

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 14TH MAY 2025 – ANNUAL REPORTS

CHAIRMANS REPORT – Prepared by Cllr R Tillett

Highways: nothing much to report this year, except the disruption caused by the burst water main in December which closed Burridge Hill for several days. We have complained to SW Water but it seems likely that the problem will recur and cause similar disruption. Apart from this, a number of potholes have been reported and repaired, usually within a few days.

Village hall: the new porch panels and doors, main fire doors and kitchen door have all been replaced recently and look very smart. The PC has agreed to place the order and pay for the work, on the understanding that the village hall trustees will reimburse in full. Overall, the hall is fairly well used and general maintenance is largely covered by income (including the PC grant). The hall is 100 years old this year and a birthday party is planned for later in 2025.

Financial report 2024-2025 – The Clerk

The Annual Audit has been completed for this year and the internal auditors report has been circulated. The points in the report for action will be looked at in this meeting. (please see below).

The Year-end accounts have already been published on-line.

The Council increased the Precept last year by £500 due to an increase in annual operating costs. The Council did not increase the Precept this financial year. The Council is committed to closely managing costs and discretionary expenditure closely to ensure best value is achieved.

The Village Hall porch repairs are due to be completed this year. The Council secured a locality grant of £1000 and the remainder of the costs to be covered from the fund's reserves.

Due to on-going complications with moving funds from the Santander savings account to the current account the decision was made to close the savings account. This has now been done and the £3,084.28 held within it has been moved to the current account.

The budget approved by Councillors for 2024-25 was set in November 2024 and is available to view on the PC website. The budget for 2025-26 and setting of the Precept will take place in November 2025. Earmarked reserves were reviewed in November and the Council continues to aim to hold 3 months of reserves.

The Council laptop had to be replaced this year at a cost of just over £500. This has future proofed the office equipment for a few years.

Variances in the accounts over the period 2024-25 are published on the website along with all other audit paperwork.

Tree Warden report - Cllr Hollingsworth

The trees planted in Station Marsh, in remembrance of those who served and died during WW1, are flourishing, as is the native oak planted in memory of Queen Elizabeth. The tussocky grass in

between the trees supports lots of wildlife including small mammals such as shrews, voles, moles and harvest mice, the latter building their nests in the tall grasses.

The memorial plaque, with an inscription dedicating the trees to those who served, suffered and died during WW1, sadly 'disappeared' during a recent spate of vandalism in the village. If anyone would like to help fund a replacement plaque, please contact the parish council.

There are also two rare native black poplars in Station Marsh which were grown from cuttings (from storm-felled trees which were growing on the river Clyst). They were planted here in 2009 and are now huge! There will be a small piece about them in Speke Up, following an item about them on the Radio 4 Today programme. Black poplars were once common trees, growing on flood plains and river banks.

The tree-in-railings looked wonderful a few weeks ago when it was in blossom and continues to enhance that corner of the village all year round. It looks like goldfinches might be nesting in it's branches again.

Bats are emerging from hibernation and returning to their maternity sites. 13 of the 18 species of native bats have been recorded in and around the Station Marsh area alone. I particularly love to see the Daubentons bats skimming the river surface, hunting insects.

Every year, I look forward to the sand martins return in mid to late March. Sadly, this year, I've seen very few and none around their usual nest sites. (It's possible that they've moved to different nest sites which are inaccessible to the public – anyone know?)

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT – Cllr Langdon

Over last 6 months I have desperately tried to add email list (will need help with this I think!)

I have communicated through village wotsap on dates and meetings.

The Facebook page is a challenge but is started.

I've sent messages to Stewart on community larder but need to approach a few people in the village so leaving that on won the back burner for now.

Once the email distribution list is up and running this may help with the above.

I have met a few parishioners recently who have welcomed supporting me in my new role.

Sue Satchell is covering g off the the welcome packs and has plants for any newcomers to the village.

FOOTPATH REPORT – Cllr Wayne and Wynn Stait

Parish Footpaths are currently dry and generally in good condition, which is a contrast to this time last year. Vegetation is growing rapidly and the cow parsley is narrowing paths ahead of the annual cut.

During June 2024 work was completed on Church Steps (FP7) to replace the rotten handrail supports and clear the steps of built-up detritus. The laurels were also finally cut back in March 2025 following emails and conversations with the landowner.

In February 2025 fallen trees were cleared by the landowner on Gypsy Lane (FP4) following the multiple storms that blew through. We are seeing repeated and prolonged flooding on this footpath

as rainwater is collecting in a natural basin between two fields. Stuart Luxton has kindly offered to attempt to alleviate the situation using his drainage knowledge and digging equipment. £500 has been requested via DCC to contribute to this work.

The Footpath fund (P3 Pot) stood at £1,528.71 at the end of the financial year. We will receive £140 from DCC for machinery servicing. We have also requested £300 for the now annual clearance of Station Hill plus the £500 for FP4 referred to above.

Apart from FP4 there are no major projects currently planned for 2025/6.

PLANNING REPORT – CLLR W HONAN

East Devon planning department recorded 8 planning applications over the period starting April 2024 and ending March 2025. Seven of the 8 applications were related to residential property. In addition, the one remaining application was related to the Village Hall. The Parish Council did not object to any application. However one application was refused by the planning department.

Three applications were minor alterations, whereas 4 applications were more major, for example an extension.

The development at Stonilands remains to be referred to the East Devon planning department.