

Chairman's Report 2019

Our year as a Parish Council began on May 8th 2018. At this meeting, I was elected Chairman and Cllr Alex Carstairs was elected Vice Chairman; other elections included: Cllr Colin as our representative on the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, Cllr Judy as our Village Hall Committee representative, Mr Chris Wardle as our Rights of Way Officer, supported by Mr Mick Rawlings. Cllr Jeremy Stavenhagen agreed to continue the responsibility for overseeing our roads, reporting faults and liaising with our Community Highways Officer, Blair Turner; and Cllr Alex Carstairs agreed to continue overseeing planning applications.

It is our custom as a Parish Council to award small donations from our income, and we will be deciding upon donations for 2020-21 at our November budget meeting. Last November we awarded: our church £395 for churchyard maintenance, £800 to Toller Porcorum Recreational Area Association towards grass cutting and insurance; and £165 to the Village Association towards the cost of the insurance for our Post Office.

Following the resignation of Cllr Alex Carstairs, a casual vacancy had arisen and was advertised in accordance with legislation. Two applicants for the vacancy came forward and at our September meeting the remaining 6 Councillors had the opportunity to question the 2 applicants, a ballot was then held and Mr Chris Wardle was co-opted onto the parish Council.

Due to Cllr Carstairs' resignation nominations were sought for a Vice Chairman and it was resolved that Cllr Neil Farmer would fulfil the vacancy.

Cllr Farmer then agreed to act as our Planning Co-ordinator. Planning issues can be detailed, and sometimes controversial, so as a Parish Council we are grateful to Mr Alex Carstairs for all his work over several years taking the lead in this respect. Cllr Farmer has overseen 7 planning issues involving: Colesmoor Farm, 5 Barton Close, The Owls, Stones Common, Bracken House, Higher Kingcombe, and Poor End duly making his recommendations to the Council.

Planning documents are sent by email to the Clerk, who forwards them onto all councillors. Cllr Neil collates feedback. If there are contentious issues, he would request an extension to the deadline so that issues can be resolved at the next Parish Council meeting. Should you wish to follow up detail of any applications these are easily accessed through the dorsetforyou.com website planning section where you do a localised search by entering your postcode. Neil would like me to reiterate that any member of the public can either write a letter or comment on line, both of which will appear on the website against any applications commented on.

Highways is always a regular agenda item! Cllr Jeremy has worked tirelessly to get the quality of our local roads improved. Our Community Highways Officer is Mr Blair Turner, and we should all be grateful to Cllr Jeremy for developing a very positive relationship with Mr Turner, and I hope you agree with me that our local roads are safer and more easily passable with fewer pot holes and certainly less flooding. Despite bouts of very heavy rain during the Winter Lower Road has remained passable and this is as a consequence of the Stavenhagen/Turner initiative of getting ditches cleared and drains jetted before Winter set in which has paid dividends for us all. You will also have noticed that drain covers in the High Street were replaced with some associated levelling making the road more even.

A most prominent contribution to our village – indeed, even to Dorset – has been the work to upgrade our way signs. This started over 2 years ago with Cllr Jeremy investigating how best to repair our rusting posts and finger boards. He liaised with Dorset's AONB as well as the CLT to obtain funding. The first stage of improvement was when AONB agreed part funding to repair the signpost at Barrowlands, as long as the wording contained Eggardon!

He orchestrated sand blasting, priming and top coating the posts, and then a real fillip to the process occurred when he met Mr Nigel Phillips who resides in Church Mead. And the rest is history as they say! Nigel, agreed to take on the renovation of the finger post boards and painting of the finials. While the Parish Council/AONB/CLT has paid for the parts: wood, stainless steel brackets, paint and lettering, Nigel has been working at home to prepare the boards, and possibly you have seen him on the highway installing them, and occasionally, with his wife, Kate, holding the step ladder. Nigel has repaired 4 of these historic sign posts

plus the signage outside The Old Swan. The final one at Higher Kingcombe has been the most the most problematic as a new post was needed, so much liaising with our friend Mr Turner - as Highways by some statute law has to provide and install the post before Nigel can get his hands on it! If you meet Nigel, please make yourself known to him, and on behalf of us all a few words expressing admiration for his work would be warmly welcomed.

One major Highways issue that has emerged again this year has been a speed limit through the village. I have been a Parish Councillor for 12 years now and can remember that we have been rebuffed in this respect twice before. It was about 8 years ago that I had to have a site meeting with Highways to get SLOW printed on the road at the corner to the bridge on Lower Road, and only this year did we get the go ahead for Slow to be printed on the village side of the bridge!

But while at Parish Council level things move frustratingly slowly, this Parish Council is tenacious if nothing else! This time we decided to request the help of our MP, Sir Oliver. I met with Sir Oliver and we looked at the main road through the village and particularly the area at the railway bridge. Sir Oliver was extremely supportive and immediately acted on our behalf by writing to Highways and this led to Mr Michael Potter (Collision Reduction Team Manager at DCC) attending our November meeting. Mr Potter began by stating that a speed limit of 30mph had been agreed as part of the 2019 Transport Regulation Order programme. This would entail a period of statutory consultation, followed by a public consultation and as it was included in the programme, costs would be met by the County Council. Mr Potter answered questions and stated that Toller Porcorum was scoring highly on the list, this, we believe, is down to Sir Oliver's intervention! With the formation of the new Dorset Council, we hope that the consultations will begin very shortly but at this stage there is nothing anything further the Parish Council can do to accelerate the process.

