

Castle Cary Town Council

Annual Town meeting

May 16th 2017

Chairs Report

How quickly the last 12 months have passed and the Town Council seems to have been busier than ever. A big thank you to all the Councillors, staff, and volunteers who help to keep Castle Cary a vibrant and enjoyable place to live.

It seems strange writing this report and not being around to talk to you all but as you may have heard I am taking a 6 month sabbatical from the Council due issues with young grandchildren and an elderly mother. A problem that I am sure a number of you can relate to.

What have your Council been doing over the last 12 months?

Recruiting new Councillors - This time last year Barbara, Martin and Justin joined the Council and are now fully fledged Councillors. We still have a vacancy so I hope that after tonight you will all be rushing to put your names forward to join us.

Staff - The clerk has been kept busy this year managing new employees. Sadly Mo, the deputy clerk, retired this year. She is missed but Claire has joined the team and is settling in very well. Anna, the Booking and Promotion Manager took maternity leave in November and her role has been covered on a temporary basis by Lara, who has shown her expertise in design by helping to produce new signage for the Market House, which will be installed later this year once planning permission has been granted and also a standalone website for the Market House. Anna returns to work in August.

Sue has also had to cope with a change of Chair during the last 12 months. Liz Stokes stood down in December due to health reasons. A huge thank you to Liz for all her hard work over the 2.5 years she capably chaired the Council.

Projects - One of the main projects, Fairfield, has not progressed quite as fast as we had hoped. Sadly we did not secure the major funding that we had hoped to get from Viridor Credits for the financing of pathways and the Pump Park. However the project team have worked tirelessly on securing other funding, clearing the field and fencing. New fencing has been installed, drainage is about to happen and then a new hard surface pathway will be installed from Priory View to Clothier Meadow. The Use less Share More group in Castle Cary donated £8000 to the project fund for the installation of a green gym and should funding be secured this summer the pump park and more pathways will be installed.

Over the last 12 months the Council has worked with the Football club and Cricket Club to look at ways of refurbishing the Pavilion. This is an ongoing project and hopefully over the next few months plans will have been agreed to take the project forward.

Market House – Over two years ago we completed the major refurbishment of the Shambles area of the Market House. The area has continued to be used on a regular basis for meetings, classes, exhibitions, parties, weddings and even pop up restaurants. A fabulous space and so versatile.

Tuesday Market – Another great success for the town. The market is now 2 years old. Stalls come and go but we have an eclectic mix of traders who come in all weathers and punters who support the market throughout the year. Sadly due to an increase in cost for a trading licence, by the District Council, from £13 per day to £57 for people trading outside the normal market day, the pizza and burger stalls that came two evenings a week could no longer afford to trade here. We still hope that we can find a solution to this and bring back the evening stalls.

Toilets – A subject that is debated at many Council meetings! Castle Cary is lucky as a town as we still have two public loos. This year we made a decision to have one unisex loo at Millbrook Gardens, like we have on The Donald Pither Field, in order to save money on cleaning, and rates and this seems to be working successfully. We will now be looking at ways of using the space gained by closing the individual mens and women's loos. Small office areas, Youth café, storage, are all ideas we are looking at.

Transport – People often talk to the Council about traffic issues in town, whether they be parking, on the streets or in the car parks, or speeding. A group is at work to look at ways we can improve the situation in town but we would welcome more help from local residents, so do contact us if you would like to be involved with this project.

Planning and Neighbourhood Plan – I do not need to say much about these areas as you will hear more in a few minutes from the people really involved in this work. However I wish to thank everyone who has devoted so much time over the last 12 months to help develop our neighbourhood plan and who have worked so hard defending various planning issues in our area. Stirling work has been done and although we have not got the results we had hoped for with new developments in town it was not for the want of trying.

Ansford Parish Council – Finally it has been great to work with various Councillors from Ansford. We have shared roles on the Fairfield project, planning issues and the Neighbourhood Plan. We are delighted at the close links that are being forged between the two Councils.

Enough from the retiring acting chair and now over to individual Councillors to report on the work of the various committees since May 2106.

Penny Steiner

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