

## **Chairman's Report May 2015**

### **Puddletown Area Parish Council**

The year has seen a number of changes to the Parish Council. After only a brief period as a councillor Wayne Lewin left us in May 2014 and the meetings returned to a degree of normality. Bridget Legg left us shortly afterwards. At the start of this new term we shall be without David Smallwood and Diana Foreman who have both decided not to stand for re-election. Disappointingly, we go into this new term with a number of vacancies; 5 for Puddletown, 1 for Burleston and 1 for Athelhampton. My thanks go to all past councillors, in particular Diana, for their involvement and contribution to the work of the Council.

It was a great disappointment, despite the hard work of a number of Councillors, and in particular Ann Soderberg, that the Neighbourhood Plan for Puddletown couldn't get beyond first base due to a lack of willing volunteers able to take on the considerable task of putting together such a considered document. Let us hope that the effects of this don't come back to haunt us with ad hoc building developments throughout Puddletown. Tolpuddle parish had already decided that a neighbourhood plan was neither needed nor appropriate for their needs.

During the year the management of the Millennium planting began and this made an instant impact and improvement to the visual display at the western end of Puddletown. At the same time the hedges and trees around the recreation ground were cut and tidied giving the whole site a much needed makeover.

The local bus shelter at Kingsmead was replaced thanks to the support of County Councillor Andy Canning's small project fund with a grant of £1500. Thank you Andy.

The Tolpuddle shelter was recently professionally refurbished by Councillor Usherwood . Thank you Martin.

In October 2014 Rob Asprey of Hastoe Housing addressed the Council and set out a scheme to build some much needed affordable housing in Tolpuddle. All the properties will be available to rent, primarily for local people. The plans were approved in principle and it is hoped that work will commence in the near future on this very worthwhile project.

The plan for a proposed new and updated play area and skate park at the Puddletown recreation ground was approved in October 2014 and Rob Belbin and his team under the expert guidance of Councillor Sheppard continue to move this large project forward. They are currently seeking sources of funding for this most ambitious, exciting and much needed venture.

I'm not sure if it is good luck or superb timing but Cadbury's Chocolate Company have asked to use Puddletown for the imminent launch of their new product Cadbury's Puddles. They wish to rename Puddletown for the day and sponsor and organise a number of events which should elevate newly named Puddletown to a level nationally only seen previously by it's sister parish Tolpuddle. It is expected that Cadburys may well support the play park project financially although at this stage the details are as yet unclear, or should I say under wraps.

In September the Weymouth Challenge came through Puddletown leaving in it's wake considerable disruption and a little anger at the lack of notice of this now annual event. Notification has already been received of this year's event. It is hoped that greater communication and better organisation and clear up will be achieved after last year's experience. This year's nominated charity is Weldmar

Hospice Care Trust of which I am also Chairman.

Throughout the year there have been intermittent reports and meetings about the suggestion of setting up a new youth club. To date, and another year on, nothing further has happened.

The old first school is now being marketed having been empty for some while. This will likely go for housing development. On a positive note it looks like a section of land at the rear of the site can be used as an extension to the cemetery. This will solve a major problem that has been facing the village, as the current cemetery is virtually full and there are no other sites in Puddletown that can be utilised for this purpose.

Other matters to note include the rebuilding of the Backwater wall, knocked down during the recent flooding. An excellent job by our local Council. Thank you.

During the year, Superfast Broadband finally reached Tolpuddle and Puddletown but has still not made it to Athelhampton and Burleston.

Also during the year we have had regular attendance and updates at our meetings by the local PCSOs. Fortunately, we continue to live in an area of low crime incidence but their interest in our community is pleasing and welcomed.

In July Tolpuddle once again hosted the annual Martyrs' event. This was, as usual, very well attended, very successful and with the minimum of fuss and no after effects.

Almost finally, thank you to all councillors for their attendance, contribution and wise council. You do a great job and if I mentioned you all, I wouldn't know where to stop. Thank you to you all.

Finally, Amanda our Parish Clerk of long standing has decided to leave us after some 15 years of service to this Council. Her work, involvement, interest, contribution, understanding and good nature have been the back bone to this Council for such a long time. She will be sorely missed. Thank you so much for everything you have done for this Parish Council.

Our new clerk Sarah Davies joins us later this month. Sarah comes with strong previous experience being the current clerk to Charminster Parish Council. She has a hard act to follow but I know we will give her our wholehearted supported.

Once again thank you all again and thank you for listening to me.

Stephen Baynard  
May 2015