An unusual topic on our agendas has been the concern over very large juggernaut type vehicles entering our village with the possibility of blocking roads and damaging buildings. The main event occurred in Kingcombe Road last June when a 5 axil HGV became stuck outside The Old Swan – too large to turn left or right without taking the corner off a building. The Police were called and the vehicle had to reverse all the way back to

Kingcombe before it could turn around. The school bus had to be diverted, and no traffic could pass, matters could have been worse had an ambulance or fire tender needed to get through.

The Parish Council has discussed and investigated the matter thoroughly. An option was to install advisory road signs – which we would have had to pay for! But where to place the signs was a problem: at the village boundaries was not an option as by then the HGVs would have come too far and would not be able to turn around. If we agreed on signs, the only option was to place them so far from the village that they would become meaningless. At this stage, we are taking this incident as a ‘one off’ situation, but we are aware that with lorries, it seems, becoming ever bigger such a situation may well occur again. Probably the most effective solution would be for Government banning companies with, say, 5 axil lorries from installing sat navs suitable for cars in their vehicles, we believe this was the case in this situation last Summer. So, Sir Oliver, should we get another incident of this kind you may well be getting another letter from us!

Associated with Highways is the on-going monitoring of our footpaths. And Cllr Chris Wardle with his wife Jenny and essentially their 2 very playful dogs Ted and Millie have been striding out across our countryside keeping an eagle’s eye on the state of our footpaths. Chris liaises with Tara Hansford (Rights of Way Officer) by reporting broken stiles and bridges and checking that they get repaired. Currently, Chris is looking at the installation by match funding in association with Tara of 4 gates replacing the old styles to improve access for walkers. Another on-going issue includes the right of way determination at Frogmore Farm/Badger Lane.

The Toller Porcorum Recreational Area Association was within a period of flux to say the least with Debbie Billen having resigned as its Chairman, and with no Secretary the charity was in a state of collapse with the inherent danger of the village losing the playing field. Despite the field being held in trust, without a management committee, the equipment would fall into disrepair and a possible closure resulting on Health and Safety Grounds would have become inevitable. The Parish Council decided to help resurrect the

management committee as well as continue to fund a grant. Some Councillors agreed to become trustees, and with these good people rallying others an AGM was called in September and a new Management Committee was formed. Just to highlight one major concern - the December inspection stated the rot in the swing frame which would have to be repaired or removed within 6 months. Replacement would be around £4800, and there was no way the committee could fund such a cost. While this is not a direct Parish Council issue, I want to highlight that when there is a need sometimes a solution can be found, and I am sure you have heard that the Recreational Area was awarded a lottery grant earlier this year and this wouldn't have happened without the enormous contribution in time made by Cllr Neil Farmer who worked with Mrs Ann Bayliss to submit the successful application. So, to end my report on good news, you will soon see a brand-new triple swing in the playing field where one swing will be a basket so whatever your age you can get into it with a friend and become a village swinger!!

Yes, I've nearly finished, however, very briefly, I want to highlight again 4 things:

The Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust contacted us last year as they wanted to erect a memorial plaque to commemorate the nearby Toller Airfield at Grey's farm, which is a slight exaggeration as it was a really a place where we think a barrage balloon was installed. This matter is now resolved and you will have seen the plaque displayed on the wall outside.

In 2015, two Parish Councillors were behind the initiative to start the Toller Times and this has now become a regular publication 10 times a year, the Kingcombe Centre now fund the printing, for which we are grateful. Mrs Debbie Billen continues as its editor in chief and we are very grateful to her for the time she takes over its compilation.

Our village website hosted by former Councillor Peter Davies. Again, our sincere thanks to Peter for this ongoing and most useful initiative. And you will be pleased to know that you can catch up on all the PC minutes (and even the Chairman's reports!), and now the added bonus of the playing field minutes! If any village group is holding a special event it is always worth contacting Peter who will willingly advertise it on the Noticeboard page, which may I add is currently advertising our famous church plant sale for Saturday morning May 11th!

With the demise of the Library Service bus, you will be pleased to know that Toller's own Library Service is still fully operative. You can order a book in the Post Office by a Tuesday morning on Wednesdays Robin Masters takes in orders to Bridport Library and delivers them back to the Post Office where they can be collected. Currently there are about 10 people using this service. Our gratitude expressed to Evelyn and Robin for this service to the community.

In finishing, I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors who make for lively but friendly debate at meetings. They give freely of their time for the good of our community and to our hard-working Clerk, Katharine Sheehan, who keeps scrupulous records and always seems to have any bite of required information to hand!

While Toller Porcorum has not to date been entered into Dorset's prettiest village competition, it is lovely to see the large pot by the telephone box and the rubber tractor tyres at the entrances to the village, these are planted and replenished by Janie Rawlings supported, of course, by husband Micky – our grateful thanks to them both.

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 and you can share your concerns or ideas during the public forum sections.

The new parish Council starts work following our AGM on Wednesday May 15th with 2 new Parish Councillors – Mr Peter Crabb and Ms Helen Jones. There was not an election as only 7 people applied to become Parish Councillors. But with 2 new councillors it means that 2 are stepping down, namely, Cllr Janet Knowles and Cllr Colin Baker.

The chairman summarised their contributions as serving Councillors. Cllr Knowles served for 12 years taking on the responsibility for footpaths, bye ways and B.O.A.T.S. Cllr Baker had served the parish for over 30 years as Councillor but also as the Parish Clerk when Jennifer Rolfe was Chairman. Cllr Ennals made a presentation of gratitude to both Councillors.