

The Charltons Parish Council

Chair's Annual Report 2024

When asked to report on all activities for a whole year it is difficult to remember anything unless it was particularly out of the ordinary, but on checking back over various minutes and records it is encouraging to find that, the Parish Council covered quite a bit of ground in many different areas:

The major difference was the transfer to the new Unitary Authority elected on April 1st 2023, and with it a change in many aspects of how things are done. Much publicized are the costs and lack of funds associated with this, but I don't intend to enter the politics of that in this report – suffice to say that this Parish Council have undertaken to raise the Reserve held to support maintenance and other costs arising within the Parish, following recommendations to do so after our official audit. We have been successful in this and have still managed to support local organizations, particularly to support the youth club financially and contribute to Somerton Library. Going forward we will still need to carefully manage funds. The changeover also saw the introduction of new LCNs or Local Community Networks – consisting of all the Parish Councils across Somerset grouped into areas with their own committees and meeting agendas. The Charltons are part of the Levels & Moors Group, with Langport, Somerton, Kingsbury Episcopi and others, but not stretching to Glastonbury and Street. A representative from the Parish has attended all but one of the 4 or 5 meetings held annually across the area. Topics and activities undertaken are very varied, and there are some useful contacts and data made available,, with neighbouring Parishes working together, for example an Active Travel group which seeks to link up footpaths and tracks to enable easier walking or cycling to avoid major roads. Unfortunately it was not envisaged that the Somerset Authority would have little or no funds to contribute. On a more sombre note this January saw the untimely passing of our County Councillor Dean Ruddle, who worked tirelessly for Somerton but also made many things easier for the Parish Councils he attended, he will be very much missed. We do have a new elected County Councillor, Stephen Page , now in place.

Planning: The last 12 months saw permission finally granted for the development of 35 houses behind the Fox & Hounds by Grove Properties, after many meetings and communications. The Parish Council agreed in principle to adopt the Public Space, in the form of a Green, when the development is complete, subject to satisfactory terms and conditions being agreed. This development will provide a mix of housing with 13 much needed starter and affordable homes Full permission was granted last autumn and as yet no groundwork has commenced. The PC will of course continue to monitor developments. Within the last year the conversion of the old Greyhound pub was completed, and the properties occupied by new owners, the building of a new dwelling at Lytes Cary farm has been approved, and there have been many extensions and alterations processed. I think it is noticeable that many of these seek to be, or at least improve, on ecological aspects of

development, especially in the older properties within the villages, and of course having reference to our Conservation areas

Highways: the purchase of the Speed Indicator device was completed in August 2022 and posts installed for mounting. Data continues to be monitored, and many thanks go to the Speedwatch volunteers who undergo the training and undertake the duties to try and make our roads safer and more pleasant. We also worked with the County Council Highways Department to install and fund a new 30 mph limit at Lytes Cary, which was only at planning stage last May.

Defibrillators:

The Parish Council continues to pay the ongoing maintenance costs of these, and thanks to fund raising in Cary Fitzpaine, a new defibrillator has been installed there recently, so much of the Parish now has access to this emergency support, and they have been needed and used.

Flooding:

After several years of no really significant problems – only one or two incidents, which I am not dismissing, this year which has broken all weather records nationally has seen some major flooding events in both Mackrell and Adam, also Cary Fitzpaine. Work is currently being investigate the formation of a Flood Action group, taking advice from the relevant authorities, and holding meetings, and speaking with surrounding landowners. Many thanks to the parishioners and Councillors who are volunteering for this task, we hope that should this become “the norm” in our weather pattern we can alleviate the recurrence, and be better organized to deal with it. Some culvert and ditch clearing has already started.

Finally, as this is being prepared, we have a full complement of 9 Councillors, which is pleasing, and we continue to try and look after the needs of the Parish and it’s assets. Over the year work has been undertaken on the village car park, hedges trimmed, and the War Memorial ‘repaired’ in that the names have been repainted to make them clearer. There is further work scheduled on that, currently delayed by the discovery of stag beetles within the tree stumps. A Tommy figure was purchased last year for Remembrance Day, and we hope to purchase a corresponding female figure this year to be placed opposite.

Lastly may I thank my fellow Councillors for their hard work during the last year and particularly thank Becky our Parish Clerk and Financially Responsible Officer for guiding us through what has sometimes been a challenging year.

Tamzin Elliott

Chair

May 2024