

Winterborne St Martin Parish Council

Annual Parish Council Report

2017-2018

The Winterborne St Martin Parish Council has had a busy year during 2017-18. Members of the Parish Council have had some interesting discussions about a variety of local matters.

We have discussed 21 planning applications within the parish area and submitted our comments to the planning authority, West Dorset District Council.

During 2017 Stonewater Housing Association held a public information event at the village about a proposed development of affordable housing on land adjacent to Dukes Close. At the time of writing there is no further information regarding this and no planning application has been submitted. When a formal planning application is submitted the Parish Council will arrange a parish council meeting, in a location of a suitable size, to consider the views of the residents in the village before submitting their comments to the planning authority. Details for all planning matters can be found on the Dorset for You website and all are entitled to submit comments to the planning authority on any planning matters that are of interest to them.

The parish council continues to communicate with the residents of the village through a variety of means including the village website and Valley and Valence, the parish magazine. Minutes, agendas and other public notices are also placed in two notice boards in the village, one in the bus shelter adjacent to the childrens' play park and one in the lay by at Mallards Green. Hopefully, this enables everyone in the village to have an accessible means of receiving information about the parish council.

At the annual parish meeting last year it was evident - from the members of the village that attended - that one of the pressing concerns was that of the speed of the traffic travelling through the village, particularly in the parts of the village with no pedestrian footpaths. The parish council took this on board and after negotiation with Dorset County Council highways team including data collection and agreement of suitable locations, the parish council decided to purchase a Speed Indicator Device (SID). The SID is used at two locations at Mallards Green on the C53 and the direction of display is changed every six weeks. To date the highest recorded speed is 68 – in a 30mph zone – 4:20 on a Tuesday afternoon in May and again at 7 on a Thursday evening in May! The data recorded constantly measures a high proportion of vehicles exceeding the speed limit. Further consultations will continue with DCC highways team about the data collected from the SID and also about the possibility of using it an additional location in the village. The Dorset Police 'No Excuse' van has also been making more frequent visits to locations within the village.

Since January 2018 the parish council has increased its frequency of meetings to monthly. This was both to ensure that more discussions about planning matters were help in a public forum and also to meet the increasing need for meeting time, which is likely to increase in

the future as the parish council responds to the changes that will come about in Dorset as the principal councils move to a Unitary Council format.

Statutory changes bring about new and additional requirements that the parish council has to meet – the latest being the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Many of you will have heard of these changes from the many organisations you interact with – and it is no different for the parish council. We are preparing for the changes we have to make to meet these more stringent data protection regulations.

From April 2019 Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council - along with all Dorset District Councils - will be abolished and replaced by one Unitary Authority, covering all the statutory responsibilities of the previous two. This will inevitably bring about further changes for the town and parish councils in the area covered by the new Unitary Authority. West Dorset District Council has already started consulting with town and parish councils about some discretionary services and the possibility of these being taken on by towns and parishes, rather than them being lost altogether as further cutbacks are made to meet the ever increasing cost pressures arising from the complete reduction in funding from central government - and the increasing costs associated with adult and children's social care. There will be additional consultation about discretionary services currently undertaken by Dorset County Council. What parishes and towns currently do will inevitably be changing in the near future and we have to be prepared for this. This will also inevitably require an increase in the precept if the parish council is to take on discretionary services currently delivered by either West Dorset District Council or Dorset County Council – but at this time we have no idea what this will require.

2018/19 is the final year of four year term of office for the current members of the parish council. An election will be held in May 2019 to choose the members of the Parish Council for the next term – expected to be five years to bring all the Dorset Councils in line with election dates. During the next 12 months we will be regularly asking members of the village to consider standing for election to the parish council. The most important element of the parish council engaging with the villagers it represents is through the process of an election – so that your parish council is made up how you choose it to be. There are nine seats on the parish council – therefore to hold an election we need more than nine people willing to be nominated to stand for election. No special skills are required and a balance of ages, genders and previous experiences is positively welcomed.

All parish council meetings are open to the public and we welcome everyone who gives up their time to attend. Please come along to a parish council meeting over the next year to see how it operates and to help in your decision about whether you might stand for the next council. Talk to any parish council members about what we do, how much commitment there is, can you fit it in (we can almost guarantee you can), might you enjoy it, what can you add, what can you learn, how can the village benefit from you being a member of its parish council.

Debbie Wiltshire, Chairman, Winterborne St Martin Parish Council