

Chairman's Annual Report 2009

The year began with our AGM in this hall after the APM. At that meeting it was agreed that Cllrs Davies & Goodwin were to represent TPPC at the Association Of PTCs. The parish emergency contacts were to be Mr David Walbridge, and Mr Paul Comer, and we are grateful to these gentlemen for their care and concern. I shall ask Mr Paul Comer to comment on their work.

Cllr Miller was re-elected as Vice Chairman, and I was re-elected as Chairman. The pc approved grants for Village Hall £275; Churchyard £100; Recreational area £100.

At that meeting we had short reports from 13 village organisations. And in preparation for this meeting I have written to all the village organisations inviting them to give short reports again this year.

You will also have noted that I have invited Sustrans to this meeting to report to you on their progress and they are also here to answer any questions you might have. A number of residents showed a lot of interest in their presentation in MN village hall last February.

At the APM meeting a number of issues were raised from the public: there was concern about trees being cut down in Church Mead, speeding through the village, and the re-cycling of plastic bottles. All these issues were explored by the pc:

Trees - Clerk contacted the tree officer and he confirms that if the tree was planted as part of the planning condition it is only valid for 5 years, therefore there is no control.

Re-cycling – This originated from a question to Cllr Nick Patemore. The District Council was not likely to introduce the recycling of plastic bottles. In a subsequent private conversation with a resident Mrs Rachel Geddes, volunteered to take crushed plastic bottles into Tesco if a collection point was arranged in the village. It was suggested that a container be placed behind the village hall. Permission was to be granted from the village hall committee, and a big enough container would have to be purchased. The Clerk contacted DAPTC to enquire of legal responsibilities of the Parish Council. DAPTC also advised that it was legal to use pc money to purchase a bin, but would need permission of the land owner for where the bin was to be situated. The village hall committee were approached, and they were generally in favour but expressed concerns about the size and where the bin was to be sited. There were safety issues to be considered, the bin needs to be secured to stop it tipping over, and insurance would be needed against theft, damage & public liability. Also Parish councils insurance would not cover transportation of plastic to recycling centre. A vote was taken to consider if to pursue the matter and 6 councillors agreed it would not be prudent to carry on considering points raised. Despite this we agreed that it was regrettable that for legal reasons envisaged such a public spirited offer had to be turned down. The Clerk and I wrote to Rachel thanking her for her offer.

Speed Limit – The chairman contacted CSP officer Sandy Redford and she confirmed that there is no speed limit in the village, however motorists can still be prosecuted under the due care & attention law. Andrew Bradley at DCC was also been contacted with reference to unofficial signs, these are generally not accepted, however a “please

drive carefully” sign could be erected at the entrance to the village but would be Parish Councils responsibility. Planning permission should also be sought for any signs on private land. The pc were, at the time, looking into the possibility of purchasing new village signs, and we changed our order to include ‘please drive carefully through village’ and these have since been erected in Lower Road and at the top of the High Street. We are still waiting for the third sign to be erected at Poor End. The Clerk contacted Traffic management to enquire of costs and planning permission and also the possibility of Speed indicator devices. This proved to be too expensive and it would involve planning permission being granted.

At the APM, those of you who were here, will recall that Mr Simon Thompson gave a presentation on the merits of to a community of having a Parish Plan. Although this received a mixed response at the time, Cllr Davies proposed at a subsequent pc meeting that we explore the issue further and attempt to form a group of interested residents. All councillors were asked to casually raise the issue with their friends in the village, and Cllr Miller – who leads a very outgoing life style – was to take a lead in this! The Clerk was asked to prepare a flyer for the parish magazine, this provoked some interest, and by January we felt we had a nucleus of interested personnel who would meet with Mr Thompson. The PP Committee consists of 8 people and has now met on 2 occasions. At this point I will ask Cllr Debbie Billen to speak on behalf of the group.

The A356 junction: the pc pursued the issues of improving the visibility at this dangerous turning when turning right towards MN. In response to our concerns a letter was received from Dave Gillet, Traffic Management Dorset County Council to confirm that an investigation had been made at the junction and because no personal injury accidents have been recorded in the latest three year period no remedial measures would be taken. He also commented on the Telegraph pole re location, saying, the substantial cost of moving the one on the north-west corner of the junction 50 cm back was not justified at this time. He has however contacted the Grounds Maintenance Manager to ensure the verge is strimmed on a monthly basis. This is on the schedule to be carried out by the District Council. Subsequently we received notice that Highways had agreed to cut back the grass verge every 6 weeks. We await to see if this happens this year! In the meantime I contacted the landowner, Mr Rob Yates, asking him for his permission to cut back plants around the telegraph pole, and apply weedkiller to plants in that area. Simultaneously we received an offer of help from Mr Rorie Geddes who said he would supply and apply the weedkiller. Mr Yates agreed to this, and we are very grateful to both gentlemen for their co-operation and help in this matter. I am delighted to report that Mr Geddes has already been in contact with me this year, offering to carry out the same action this year. Thank you, Rorie.

