

Chairman's Annual Report 2010

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 £150; Recreational area £125, and £50 for Neighbourhood Watch.

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 brief reports again this year.

You will also have noted that I have invited our Police Community Support Officer Sarah Pilcher who has taken over from PCSO Sandy Redford, Robert Asprey who will speak about affordable housing and we welcome back Sustrans who gave a short report on their progress last May and we look forward to hearing their latest news tonight.

First of all we will turn our attention to affordable housing. Robert has attended 2 pc meetings, and you may remember that the village was surveyed to discover the need for affordable housing. We will hear from Robert shortly.

Highways: once again the council has been busy trying to get the Highways Dept to improve our roads. In the Autumn I was writing a number of letters to Mr Nigel Hamer about blocked drains, and gullies and the concern about the flooding in Lower Road. I am pleased to report that much work was carried out on drains near to the bottom of Toller Hill and the gullies adjacent to Manor Farm. We were even informed that in October, the bollards had been inspected! Then the Winter set in and pot holes appeared all over the place. This led me to write another letter expressing our concern and the danger due to the depth that some of these holes presented to

motor cyclists, cyclists and even cars as drivers tried to avoid them. Cllr Davies was also busy filling in PMU forms. PMU stands for Parish Maintenance Unit who respond, hopefully, to the forms we send in. We are visited by the PMU gang in January and June, so it has been encouraging to find pot holes filled in only recently on Lower and Kingcombe Roads. The pc has requested that the road surface outside Manor Farm be resurfaced, but we have been informed that finances will not allow for this. I am grateful to our County Councillor Rebecca Knox for her support behind the scenes as it were and to Cllr Peter Davies who is currently surveying our roads in preparation for the PMU to visit us in June.

Last year I reported that we had had 2 new village signs erected, and this year we have had a new sign erected at Poor End, and that we have been successful in getting finger posts replaced at Clift Lane, Eggardon and at Barrowlands.

Your pc likes to respond to concerns or suggestions from residents and this year we have been busy looking into street lighting, a stone wall and the village bench. The heady business of local government never ceases to amaze! The pc rarely has to vote on matters of business, as we are usually united on issues, however, there was much disagreement over the village bench. Should we have the old one repaired, or replace it with a new one? At one point there was a stand off by those that wanted a stone bench against those that wanted a wooden bench. We had a stone bench reserved at Grassby's as there were 3 on offer! A few of us went to sit on the stone benches at Grassby's, and the feeling was that they were too cold on the bottom, and would remain wet after rain, but on the positive side would be maintenance free. The costs for a new wooden bench was researched and compared – we would need about £600 for either. In the end, we voted to have the old one repaired, which was going to be so much cheaper and we are very grateful to Mr Keith Miller for the excellent job he did on it, for a fraction of the cost of a new bench. If you ever have rotten legs, he's the man to contact!

The issue of a collapsing wall in the village was also referred to us, as it could become a hazard to traffic or even pedestrians. This was to prove a sensitive issue. In the interests of privacy I will not go into details, but the matter is now resolved, and we are grateful to the householder for the response that occurred.

The third concern was street lighting. The pc owns 3 street lamps, and the one in Kingcombe Road was proving a problem as it was too bright and adversely affecting the chance of sleep in a few households. The issue of having timers installed or installing shading was also raised. Much time was spent consulting with S.E. on whether shading could be applied, but this was not allowed as it was at a junction. The bulb was also checked and it was the correct 70W. The pc received another query about repair to another lamp as the lens was cracked and water was getting in turning it green with algae. The streetlamps were installed in 1953, we know this from an article published in the Daily Mirror which came to light when many of us enjoyed Peggy Denty's talk to the Gardening Club earlier this year. We had the lamps inspected and it was obvious that as they were getting too old and the costs of repair were to become prohibitive. Before we could have timers installed they would need to be brought up to present day standard. It was at the suggestion of Cllr Knox that we looked into the possibility of having them adopted by WDDC. Adoption was to prove expensive as they would not be adopted unless they were brought up to present day standard. We examined the costs and agreed unanimously that the expenditure would be cost effective in the long run, it would mean timers could be installed and the pc would not have to pay for the electricity any more, neither repair or replacement. At present we are pursuing this matter with the county council.

This time last year our village website was still under construction. Cllr Peter Davies was responsible for this initiative and he has spent much time with Mr Don Bowman on this project. If you were to look at www.tollerporcorum.org.uk you would be , but impressed. There are pages on: Local Information, Local Activities, Local History, Cycle Track, The Old Swan, The pc and a picture gallery. If you click on 'Other websites of interest' you can link through to a variety of other websites including the Village Hall, and Toller Railway Station. This is a marvellous resource but to maintain a website and keep it up to date takes time, and I would like to urge village groups to become more involved in helping to run this website, keeping it up to date. The page on Local Activities, needs your involvement, and on this website you have a chance to highlight future events and meetings, as well as publishing reports and photographs of past events. If any of our village organisations would like to update their own information they can have access to the website pages. Don is happy to

hold a training session for all those interested – it will only take about an hour, but he would like to train people together to save having one hour sessions repeatedly. If you are interested, please see Don tonight.

