

## Chairmans report – for 2014-15

Parish clerks: Matthew resigned at the start of the year and we were fortunate to persuade Jenny Farthing to provide temporary cover until we were able to recruit a permanent replacement. Malcolm joined us in July. At that stage we were his third parish, but he's now down to two – us and Shillingstone. As he has the CILCA qualification we'll be able to continue with the General Power of Competence that allows us to do pretty much anything that isn't illegal (or fattening).

Ideas Please monies allocated: This was a very successful initiative with lots of ideas coming forward for consideration as to how the parish council could usefully spend some of its accumulated reserves for the benefit of the community. A task force led by Cllr Martin Richards (!) assessed the ideas and recommended the following distributions totalling £15,000 – play area fence- £3450; village hall £4000; award scheme - £100; Alex Field £1700; allotments £750 and more funds towards a footpath from the Antelope towards the shop £5000. The organisations have been advised they have until the end of the year to spend the money and already we've seen new chairs and projector equipment at the hall with more items to follow.

Cemetery donation: We were very fortunate to receive a donation from the Trustees of the Wonston Club of £10k towards the costs of extending the cemetery. Whilst there is still some space it will need to be enlarged in the foreseeable future and this will provide a very useful contribution to the cost.

Remembrance day: We supported the anniversary events marking the start of WW1 and in liaison with the Royal British Legion provided a donation towards a memorial tree planted on Remembrance Sunday in November.

Councillors: Alun Read agreed to join the council and was formally co-opted in the autumn. After the Election we still have two vacancies and will look to co-opt from the community. Ideally we'd like to have a wider range of gender and age but we can't force people to come forward. Emma Grayson and Tricia Walton did not stand for election this time – I'd like to thank them for their hard work over the years and wish them well in all they do.

Dog bins: We've installed a total of 5 bins for dog waste, an initiative that seems to have been popular and successful. Our contractor, Ian Kerr, empties the bins on a weekly basis and hopefully everyone is now "pooping and scooping". There is no excuse not to.

Financial position: The year went pretty much according to plan, although the expenditure on dog waste bins was not budgeted, but was worthwhile. Our income for the year was £26.6k, including an extraordinary item of £10k as the donation from the Wonston club. Expenditure was £20.5k, with extraordinary items of a vat repayment of £4.2k, Ideas Please payments of £4.2k and £0.5k for dog bins. Our reserves are healthy with £31.5k earmarked for specific items (including £10k for the cemetery and £8k for the Antelope path), a contingency reserve £7.1k and a general reserve of £4.5k. For the coming year we are expecting to break even.

Bryan Bytes: An edition is due shortly following the Elections. We hope this is a useful way of letting everyone know what is going on at the parish council at relatively low cost. Each edition costs about £50 to produce and deliver to every house by all parish councillors, bar one, and the Clerk

Planning: We looked at 12 planning applications during the year and commented as appropriate. Sometimes we feel that our views are either ignored, or taken account of, and then ignored. We know any comments can only be made on substantive planning grounds and the team leader from North Dorset Planning is coming to a parish council in the near future to discuss its approach with us. We'll also be looking again at the merits or otherwise of creating a Neighbourhood Plan, particularly given the huge volunteer effort need to create a robust Plan

Rights of Way and Highways: We had a very useful and informative visit from DCC Highways and Rangers talking about all manner of Highways and Rights of Ways matters. The key message was that if you see a problem report it immediately either via DorsetForYou web site – follow the easy links – or by phone

We are certain that there is sufficient funding in place from the parish council and Dorset County Council to create a footpath along the Causeway towards the shop. This is a very important safety issue and we have been trying for some time to have a sensible dialogue with the landowner, Hall and Woodhouse. We're hopeful that our patience will be rewarded in the not too distant future.

Alex Field: We improved and extended the fence around the play area, an initiative which was supported under the Ideas Please programme and has been well received. The play equipment has had its formal safety inspection and no major risks were identified.

There is no point in having a parish council unless it does things for the community. We hope we've made a difference to your day to day lives across a range of areas and we'll continue to do so in 2015, 2016 and beyond.

Steve Murcer  
Chairman  
May 2015