

**ETCHILHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (2015)**

1 Meetings

The Council has had five meetings in 2014/15 together with the Annual Parish Meeting the minutes of which have been tabled.

2 Councillors

Mrs Elizabeth Bridewell; Mr Tim Holgate; Mr Jon Nash (Treasurer & Responsible Financial Officer, unpaid); Mr Ralph Smith and Mr Mervyn Woods (Chairman and unpaid Clerk).

Mr Woods has been mandated to attend the Devizes Area Board, the Devizes Community Area Partnership and ad hoc meetings.

No councillors have received any payments from the Council for work done. Their pecuniary interests have been notified to Wiltshire and declared at relevant Council meetings.

3 Accounts

The Council's draft accounts for 2014/15 have been presented to the Annual Parish Meeting by Mr Jon Nash, the Responsible Financial Officer. These will be vetted by the Internal Auditor, Mr Ted Bearman, and the External Auditors, Grant Thornton.

4 Flooding

Flooding of the central village road and on the Etchilhampton-All Cannings road remains a serious issue. Wiltshire Highways officials have examined the problems and passed the matter to a specialist team who may combine remedial work with highway resurfacing as the highways need to be excavated in places. Mr Andrew Clark of Manor Farm has done significant drainage work on the culvert leading from No4 Manor Farm Cottages through his fields, to complement work done by Mr Tim Holgate on the open ditch through his land. Despite this the central road continues to flood when there is significant rainfall. Farmers on the north and south sides of the Etchilhampton-All Cannings road have been reminded of their ditching responsibilities but follow up action by Wiltshire remains outstanding.

The Council's serious concerns about the flooding problems have been and continue to be notified to Wiltshire.

5 Dog Fouling

This continues to be a problem, particularly for children playing in the playing field, despite notices put up by Wiltshire's Dog Warden some of which have been destroyed.

6 Buses

The Council responded to Wiltshire's Connect 2 consultations welcoming the proposals made by Devizes Area Passengers' Association and making some positive proposals. It is understood that the 18 month trial period of the new arrangements has not yet started leaving only 9 months or so to conduct the trial. This may be extended or

curtailed as Wiltshire is now conducting a much wider transport review. Mr Philip Whitehead has the Wiltshire Cabinet Portfolio for this.

7 Play Equipment

The Council has agreed to support the provision of outdoor climbing apparatus for children and has agreed to set aside a safe part of the playing field for this. Subject to the obtaining of grants to boost the Village Hall Social Committee's fund raising, the equipment may in due course become Council property, like the picnic table and bench and will supplement the swings.

The Village Fete on 25 July will split its net proceeds between funding the equipment and contributing to St Andrew's Church Fabric Fund.

8 The Wiltshire Core Strategy

The Strategy has been approved by the Planning Inspector and Wiltshire Council and will form the background to local planning.

9 Devizes Area Board

This Forum run by Wiltshire Council continues to discuss local issues with Devizes Area residents. Similar bodies exist in Marlborough, Pewsey and elsewhere. Mr Philip Whitehead has been appointed Vice-Chairman of the Devizes Board.

10 Devizes Community Area Partnership

This brings together councillors and others from the Devizes area and acts as a sounding-board/working group for local issues such as public transport and air quality.

11 Car Parking

Wiltshire has consulted on different schemes tailored to different towns in the county.

12 Playing Field and Hedge

Mr James Cowdry has very kindly cut the hedge at no cost to the Parish. Mr David Stevens has cut the grass in the playing field very thoroughly and has been re-contracted for 2015-6.

13 Highway Maintenance

The Council secured action by Wiltshire and their sub-contractors Balfour Beatty to clean up the track between the Village Hall and the Old Mission Hall and to cut grass and clear out grips on the Etchilhampton-All Cannings road. These are ongoing tasks.

As regards speed limits this road did not qualify in Wiltshire's first round assessment.

Potholes and road verge erosion problems remain unresolved.

14 Footpaths

Wiltshire has been notified of the impassable access point on the west side of the Etchilhampton to Monument Cottages footpath. As currently signed by the erection of a new stile this would require climbing up very steep muddy grass steps on the bank

on the west side of the Etchilhampton to Stert road. Hitherto access has been via the flat field entrance a few feet to the south with no stile.

15 Hedge at 12 Church View

After lengthy argument between Wiltshire and Sarsen Housing Association as to ownership, the overhanging hedge has been cut back by Wiltshire and a new fence erected by Sarsen.

16 Bus Passes

The Council continues to urge Wiltshire to provide full passes to pensioners and disabled residents.

17 Telephone Kiosk

The Council has, at least for the present, successfully stalled BT's abandonment of the kiosk and has asked for public telephony to continue.

18 Planning Applications

A number of routine applications have been approved during the year.

19 New Local Government Transparency Rules

The Council is exploring how best to address yet more red tape regulations.

20 Subscriptions and Donations

St Andrew's Churchyard maintenance was given £250; subscriptions were made to Wiltshire Association of Local Councils and Community First and donations to the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Bobby Van Trust all of which provide local support for parishioners.

21 Street Lights – Energy saving

Wiltshire is re-introducing its midnight-5am street lights switch off plan. This will be rolled out first to towns. The Council has already submitted suggestions on this topic sometime ago.

22 Thanks

The Chairman would like to take the opportunity of this report to thank everyone who supports the Council's activities in many different ways.

Mervyn Woods
Chairman, Etchilhampton PC
May 2015.