Highways: concern about the flooding in the village was brought to my attention by a resident, Mr Jeremy Stavenhagen. He kindly took photographs of problems in the High Street and Lower Road in teeming rain! I followed this up by writing to Highways, submitting a map of the village, pasting onto this copies of the photographs to outline to Highways the exact areas of concern in our village. A site meeting was arranged for October 29th, when Cllr Miller and I met with two members of the Highways department. We took time to walk them round the village to show them where water ran by drains, where drains were blocked, and where the verges

covered drains. Cllr Miller and I were greatly encouraged by their positive responses, and the work they were going to recommend to Dorset Works to be carried out. Cllr Miller and I were also told about PMUs and PMU forms – PMU standing for Parish Maintenance Units – Cllr Miller and I felt that it was problem solved, and sat back to wait for all the positive things that were going to happen. The weeks went by, then months, the Clerk and I sent frequent emails, I telephoned highways and there was always an excuse, mainly due to work being carried out on the coast road! The whole scenario became most frustrating. It was at this point that Lower Road adjacent to Manor Farm became very pot-holed and flooded. On the advice of Cllr Gregson, I wrote a long letter to Mr Nigel Hamer Area Highways Manager, with another map and photographs, together with copies of emails to highlight our frustration. I sent a copy of my letter and enclosures to Cllr Gregson, who responded by writing a letter of support on our behalf to Mr Hamer. I am delighted to report that at last some action has been taken, and more is planned. I shall read to you Mr Hamer's letter dated May 8th.

The Old Swan: in the Autumn the village group Save our Swan asked the pc to write a letter of support of their objective to get the Old Swan reopened. The letter was to be included in a portfolio they were compiling for WDDC. This was duly written. In November I was invited to join SOS at a meeting with them and WDDC, when the portfolio of documents they had prepared was submitted and discussed. Mr Oliver Letwin MP also attended this meeting. I spoke briefly at this meeting on behalf of the local community.

In March, SOS Chairman, Mr George Connelly advised me that Mr David Evans (WDDC Planning Director) was about to contact me inviting 2 members of the pc to a meeting with them Mr John Palmer, and Mr Nigel Jones of Humberts (Palmers property manager). I asked Cllr Davies to accompany me to this meeting, but not before we had met with SOS to discuss the possible stance we should take. Cllr Davies and I met with 2 members of SOS before the meeting, and I also consulted Mr Don Bowman who gave me valuable advice. It was agreed with SOS that Cllr Davies and I would attend the meeting mainly in a listening capacity, but also to attend as individuals who were on the pc, but who were NOT representing the views of the pc. At the close of the meeting it was agreed that Mr David Evans (WDDC Planning Director) would produce an agreed statement that either party could use. Following this meeting, Cllr Davies met with SOS to give them a full report on the meeting, and within a day or so I sent by email to Mr George Connelly the copy of the agreed paragraph which I shall read to you now. The pc received a full report from Cllr Davies and myself at an extraordinary meeting of the council held just 2 days ago. The pc have decided to.....

I will close my report by highlighting a number of less complicated items:

1. Footpaths – during the year, Cllr Knowles agreed to take on the responsibility for footpaths, and she and her husband Alan have been walking and grid referencing footpaths in the parish. She continues to work closely with Tara Hansford.
2. Telephone Box – in the Autumn the pc received notice that BT were currently undertaking a national programme to agree the level of public payphone provision still required to meet the current level of demand, and had instigated a consultation

regarding proposed payphone removals across the country. We managed to ascertain that the payphone at Toller Porcorum was not being considered for removal under the present street rationalisation programme, however this could change in the future if its use diminishes further. In order to safeguard the red kiosk there were two options: 1. The parish council could buy the kiosk for £1, but the phone would still be removed if it was to be included in the next round. We would then be responsible for liability, insurance and maintenance. 2. Sponsor the kiosk this would involve the pc would paying BT £500 per year to keep the box and phone. After reading the terms and conditions the pc decided not to adopt the box, but to highlight to villagers that unless the box was used, the village was likely to lose the box sometime in the future. At a Chairman's seminar I met the Chair of MNPC, Sally Falkingham who said that MN had managed to have one of their telephone box categorised as a listed building. The advantage of this being that it would present BT with an obstacle if they proposed to remove the box in the future. The Clerk has been pursuing this matter, and an application has now been made.

Cattistock Hunt: the pc received a complaint about the Cattistock Hunt blocking Toller Hill. The Clerk wrote to the huntmaster asking for due consideration for road users; coupled to this Cllr Miller approached, in person, a number of the hunt followers on their next visit to Toller in January. She felt her expressed concerns were well received, and we hope our positive relationship with CH will prevent further difficulties being experienced by residents.

Ring in the Olympics: the pc were approached to join in with the nation to ring in the Olympics on August 24th when the Olympic flag was to be passed to Great Britain. Cllr Peter Billen agreed to ring the church chimes at 3pm that day. We are grateful to Peter for doing that.

The Track: The Clerk has pursued improvement to the track. This has resulted in the main pot hole at the church end being filled in but we are still pursuing the Environment Agency in getting the drains unblocked. (This is not Highways responsibility).

The hedge outside the Old Swan: The clerk pursued this with Palmers, she first contacted them last August, and again and again through October and November. As you are aware this has now been done, and the car park was cleared as well.

Grass Strimming: this has been on-going through the growing season, and we are grateful to Mr Martin Wilson for his work.

Notices: we have continued to keep residents informed through our minutes or notices on the pc noticeboard: such things as – heating grants, waste and recycling dates, free swimming in Dorchester for senior citizens, and the Digital Switchover. The Clerk organised an information evening and approximately 20 residents attended this last January.

We have commented on 8 planning applications (compared to 16 last year!, A sign of the recession!).

I would like to close by thanking

