

PUDDLETOWN AREA PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2018/2019

First of all my apologies for not being here to present my Chairman's report. This is my 6th report as Chairman. It is also my last as Chairman of this Parish Council.

It is not my intention to regurgitate all of last year's activities as these are readily available on the Parish website but just to highlight some of the issues faced by the council in what has been an interesting, but often frustrating, year.

We started the year with a strong group of 11 councillors covering all 4 parishes. Unfortunately for a variety of reasons we managed to lose 4 during the year. We also had an acting clerk when one of our councillors, Shirley Langdon, stood in for our permanent clerk who went AWOL without any warning. Shirley helped us to recover from a very difficult situation, helping us to recover lost ground and generally performing the duties of a clerk, albeit unpaid. As Chairman I am immensely grateful for all of Shirley's support and determination.

Many of the issues faced by us are no different from other similar parish councils, namely, speeding, parking, dog fouling to name but a few. We met and dealt with all of these in abundance but not necessarily to everyone's satisfaction. However we still have speeding issues in the 2 main parishes despite a SID purchased and installed used in Puddletown and Tolpuddle. We still have parking issues at the First School, identified by the Council at the planning stage and we still have ill feeling regarding dog fouling on the recreation ground. Hopefully the new Council will manage to overcome these issues.

My comment regarding frustration mainly relates to planning issues and I know this has irritated a number of other councillors. On a number of occasions, planning applications objected to by the Parish Council and then treated similarly by West Dorset DC, have subsequently been overturned on appeal without the original reasons for denial being addressed. Whilst some of these reasons could never be addressed, it is hard to understand the rationale for some of these decisions.

Other planning decisions by higher authorities, such as the Southover slurry lagoon have also caused certain members of the Council to wonder just why we bother to review these applications.

My other main frustration has been the stalling/mothballing of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in the latter part of the year for reasons which, although understandable, are ultimately self-defeating. It was very sad personally for me to see this process come to a grinding halt after such an outstanding effort by so many and with so much of the investigatory work completed. I'm very hopeful that under a new Chairman this process can be restarted and driven to a successful conclusion.

As Chairman my thanks go to my Vice Chairs for their objective support and who have stood in for me when absent. I must also mention the considerable support given to our Parish Council by our County Councillor, Nick Ireland. He has been ever present at our meetings and supported us on many issues such as the slurry lagoon, speeding limits at The Coombe and local bus services.

My thanks also to our locum clerk, Colin Hampton, who has shown just how a parish should be professionally managed. It's a great pity that he cannot stay and support the new Council as he will be a hard act to follow for what has been a very active and busy Council.

We are all impressed with the new website. Thank you.

It is pleasing to see that both of the parish playparks are thriving and hopefully a revamp of Butt Close will follow shortly. Thank you to Alan and Martin for their continued hard work in this area. Good luck also to the Puddletown Play Park committee now that the proposed skate park has been approved.

Without wanting to name all of the Parish Councillors I feel I should mention Patrick Cooke who leaves us after 15 years as a Councillor. Also, although thankfully not leaving, Phil Drake who continues positively to support all things Puddletown and in particular PRIDE.

We are blessed to live in an area, despite the lack of buses, that is low on crime, has ready access to the best of medical facilities and generally has an excellent way of life.

Finally I believe the new Parish Council will have much to offer and hopefully will continue the very good work carried out by all of us leaving.

You are left with a very sensible precept, strong reserves and the finances in good shape.

Good Luck for the Future.

Stephen Baynard

Chairman

13th May, 2019