

BUCKLAND NEWTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report Annual Parish Meeting

Tuesday, 12th May 2015

Welcome by Chair:

With the retirement of the Chairman on 5th May, Vice Chairman Nicki Barker presented the Chairman's Report highlighting items that the Parish Council have been involved with over the last year.

The Council would particularly like to express appreciation to two people whose vital input has done so much for this Council as well as for the wellbeing of the Parish: our retiring and long serving Chairman Trevor Marpole, who has been ever generous with his time and practical skills in keeping much within the village in fine shape and, our District Councillor Jacqui Cuff for her help in resolve issues at a higher level and her unstinting support through the evolution of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Both will be greatly missed by this Council.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Council has continued to comment on a variety of Planning Applications, mainly agricultural and building alterations alongside a single application for a new dwelling on the Gaggles of Geese land and revised designs for a small group of houses on Brookfield stable land opposite the school.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This has continued to be by far the biggest undertaking of the Parish and Parish Council during the year. Following a preference by Parishioners to give equal weight to new affordable dwellings alongside open market dwellings and to maintain development at the historical rate of 2-4 dwellings a year, a great deal of background work was done during the summer of 2014 to identify potential sites throughout the Parish. This led to 20 sites being brought before a parish consultation in September 2014. Of these, the 12 most suitable sites, with sufficient land for 40 new homes, will be included in the Plan with an aim of 50% of these designed to meet local affordable needs.

The Parish Council is greatly indebted to the driving force of Cllr John Baker, assisted by Cllr Townsend, District Councillor Jacqui Cuff and a core of dedicated Parishioners for enabling this Parish to progress towards having a real influence over its build, business and conservation future. Once finalized, the Neighbourhood Plan will be put to a Parish referendum later in the year.

The expenses of developing the Plan, including valuable external consultancy, have been met largely by the Community Foundation Grant, WDDC and the village United Charities alongside £500 support funding from the Parish Precept.

PARISH FIELD

Mowing of the field continues to be done very economically and efficiently by the County Council Grounds Maintenance Team. The Children's Play area received its annual inspection and new bark will be installed during the summer.

An oak memorial bench in memory of Sir William Aykroyd has been installation along the western boundary of the field. A second hardwood bench, donated by a local parishioner, has been installed in the Children's Play area.

VILLAGE SERVICES

A year ago, the village was plunged into crisis when 3 of its most important privately owned services, the Pub, the shop and the Outreach Post office, were threatened with closure. Following a packed meeting, the Council looked into the Parish acquiring the WDDC owned empty offices in Steven's Walk as accommodation to support a successful sale of the shop. 12 months on, although the Pub is on the market and its future remains uncertain, the shop's future is now secure under new local ownership and the Post Office has been given a permanent home in the Village hall. With supporting

accommodation for the shop no longer a priority, the Parish is unlikely to pursue acquisition of the Steven's Walk property from the District Council,

FINANCES

- 1) The Parish Accounts remain in positive territory.
- 2) As a result of economies within the District and County Councils, a number of expenses have to be borne in future at parish level. These include the provision of flood prevention sandbags, winter salt for local use, fingerpost repairs, and local election expenses. To cover these, the Parish Council has given notice of its intention to increase the precept in 2015 after a 6 year hiatus.
- 3) A reoccurring annual grant of £150 is allocated to the Village Hall to offset expenses in hosting the Outreach Post Office for the benefit of Parishioners.
- 4) The Council continues to manage Sir William Aykroyd's legacy prudently and to use it to cross subsidise or benefit projects within the Parish.
- 5) Repairs to the Parish Rooms, particularly the roof will be a significant future expense. No Precept funds have been allocated and the Council will pursue grant routes.

SAND STORE

In order to fulfil the newly emerged Parish requirement of providing sand bags in times of flooding, the Council has funded and built an easily accessible store in the grounds of the Village Hall. The cost of this was limited to materials, thanks to Trevor Marpole's freely given construction skills. The store now houses sand and bags, accessible when needed via our Flood Warden Doug Morse.

SUPERFAST BROADBAND

A fibre optic cable now exists into the BN Telephone Exchange and should be linked onward this summer to the only distribution point in the village located near the school. This should considerably improve broadband speeds in the centre of the village with a noticeable enhancement up to 2kms from the distribution point. In the more outlying parts of the parish, there is likely to be little or no improvement in broadband speeds.

HOUNTWELL PUMP

The question of the current ownership of the land on which Hountwell Pump sits continues to be unresolved despite meetings between this Council's appointed Land Agent, Andrew Robinson, and Mr and Mrs Higgs's solicitor.

It has been clearly established from the Finance Act plans of 1910 and from Minutes of the then local district Council, Cerne RDC, that the land on which Hountwell well stands lay in the ownership of Mrs Lewis up until her holding was sold in 1934. However, 1934 transfer deeds of her holding show the well land to have been excluded from the onward sale. No record exists of a separate sale covering the well land. Conveyancing documents relating to Hountwell House in 1981 (Radford) and 2003 (Higgs) likewise exclude ownership of this well land.

Throughout its existence Cerne RDC, who had water supply responsibility, record Hountwell as being a "Public Well". Following Cerne RDC's amalgamated into Dorchester DC in 1929 this Parish Council's minutes show that it looked to Dorchester District or County Council to take responsibility for water testing and maintenance up until 1978. In 1979, BN Parish Council drew up a statutory declaration of ownership which is now housed in the Records Office of the Dorset History Centre.

Signed Date.....