

**BISHOPS LYDEARD AND COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL  
(including COTFORD ST LUKE)**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MAY 2011**

First of all, I would like to thank all members of the Parish Council for their efforts over the past year and their commitment to the work we do. The strength of the Parish Council is in working as a team to get results for our area and taking on board ideas, suggestions and contributions from all members and, of course, members of the public as well.

I particularly thank Vice Chairman, John Wilkins, for his help and sound advice, Paul Partington for his work on footpaths, Pete Watson for his work on hanging baskets, Greg Allen for being the village hall representative, John Hassall for representing us on CSLCA and Ann Pattermore for contributing to the MUGA committee. Also, though not appointed by the Parish Council, Henry Davenport for his work with Speedwatch and Annie Smith and Pete Watson for their work on the Library Group,

I also want to thank our Clerk, Mary Rousseau for the very professional way in which she plays her part in ensuring the efficient running of the council. I rely on her and very much value her advice and help. I know other members do as well. I also want to record my thanks to Jane Durrant who stepped in to take the minutes most efficiently on four occasions during the year when the Clerk was not well.

This year, we have said goodbye to Mrs Waymouth as Councillor for Cothelstone ward. I thank her for her contribution and welcome Mrs Warmington in her place.

It is perhaps worth recording that, according to the minutes, 63 members of the public attended parish council meetings during the year.

### **Precept**

Setting the precept for 2011/12 was particularly challenging this year because Cotford St Luke elected a new Parish Council from May 2011.

This effectively meant a reduction of around 40% in Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone's Parish Council income with fixed costs reducing by less than 10%. In order to balance the budget, the Parish Council agreed to some cuts in funding but reluctantly also felt there was no choice but to increase council tax. We therefore set a budget of £25,185. This equates to a Parish Precept for a Band D property of £22.55 per annum (just under £2 per month). This was an increase of £5.64.

A number of residents subscribed last year towards the cost of hanging baskets in Bishops Lydeard and the Parish Council also contributed to the scheme. One of the savings reluctantly agreed for 2011/12 was to suspend the hanging basket scheme, which had an annual cost to the Parish Council of just under £2,000. Hanging baskets could be reinstated next year if residents felt this was important and sufficient people were willing to contribute.

### **Planning**

The Parish Council considered and commented on 51 Planning Applications during the year. Of these, 42 came from Bishops Lydeard, 9 from Cotford St Luke. Those which attracted the most comment were the plans for a 2.5 storey building mixed use building on what is known as the old pub site in Cotford St Luke, the application for a

storage building and offices at Lime Tree Farm, the photo-voltaic panels at Lethbridge Park and, most recently, an application for 4 new dwellings in the garden of the Lethbridge Arms.

### **Police**

PCSO Sue Thompson has regularly attended Parish Council meetings throughout the year and Beat Manager Andy Davies has also attended. The main issues reported have been theft from outbuildings and ongoing problems at Sandhill Park. At our last meeting, it was reported that, owing to a police restructure, both PCSO Sue Thomson and Beat Manager Andy Davies will no longer be responsible for this area and I would like to thank them both for their work in the Parish and particularly Sue Thompson for her work with young people. We welcome in their place PC Joanne Jeffery and PCSO Sharon Cridlin.

### **Highways**

Following discussions with members of the public and Somerset County Council, the Parish Council agreed to fund dropped kerbs in West Street and Mount Street at a cost of £600 and white lining marking pedestrian footways at the Lethbridge Arms and High Street from Pound Land to Glanville Close.

### **Lease on Cotford St Luke Community Hall**

Following protracted negotiations the Parish Council signed the sub-lease on Cotford St Luke Community Hall on behalf of the Cotford St Luke Community Association. It may now be sensible to transfer this sub-lease to the new Parish Council in Cotford St Luke.

### **Grants**

The Parish Council made grants to the following organisations during the year: Bishops Lydeard MUGA Group for resurfacing works (£5,000 from MUGA sinking fund), VHMC for improvements to the play park (£2,000), Friends of Dene Barton (£150), Bishops Lydeard Youth (£400), Quantock Eco (£85).

### **Grit Bins**

4 Grit Bins were purchased by the Parish Council and placed in Knapp Lane, Cushuish Lane, Graham Way and Quantock View.

### **Old Tramway Pole**

The Parish Council corresponded with Western Power over the damaged Old Tramway Pole in West Street. The latest information is that this work is now in hand and a new casting should be in place shortly.

### **Triangle in front of Webbers**

There has been an ongoing problem with the small triangle of land in front of Webbers which is not maintained and creates a poor impression coming into Bishops Lydeard along Taunton Road. A land registry search by Taunton Deane showed that the owner had gone into liquidation and that the land has reverted to the Crown Estate. There seems little option but for the Parish Council to take responsibility for maintaining this land.

## **Roger Sleaf award**

Following a suggestion by a member of the public, the Parish Council nominated Roger Sleaf for a Chairman's Award from the Chairman of Somerset County Council. The nomination was successful and Roger attended an award ceremony.

## **The Library**

Three members of the Parish Council set up a small steering group to look at options for the future of the Library and they reported back to the Parish Council. A bigger Library Working Group has now been established which is working towards running the Library as a Community Library outside the County Council system.

## **Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC)**

A small village garden was established by the underpass thanks to funding from LARC. The specific aim of this is to improve the impression of the village for visitors from the railway but there is no doubt it has given pleasure to many locals as well.

## **Cotford St Luke**

This past year was the last one in which this Parish Council had responsibility for Cotford St Luke. I am very pleased that Cotford St Luke now has its own Parish Council, whose first meeting was last night. I am sure I speak for everyone is wishing them well in the future.

**So, in summary** - a good year, an interesting year, a varied year. I also think there are clear pointers for the future and to extra responsibilities/costs which this Council may be asked to take on or help fund. We already have the land at Webbers and the Woodland walk by the By-pass in the pipeline. The new Library may well approach the Parish Council for some funding and, as the Borough and County Council seek further savings, I think it is realistic to anticipate further calls on this Council to help protect local services which we value.

Joanna Lewin-Harris  
Chairman  
Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council