Assessments

The Clerk is effectively the CEO of the Parish Council and it is incumbent on all Councillors to aid the Clerk in this role by communicating in-house via the proper channels as promptly as possible.

Becky;

Our thanks, gratitude and respect go unreservedly to our Clerk, Becky. She has been pivotal to helping us to survive this difficult year. I am certain that without her guidance the Council would have floundered and sunk without trace.

Respect;

Finally, if we have learnt anything this year it is that respect for each other as a Council and respect for residents, stakeholders and their views is absolutely essential.

Andy Keys-Toyer.

Chairman.

*Tempus edax rerum*