

MOPC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018

A parish chairman is more like a ship's figurehead than a captain. Of decorative and symbolic value and a useful target for enemy gunfire but the real work has been done by the crew – the councillors and clerks past and present - to whom I give my warmest thanks for their support and dedication.

The Council comprises Roger Caesley, who joined us last year, Pete Coverdale, Anna Roxburgh, Martin Smith, Charles Swallow and Paul Wells. Your council has met nine times including an extraordinary meeting to explain legal changes and the increase in the precept. However this belies the extensive work undertaken by all our councillors and Clerk. All have taken on extra duties way beyond our regular meetings – establishing our finances on a sound footing, ensuring we are compliant with legislation on audit and publication online, ensuring our contract and insurance are in order, looking after our assets such as the playground, keeping the village looking attractive with a Spring Clean and dog mess campaign, helping organisations such as the Village Hall, Tennis Club and ArtsReach and attending special meetings.

For those with children or grandchildren, Pete Coverdale has looked after the playground, and doing much of the work such as bark-laying himself. Anna has also looked after the playground and maintained liaison with the many committees on which she sits as well as being our Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator.. Charles's financial expertise has been invaluable – indeed essential. Paul Wells detailed work on contracts and insurance has been also invaluable. Roger has sought to put the council into a legal framework in line with current demands. Martin has also taken on the role of ArtsReach co-ordinator and presented an excellent case for council support of the organization. In

short, although we have no official deputy chairman, each councillor has taken on that role informally.

District and County Councillor Mary Penfold has been an essential source of help and advice and explained the many changes that are involved in the setting up of a unitary authority for Dorset and the different share of responsibility between parishes and larger authorities.

The past year has seen our new Clerk settle in and now has a proper contract and remuneration appropriate according to local government legislation. As a professional clerk she has attended courses on our behalf and shared the costs with other councils she works for. Her experience of these has proved invaluable in sorting some of our own issues.

Our former clerk Lindsay Reeve has continued to maintain the village web site, which is a legal demand on us as well as an essential source of information and we strongly encourage everyone to make more use of this resource. Lindsay also continues to look after the defibrillator which has been installed outside the Village Hall. We are aware that we need more sessions on how actually to use it safely and these will be arranged.

The major event of the last 12 months has been the increase in the precept and the new obligations, which resulted in this. We held a meeting in which Charles Swallow excellently explained every detail of the new situation and we are all grateful to him. As a result of the precept increase our finances are sound and we have budgeted for future expenditures. Our bank balance stands at £2329 although we are facing further expenditures soon. Total income last year was £3344 and expenditure was £2666

We have been able to decrease our insurance premiums with no diminution of cover thanks to Jodie and Paul Wells.

As a result of the insurance review we have looked into the agreement with the Estate about the Reading Room and have written to the estate about the use by the Post Office and hire out of the Recreation Ground to solidify informal arrangements.

We were able contribute to the Tennis Club's trench and to the Village Hall. Sadly we lost anticipated income from the Caravan Club when the Recreation Ground proved too waterlogged to be safely used.

Relations with Ilchester Estate remain good – the works on the Dairy Farm that they had permission for last year and were postponed are now continuing. We have noted a much improved level of courtesy and safety from estate and contractor drivers and are very grateful for this. The Reading Room continues to be an invaluable site for village society meetings and we hope to agree with the Estate on a redecoration of the premises.

We had no objections to the current domestic planning permissions, which have become less stringent in recent legislation.

In short, the Council has tried to fulfil its old obligations and taken on new ones in a new local government context. Please wish us luck!