

Chairman's Report for Annual Parish Meeting

Hinton Blewett Parish Council, 23rd April 2014

This report is for the third year of our four year term of office which ends in May 2015.

The main focus of the Parish Council's attention this year has been on producing a Placemaking Plan character assessment. The survey work and compilation of the assessment was carried out in the autumn. B&NES have requested further green infrastructure information and for the council to identify natural and built environment assets. At the same time we have been working on securing a grant from the Lottery Awards for All for equipment for the playing field which has finally been successful, although at the present time there is a restriction on publicity until the end of May. The Council is participating in the production of the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan and is supportive of the Wansdyke Telecom initiative to bring ultra-fast fibre broadband to Hinton Blewett.

As a planning consultee, the Council has considered nine planning applications during the year including the Rees Mogg application for 19 houses on Lower Road which was refused.

Unfortunately, Planning Enforcement continues to provide a less than satisfactory service. The Parish Council has repeatedly chased them since last year to even respond on one particular contravention which has been on-going since 2007 and was the subject of an appeal in 2011. Trying to prevent unauthorised occupation of land acquiring residential use can take a considerable amount of councillors' personal time, let alone compiling objection reports or attendance at meetings, most of which our local community is rarely aware.

We have recently heard that our draft Parish Appraisal is at long last moving forward with a six week consultation period starting with a public meeting here in Hinton Blewett next week on the 28th. Adoption of the appraisal, together with the Placemaking Plan character assessment should help to prevent inappropriate development in the village in the future.

Again it has been a difficult year for our local Highways inspector with so much rain but he continues to be pro-active with the patching regime adopted by B&NES and the 2014-2015 Highways programme has been boosted by some additional funding of £9m. It's important that we keep up the routine reporting of defects which will help to ensure that standards of maintenance are kept up.

The Village Agent coffee mornings have continued again this year and although the numbers are small, the help and advice available has been significantly helpful to carers.

The Council incurred additional expenditure this last year with the replacement of the defibrillator and increased salary costs, and it is with great regret that we have to report that our current Clerk, Jen McCallan, has resigned.

Two organisations that we need to thank formally are the Lottery Awards for All for our playing field equipment grant and the PCC for its generous contribution.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their hard work over this last year particularly Alan and Brian and the co-opted members of the Playing Field Management Committee. I would especially also like to thank our Clerk, Jen McCallan, who has worked so hard throughout her time with us and we will be very sad to see her go. On a more positive note we are pleased to welcome Chris Arnold and Jonathan Layzell who have joined us following a B&NES decision to allow an increased in the number of Parish councillors.

April 2014