

Chairman's Report

Good evening to you all and it's pleasing to see how many parishioners have come along to this first combined Annual Parish Meeting, for Ansford and Castle Cary.

On behalf of Ansford Parish Council, let me briefly run through the main activities that we have dealt with over the last twelve months, starting of course, with the new residential housing developments all in one relatively confined area along Station Road. The total number of new homes where planning permissions have already been granted amounts to 311, with the possibility of a further 50 or so new homes at the Backhouse site, where plans for a second phase is likely to occur next year.

The newest of these developments, the Yarlinton Homes scheme for 75 new homes is now finishing the initial ground works, and a showhome is expected to open at the start of the new year.

A public Right of Way footpath is to be re-routed for safety purposes, due mainly to poor sighting problems where it crosses over Station Road, on a blind bend.

The problem of mud and dust on the surface of Station Road has been reported to the builders, and the situation is to be monitored more stringently by their staff.

Fairfield

Plans are under way for the setting up a new management team to oversee the maintenance and future development of various facilities, and our two Councils are currently working towards establishing a community group, which will henceforward be known as the Friends of Fairfield, who will be responsible for the day to day upkeep of this important local amenity. At this point, may I thank CCTC and especially Penny Steiner and her many team members, for getting Fairfield up and running over the last few years, and where we have all seen such a huge improvement.

With regard to the Friends of Fairfield, if this sort of recreational activity is of interest to anyone, do please let us know. There will be more announcements about the formation of this new group in due course.

War Memorial

A final phase of works has been completed, with repairs to the very fragile lead lettering, including the correction to one of the mis-spelt names. Also, a new sign has been installed on the gate pillar to the churchyard, drawing attention to a war grave.

Railway station

GWR have acquired a parcel of land close to the northeast corner of the station, that can accommodate up to 200 vehicles. The former occupants of this site are currently removing equipment and are re-locating their business to Dimmer.

All of the station lighting has recently been upgraded and new lights have been installed on the footbridge and staircase.

Footpaths

For those of you who know the land at The Combe/Combe Bottom, two new sets of timber gates were installed at the far end of the footpath linking Maggs Lane and Wyke Road, that had previously been vandalised. They have been fitted with gate fittings suitable for use by horse riders, as this route is also a public bridleway.

Caryford Hall You will already be aware of their ambitious plans for enlarging and improving the facilities of the Hall, and now that the first phase of construction is to commence next month, our Parish Council will continue to provide financial support for this particular facility, and wish them well during the works program whilst the Hall remains open. We can't wait for the new conference rooms to be completed (where we will eventually hold our monthly Council Meetings), and trust that their fund raising campaigns are well supported.

Traffic matters

During the year, we provided funding for an Automated Traffic Control sensor, which is used to record and calibrate the data of vehicle movements along the B3153, and this type of monitoring equipment is also being used by other Parishes, as a result of the increased numbers of HGV's and vans using this route.

We are pleased to report that our Parish Council has committed to offer financial support for the CAT bus/car service for the next few years, as it provides a vital service for our communities.

You may have seen that we have provided additional salt & grit bins in the neighbourhood. Most of them have been fitted with padlocks, in order to stop people from using them as waste bins, and whenever we experience a hard frost, they will of course be unlocked at the appropriate time.

Neighbourhood Plan

Just a brief word or two about this cornerstone of our future plans for the community; we understand that things are progressing slowly but steadily, and hope that the enormous

efforts by the NP team on behalf of our two Council's, will soon receive the seal of approval and adopted accordingly.

The Library As you already know, the library is now being organised and run by a group of local volunteers, and Ansford Parish Council is actively supporting this important facility, with annual financial contributions.

The Year Ahead

It almost goes without saying, that the most challenging issue currently facing us is the over-development of housing in our parish, and the severe impact this will have on the relatively limited resources to hand, and when we recently heard about yet another housing development near the railway station, we are certainly not prepared to approve this application for 200 homes.

There are a number of initiatives that we will be pursuing in the meantime, these being the installation of a speed indicating device on the A371, to slow down the speed of through traffic. Next up, will be improvements to the Maggs Lane and Solomons Lane footpaths/bridleways, that are showing signs of heavy wear and tear, but mindful of not creating an "urban thoroughfare", as we do not wish to spoil the charms of a rural country lane.

We think there is scope for providing some form of a kid's activity area, possibly along the lines of a MUGA, and will certainly look at opportunities and involvement with other interested organisations.

In conclusion, I would like to personally thank my fellow Councillors who have spent a great deal of their time attending to a multitude of issues within Ansford, and indeed, acting on behalf of parishioners here this evening. It is good that our parish council has been strengthened by two new councillors, and we welcome Barbara Williams and Justin Birch to our team. One other mention to make note of, and also to congratulate, is that Geoff Clothier is now in his 40th year of supporting Ansford Council, which has been a first class commitment and one that we really appreciate, and so we all wish him well on this special occasion.

My thanks also go to our County Councillor Mike Lewis, and our two District Councillors, one of whom is here for the first time. So we say "Welcome" to Kevin Messenger, and look forward to working closely together on all matters within our Parish.

With my best wishes to all of you, and for an eventful year ahead.

Chris Edwards

Chairman

We now invite you to ask our councillors any questions about the services our Parish Council provides, and it's also your chance to briefly highlight any matters or concerns about how you think this community could achieve higher aspirations.

We will soon be able to hear from several local organisations who have kindly agreed to give us an insight into their activities and forthcoming events.