

Chairman's Annual Report 2013

Welcome & introductions: This year we welcome Tara Hansford, who will give us the latest news of footpaths, and Colin will lead us through the main developments happening under the direction of the CLT. We welcome back our (re-elected?) County Councillor Rebecca Knox and District Councillor Jill Haynes, who will be giving us their reports. I would like to thank Rebecca and Jill, not only for their reports but for their support and advice during the year. They are both exceptionally busy people, attending hundreds of meetings through the year, and we are grateful that they take the trouble to fit our PC meetings into their busy schedules.

And before I forget a special thanks to my wife, Jane, for preparing and serving the refreshments.

The activities of the PC over the past 12 months began with our April AGM. At that meeting it was agreed that Cllr Davies was to represent TPPC at the Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils. 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 especially during the flooding and their extra care in clearing the drains at the bottom of Toller hill regularly, and I am delighted that Paul and David have agreed to continue in this role for another year. We made grants as follows: Village Hall £275, Churchyard £200 and £125 to the Recreation Field Association.

Last year I mentioned the impact the Localism Bill would have on our work as Parish Council, especially in terms of reforms to make the planning system more democratic and more effective. This led us into considering over a number of meetings whether to start our own Neighbourhood Plan. Jill talked to us further about the NP's she knew of and was involved in. Not wishing to sound unenthusiastic but the PC came to the conclusion that for Toller, at the moment, a NP wasn't necessary due to high costs and the time involved. There is a 5 stage process to follow which is quite intensive if residents want a change in the parish and a say in what is built here. Without a NP, planning

applications will follow the principles in the Local Plan and the National Planning policy framework. This basically means no housing in the parishes unless it is affordable housing.

Planning: Last year there was an application to upgrade various bridleways to BOATS (by ways open to all traffic) within the county. Our concern is over the bridleway in Frogmore Lane. We have already unanimously given our disapproval on the grounds of safety to walkers, riders, livestock etc. Nevertheless, this application has now gone to appeal. It is a sign of the times that there have been few applications for planning permission. Palmers applied for change of use for The Old Swan, and this was approved. You may have noticed that the boards in the windows have come down, so that potential buyers can view the interior. Yes, it is now up for sale! In November there was an application for an agricultural building, but the only other application was for the construction of a solar park at the Rampisham Radio Station. The PC made no objection, but wanted conditions put in place for hedging, and as assurance there would be no wind turbines installed in the future. Nevertheless, there has been so much work on the site before approval, that now, a new planning application has to be made in which there are 3 changes: 1. Orientation of some panels; 2. Number of panels to be reduced; 3. Only one pylon will remain and that will have a reduced height.

Highways - once again the council has been busy trying to get the Highways Dept to improve our roads. I would like to thank Cllr Peter Davies and his dog Daisy for their continual monitoring of ditches, drains and pot holes, and reporting these defects to highways. I think you will agree that our village roads are in as good a condition as we can hope for in this time of austerity.

To give you an idea how hard Peter has been working on our behalf, he has:

- had continuous dialogue with DCC and the EA regarding the problems of highway flooding principally on Toller Lane and Lower Road. Kingcombe Road near junction with Clift Lane, Kingcombe Road near The Kingcombe Centre, Kincombe Road by North Over Farm and Barrowlands Lane under the disused railway bridge.

- made a photographic survey of various conditions on Toller Lane and sent them to DCC.
- continually reporting the main potholes by using the on-line reporting system on the Dorsetforyou website.
- He is the PC's planning supremo and by this he leads us through the various planning applications, in particular the Solar Farm on the Rampisham aerals site.
- been in continual contact with DCC Rights of Way officer regarding the application to change the status of the footpath at Frogmore Lane to a BOAT allowing 4X4s and trail bikes to use it. The application was ruled illegal by the court but the Trail Riders Fellowship sought an appeal that will now be heard by the High Court next summer sometime.
- published a new village web site on 12th December and invited various organizations such as Sustrans to use it to inform local people of what is happening.
- we were informed of the need to complete a survey of those interested in high speed broadband coming to Toller and he circulated this to as many interested people as he knew.
- he has also joined me at the site meetings for potential bus shelter, discussing sighting, construction etc.
- took on the task of removing the finger post at Kingcombe as it was falling over and in a bad state of repair. The post is now with Robin Masters, and Peter is working with Robin to get it repaired.
- Peter also represents us at DAPTC's area meetings.

Thank you, Peter.

In preparation for Winter the Winter Plan was a new scheme introduced by DCC, and any new scheme always involves extra work and Peter also liaised with our clerk, Michelle on this, completing the map showing where the grit bins and dumpy bags of grit are located. Despite a very cold winter, fortunately we did not have too much snow. When it did come you may recall

there was not much gritting. We are meant to be gritted before and after snowfall, but in reality as happened this year, we didn't get gritted for 3 days after snow and that was after both Peter and I had complained about the lack of support for Toller. You will have noticed that the grit run is now down Toller Hill and along Kingcombe Road to Hooke, not as it was last year from Toller Hill, up the High Street to Barrowlands.

The self help scheme was to remain, and we are grateful to our local farmers, namely the Billens, and Robin Masters, who have agreed to hold dumpy bags and grit some of the village roads.

While Cllr Peter has been liaising with Highways and the EA about our problems, we should also be grateful to David Wallbridge and Paul Comer for their work in helping residents. They are quick to get out and distribute sandbags and help residents in any way they can. We now have to budget for the purchase of sand, but you will be pleased to know that David was able to get the bags free!

