

Flax Bourton Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting 13th May 2019

Chairman's Report

People

My grateful thanks to all our Councillors who over the year have given their time voluntarily not just at our monthly meetings but also those who have helped with the large workload touched upon later in this report. I also thank our Clerk, Sarah Jezard, for her flexibility, hard work and professionalism.

I would particularly like to thank Councillor Higgins who retired at the May elections after 12 years of unstinting hard work and leadership. He has given many hours of his time, often at short notice and at unsociable times. He has helped initiate and then seen through to completion many projects which have benefitted residents throughout the village. He will be greatly missed as he has a well deserved rest from Council work.

Despite active attempts to encourage residents to join the Parish Council we have four vacancies and we would be delighted to hear from anyone who wishes to contribute to our community by joining the Council. Until we have a full Council of 7 Councillors, to share the work, the Council will be unable to take on any new projects or improvements. We are in the process of reviewing our current projects to examine whether we can continue them all. We also cannot be sure we can respond to new challenges or threats to village life which may arise in the future.

The Parish Council employs the Village Orderly, Frank Payne, who is often seen around the village ensuring it is kept tidy and reporting back to our Clerk. We are very grateful for his loyal commitment to our community.

Two kind residents, Jill Stewart and Clare Andersson, have taken over the planting and care of the planter at the village sign. They have maintained a beautiful display over the year even through the drought of last summer. Thank you very much for your hard work and water transporting skills.

Thank you also to our Defibrillator Guardian Kiara Jones whose regular checks ensures the equipment is ready for use in an emergency.

Communication

The overhauled Parish Council website is set for launching and we hope it will make it easier for residents to keep in touch.

Residents are encouraged to register at clerk@flaxbourtonparishcouncil.co.uk to receive agendas and minutes of Council meetings and importantly any additional meetings or issues which arise affecting village life, for example, developments in regional planning in the JSP.

Finances

The Parish Council's expenditure for the year 2018/19 was £30,270 which was paid from your money collected through the rates, the precept, plus Parish Council reserves.

Planning

The most serious threat to the village and the lives of its residents are the proposals contained in the West of England Joint Spatial Plan which is currently being examined by a Planning Inspector. Your Parish Council has been active in submitting representations on the Village's behalf and in

monitoring the process which has involved the reading and processing of complex documents, reports and technical evidence within short time scales. I am particularly grateful to Councillors Higgins and Walker who have worked with me and the Clerk in this priority area. This work is on going and there will be Inspector's hearings in July and September where we will represent the village.

Village School

The building work to expand the School was completed, with the exception of the playground and paths, in the autumn. The Parish Council has supported the School throughout this project and I attended the formal opening led by the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Through the Stancombe Quarry Fund the Parish Council was able to secure the support of Tarmac to tarmac the playground and paths during the Easter holidays.

Designated Community Land

The proposal for the Parish Council to take a lease of the land adjoining the School was enthusiastically supported by the Village in 2017. We have worked hard on this project ever since. The car parking has reduced complaints about parking at School run times and parent events. We are currently awaiting details of proposals from a third party which may affect the community's use of the land. Until this is clarified we will not be able to complete the lease. It remains an important ongoing project which we expect the Parish Council will see through to a conclusion in 2019.

Traffic Calming

The village continues to suffer the consequences of speeding drivers, especially on the A370. We have formed a working group with interested residents to consult and agree the best and most cost effective traffic calming measures on the A370. This builds on the progress the Parish Council has made in the year with North Somerset Highways.

Youth Club

The Youth Club continues to be supported by the Parish Council and receives a substantial part of the Council's budget. The Parish Council wishes to work with the Youth Club Committee in encouraging membership of the 11-18 year old age group to safeguard the Club's future. We are grateful to the Committee for their hard work in managing the Club and in raising additional funds for the Club's running costs and equipment.

Toddler Group

The relaunched Toddler Group, which is self financing, meets at the Village Hall on a Monday morning. Attendance is good and we are grateful for the time volunteers give to this important community group. It is good to see that both the Youth Club and the Toddler Group use our wonderful village hall.

Village Hall

As I have already reported we have an excellent village hall. It continues to be a hub of community activity. We are extremely grateful to the CIC and their caretaker who ensure it is maintained to the highest standards and is financially successful. Again the village is so fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers who keep the doors open for us all to enjoy. The village hall continues to have strong regular bookings from clubs and organisations as well as social events.

