

2017 Woolsery Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting Chair's Annual Report

I, on behalf of my fellow Councillors, would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone here this evening, to our Annual Parish Meeting.

Over the past twelve months there have been many changes within the Parish Council, this included the resignation of Cllr Turner this time last year though he continues to be actively involved with Bucks Cross Village Hall and the welcome return of Cllr Medd to our numbers as well as some new Councillors – Cllr Taylor joined us in May and in December, Cllr Spittles. However, and it would be remiss of me not to mention that we still have a vacancy, so if anyone here this evening is interested in playing a more active role in the Parish, then do speak to one of us here or contact the Parish Clerk.

The work of the Parish Council continues to be quite wide ranging, and often challenging, as we liaise with agencies to get work completed in times of continued cutbacks. Though the Council has not raised its Precept for the sixth consecutive year, this is the part of our Council Tax that comes back to the Parish, it is proud to be able to continue to provide grants to organisations within the Parish who themselves provide activities and services to the wider parish, and am sure that my fellow Councillors would like to join me in thanking them for the time they give to their organisations.

The Parish Council would like to thank Cllr Julian for his continued support and providing new kit to Woolsery Junior Football team. On matters of highways he secured funding for road repairs within his District, and used the monies to have much needed and well overdue repairs and resurfacing of the road through Stroxworthy, as well as the stretch of road outside Thornery Farm resurfaced, even if outside parish boundaries it is a road much travelled by those who live in the Parish. Though we all know that potholes continue to be problem in this and every parish in the district, the Council would like to encourage parishioners to join Cllrs in reporting these on line, the more they are reported the more likelihood Highways will listen and use their budgets to make more long term repairs to our roads.

The Council joined with Parkham Council once again this year to apply for funding to improve drainage along our roads above that completed by Lengthsman, a number of

small projects have been carried out around the Parish to keep help drains and gullies clear and surface water moving.

After much letter writing to, and meetings with, DCC Highways it has finally been acknowledged that there is an issue with sections of drains that carry away surface water in the village, and once again with Cllr Julian's support, Highways has set aside budget during this financial year to carry out repairs.

In and around Bucks Cross and Bucks Mills the Parish Council was pleased to be able to provide funding for the Village Hall to have more weather proof doors and to reinstate a resting place on the way up the hill from Bucks Mills to Bucks Cross, by having the bench repaired, our thanks go to Mike Smith for his help.

The bus shelter at Bucks Cross sadly saw some vandalism but this is about to be repainted and the Council has been able to purchase, with the help of an Investing in Devon Grant run from Devon County Council, a new bus shelter for the opposite side of the road, this has been delivered and should soon be in place. The provision of dropped kerb between the two however is still the subject of correspondence and meetings with Highways.

Another current project for the Council is the provision of a night time landing site for DAAT, the Devon Air Ambulance Trust, within the Parish. This has taken much time and effort to negotiate, with Cllr Edmonds escorting DAAT representatives to several potential sites, including here at the Sports and Community Hall, however DAAT finally settled on the primary school playing field as the most appropriate location and the school governors were good enough to give their approval. Some adjustments need to be made to the location of the goals posts but funding has already been pledged by DAAT and an application has been made to TDC for a grant under New Homes Bonus Scheme, which is still awaiting approval and the process of making a planning application is also underway - the Council hope that everyone will sign the petition as part of the planning application to show their support for the landing site.

The Parish Council also launched its own web site and the Council would like to thank Kieren Spittles who created the site and the Clerk's hard work is populating the site with varied and valuable information. We might be biased but we think now we have a really

good web site that goes beyond just agenda and minutes of meetings – why not take a look for yourselves? woolseryparishcouncil.org.uk

Some of you may not be aware that Parish Council is responsible for the majority of the grass cutting along the verges of the Parish, and would like to thank Ben Stoneman for his continued efforts in the upkeep of our verges. Likewise, we would like to thank Chris Wills for his sterling job pollarding the chestnut tree outside All Hallows. And we would like to remind you all that the distribution of black refuse bags will take place once again in the Autumn.

There are still concerns and projects on the Council's list and, within the Parish, these include the need for affordable housing, and concerns that the much-needed social housing so hard fought for by the then Cllr Turner, could disappear under new government rules. Another concern is the need to ease the parking problem in the centre of Woolsey, though how or where space can be found is a challenging problem – if anyone has a solution then Cllr Hill would be delighted to hear from you!

Outside of the Parish but of concern to parishioners are the probable cuts to services at North Devon District Hospital, it's a pity that government ministers have little idea about rural living and access to medical services.

The Council will continue to serve the Parish, continuing to listen to concerns, and hopefully help to solve those concerns.

To conclude and on behalf of myself and my fellow Councillors I thank you for attending this evening's meeting and we look forward to welcoming all residents of the Parish to our monthly Council meetings. We hope to see you at our next meeting. Thank you.

Sonia Hamilton

Vice Chair, Woolsey Parish Council