Telephone Box: Cllr Pat Rutherford keeps a watchful eye on this and we are grateful to the WI for keeping it clean and for placing the flowers in there. Last year I commented that it was our wish to have the box re-painted, but for insurance reasons (health & safety) we were unable to do this ourselves. Pat took on the task of chasing BT. If you know Pat she is not one to give up, month after month she would nag them by telephone and email. In the end BT gave up and a few months ago it was re-painted and even the crown crest was touched up with gold. Well done Pat and thank you.

Last year the village celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The PC combined with the Village Hall Committee to hold a family fun afternoon on Sunday June 3rd. This was followed by a bring and share tea party, we estimate over 90 residents attended the event, at which through the generosity of a resident all the children living within the parish boundary received a commemorative mug. There was also a Best Crown competition for the children.

Our Clerk, Michele, had successfully applied for a small grant that we could use to enhance our celebrations, and it was in the Autumn that we discovered that not all the money had been used up, and so it was agreed that we could round off this special year by planting, in honour of the Queen, a commemorative tree. Cllr Pat contacted Oliver Letwin MP to ask if he would come along to plant the tree, making the ceremony just a little bit more special. This was planned for December, but Oliver caught influenza, and so it was postponed until January 4th. Oliver was also willing to name the Brook – just to put this into context it was 10 years ago that Cllr Pat Rutherford had brought to the attention of the PC that the stream flowing through the village had no name. Unfortunately, her intention to have the brook officially named fell through and so when she re-joined the Council for a second term she revised the initiative liaising with Ordnance Survey, and at this meeting last year she consulted with residents over the choice of name, which was Toller Brook. This is now officially accepted by Ordnance Survey and it will be printed on all future maps of the area. We are grateful to our MP for spending time with us to plant the tree and cut the ribbon naming the stream Toller Brook. You may have seen the report in the Bridport News, together with Oliver's comments in his column about the ceremonies. The tree has survived the Winter, and very kindly, David Wallbridge and Paul Comer built the protective fence around it. Thanks also to James Billen for digging the hole and to Charlotte Woodford for purchasing and looking after the tree prior to planting.

Bus Shelter: as I mentioned before the PC is keen for residents to have a bus shelter. When we started on this initiative last Summer, I never realised what a long and protracted process this was to be! The first problem was where to position a shelter and then get permission to erect it. This has led to countless emails, most of which presented more and more problems, four site meetings with three different personnel from Highways, and 2 land searches carried out. These were to discover whether Highways had rights over the verge and latterly the pavement by The Old Swan. This second land search has finally given us some good news that we could build one by The Old

Swan, on the pavement of Kingcombe Road. I have received confirmation today that the sale of The Old Swan will not cause complications as this is public highway maintained at public expense. The PC must now decide whether to go ahead with the project and engage contractors, and come up with a way to fund it.

High Speed Broadband: the procurement process is underway and DCC are waiting to receive bids from two potential suppliers. It is likely that when high speed broadband becomes available, it may be up to the householder to pay for the connection from their home to the junction box in the village. Our new website - Notice board page - has the information on the proposed timetable for the availability of this service.

Parish Plan: was delivered to all households last November. The PC agreed to adopt the plan which will help us in how we might direct our efforts by needing the needs of the parish in the future. There are some funds remaining from the original grant, and this has been set aside to pay for a revision of the plan possibly in 3 years time. We would like to thank the PP Committee for their generosity of their time on this project and especially Keith Miller and Jane Ennals for overseeing the presentation, proof reading and publication of the document.

Website: again thanks are due again to Cllr Peter Davies for taking on this project. The village has a new website which is www.tollerporcorum.org There was a concern that the old website could be lost from the web as the person hosting the site had moved from Toller. Peter has put in many hours constructing the site, and he is keen for all our village organisations to be represented on it, so please discuss your requirements with Peter.

Railway Bridge: residents have often commented how unsightly this is. When Oliver Letwin came here in January, I did ask him if he would be kind enough to contact the Railways Property Board in the hope of getting the bridge painted. I have some good and bad news on this! Oliver did kindly follow this upon our behalf I had an email from a Mr John Clarke to say the bridge was

quite safe, it had recently been strengthened and they were not intending to paint it. However, he did say that the RPB would supply the paint and we could paint it ourselves. Then I queried whether the RPB would pay to have the bridge sandblasting as it was no use just painting without time spent removing flaked paint and rust. I did get a quote for sandblasting £2,400 which was quite out of the question, but Mr Clark has agreed to pay for the hiring of sanding equipment. The question is should we, as a village, get the bridge beautified? Would we have enough volunteers to help? Mr Clarke has explained that it would require 2 coats and we could choose beige, black or grey.

Before finishing, I would like to thank once again Rebecca Knox and Jill Haynes for their support: updating us on various issues and following up items and queries on our behalf; all the Parish Councillors who give freely of their time, and to our hard working Clerk, Michele Harding. Michele passed her CILCA qualification earlier this year – we always thought she was an expert at her work, but now we know!

And, finally, a very special thank you to our retiring internal auditor, Mr Michael Boardman. Mike has audited the PC accounts for 10 or so years completely free of charge, and so earlier this year the PC felt it was right and proper to give him a token gift for his kindness. Thank you once again, Mike.

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.

David Ennals. May2013.