

Melbury Osmond Parish Council - Chairmans Report 2022

Having been the chair for a mere three weeks only, my first duty is to offer my sincere thanks to previous councillors; Paul Wells who chaired the council from 2019 to July 2021 and Roger Caesley who agreed to temporarily chair for the period July 2021 to March 2022 to facilitate succession. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our clerk since 2017, Jodie Carter, who recently gave notice of her resignation. Personally and on behalf of the council, thank-you all for all of your hard work for our community.

This year as the covid vaccination programme began to take effect and restrictions were relaxed the council met in person rather than the video meetings of the previous year. We favoured the increased space available in the village hall to make the meetings as “covid safe” as possible. We have come to prefer this space and, pending a decision to return to the Reading Room or not, we encourage feedback and opinion from our residents who attend council meetings.

We were delighted to welcome two new councillors in Katrina Holtham and Robert Ward during the summer. Your Parish council currently consists of Pete Coverdale, Katrina Holtham, Martin Smith, Robert Ward and myself with support from Jodie Carter. We do still have two vacant positions for councillors and, as referenced above, are seeking and will be advertising for a new clerk to the council. Anyone interested in these positions please contact the clerk, the chairman or any member of the council.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Mary Penfold, our county councillor, who regularly attends our meetings and provides updates and opportunities at the county level.

Meeting agendas and minutes are published on the village website, the maintenance for which we are very grateful to Lindsay Reeve. Lindsay also manages upkeep of the defibrillator unit at the Village Hall entrance, for which a replacement battery was purchased this year. Thanks also go to Anna Roxburgh for helping keep residents aware and safe via the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

The council maintains the village playground, and financial year 21/22 saw the replacement of the swings after the annual inspection carried out by RoSPA in

May indicated they had reached the end of their life. One new twin unit, at a cost of £2,634, which holds a junior and an infant seat replaces the two former units. This smaller footprint combined with new galvanised metal post feet is intended to reduce maintenance costs going forward. The play tower will be the next item requiring attention. Future RoSPA reports will be published on the website. The playground has also very much benefitted from the attention paid to it by Wendy Wheeler for garden maintenance. As Wendy is not able to continue we express our gratitude and will be seeking an alternative arrangement. Any potential leads on this will be gratefully received.

The council continues to support the Village Hall and with the joyful chatter of the recent Jubilee celebrations still ringing in mind I would like to express our thanks to all the committees and residents who made the celebrations such a success. As part of creating a more permanent celebration for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the council with agreement from Ilchester Estates plans to establish a "Jubilee copse" at the western end of the "rec". We have secured 105 native trees free from the Woodlands Trust to be planted in the autumn as a community event.

Although ordered but not yet realised, the council also supported the Boules players with agreement to fund a replacement bench seat (~£595).

Councillors commented on two planning applications in the period, and reported footpath and highways issues on several occasions to the relevant authorities. The Parish Council has also agreed to fund additional road drain cleaning, the date of which is yet to be confirmed. We would like to thank Barbara Harris for her service as she stepped down as footpaths officer during the year and we welcome and look forward to working with the new officer, David Armstrong.

The council seeks to liaise and maintain a good working relationship with Ilchester Estates and Velcourt, addressing issues, where possible, as they arise.

Parish Council finances are currently sound. Income for 21/22 was £6760, mostly from the precept, expenditure over the period was £4942, and the balance to year end March 2022 was £4634. Audited accounts will be published in due course and will be available on the website.

Richard Paley, June 2022