Another project that has taken off this year is our **Parish Plan Committee**. Although instigated by the pc, this is now a separate group, and we will hear from a representative shortly.

The pc continues to support **S.O.S.** This year, on behalf of the group, we applied to WDDC for a grant of £3000 to pay for a business plan with a view to the re-opening of the pub. However, the grant was subject to the condition that ‘the business plan for the reopening of The Old Swan as a community enterprise based on Palmers offer to open discussions for a lease on terms similar to that which currently exists in relation to the New Inn at Shipton Gorge’. However, I will invite a representative from S.O.S. to up date us on any latest developments.

Our **Telephone Box** came under the threat of removal in the Autumn. A warning poster from BT appeared in the box giving notice of removal unless it was sponsored or adopted. The urgency of the matter brought about the need for an extraordinary parish council meeting in October, as well as a number of emails to WDDC. At the time much concern was raised across the county, and Oliver Letwin MP even became involved. (Refer to article?). As a pc we voted to sponsor the box for a period of 1 year, and consult with you at the parish meeting to discover whether residents wished our action to continue. (Sponsorship would involve the pc paying BT £500 per year. Adoption was only £1 but all the telephone equipment would be taken away!). However, I discovered that WDDC were preparing a Veto, and the pc was invited to respond to this ensuring that our box would stay in situ for the time being. In December WDDC issued a final notification to the Government objecting to removal of any further boxes. We are waiting to hear the Government’s response to this. (Refer to print outs). The pc put up posters around the village warning that if we did not use the box we were likely to lose it. It would seem that in the end the level of use is most likely going to determine the permanency of ours and other telephone boxes.

The pc is also in the process of applying to make our telephone box a listed building hoping this will be a further obstacle to BT should they wish to remove it.

Since the digital switch over, **TV reception** has become a problem for some households in Lower Toller, especially, it seems for those living in or adjacent to Kingcombe Road. This matter was brought to our attention by Mr & Mrs Gibson, Northover Farm. They were the first to contact Ofcom and pursue the matter with tenacity. They have had Ofcom carry out extensive tests at their residence. (Read out her email?). Cllr Knox made the pc aware of Dorbag – the Dorset Broadcasting Action Group – their website is very helpful and it is a place where you can register problems. Cllr Knox made us aware that TV reception is also poor in other parts of the County, especially in and around Beaminster.

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

1. Footpaths – Cllr Janet Knowles has continued to oversee footpaths in the parish. This year she spent time listing and mapping them all – did you know we have 40? I will ask Janet to make a short report
2. We are in the process of purchasing a new salt bin for the bridge. This has come about because highways will no longer leave a pile of salt in the open as it solidifies and becomes unusable. We are in the process of negotiating with WDDC permission to site the bin as it adjacent to a highway, but we trust this will be in place before next Winter. It may even be green!
3. A number of villagers are concerned about the gap beside the bridge on the left hand side as you walk towards the P.O. as there is sheer and very dangerous drop. At present it is unclear who owns the land and at present Highways are pursuing the matter on our behalf. This may seem to be a small problem, but should someone fall and injure themselves there could be a question of liability. We have looked into the possibility of the pc paying to have the hole blocked off, but for legal reasons we have been advised not to pursue this action.

We have commented on 12 planning applications.

I would like to close by thanking various people, Mr Rorie Geddes for killing the weeds around the telegraph pole adjacent to the junction with the A356, and trust he will repeat the action this year, on our behalf, to improve visibility and thereby safety when pulling out from the turning.

To Mr Martin Wilson for his work around the village, mainly strimming areas and pruning, and latterly for tidying the area behind the telephone box, as well as re-laying the stone steps.

Cllr Rebecca Knox, who was here last year as a prospective County Councillor, and to Nick Patmore our District Councillor. On behalf of the parish council I would like to thank them both for attending our meetings, for their support, advice and wise council.

I would like to thank our Clerk Mrs Shelley Collins for her administrative support, and all the councillors for giving freely of their time. Mrs Judy Miller, the Vice Chairman, who does so much work behind the scenes through her vast network of contacts and friends. (I have previously mentioned the good works of Cllr Peter Davies and Cllr Janet Knowles.)

Sadly we have had 2 resignations from the pc this year Penny Goodwin tendered her resignation in February, and I would like to thank her for her time and contributions towards the work of the council over the last 3 years. But there is another councillor who is resigning tonight. This will be his last meeting, and it is with much affection and sadness that we say goodbye to Cllr Peter Billen who has been a councillor for over 30 years, and so very well respected by all who know him, which is surely everyone in the village. Peter we say a big thank you, and ask you to accept this small gift in appreciation of all your work.

Thank you to everyone for coming tonight and should anyone have any concerns or issues through the forthcoming year please don't hesitate to approach one of us or attend one of our meetings which are, of course, open to members of the public.

Thank you.

David Ennals. May2010.