



## **Chairman's Report – Annual Parish Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

### **Introduction**

At the close of another year, we said farewell to Councillors Chris Ambrose, Hugh Pratt and Jon Thompson who did not stand for re-election. I would like to thank them for their contribution. We welcome Alison Lock, who was elected unopposed along with the remainder of the Council. Alison has already been supporting the Council over the past year. We have two vacancies that we hope will be filled by co-opting new Councillors, so if you are interested in becoming a Councillor, or know anyone else who may be, then please do talk to any of us about it.

This time last year we were awaiting the outcome of our challenge to the Boundary Commission's proposals to change the ward boundaries for the District Councils and which threatened to divide our parish. We were glad in June last year, to finally be advised of the outcome that our ward boundary was to remain unchanged; thus retaining our link with Long Ashton. Following the local elections for North Somerset Council (NSC) this month we will continue to be supported by Councillor Charles Cave, but we are sorry to lose Bob Cook who did not stand for re-election. In his place we are pleased to welcome Councillor Kate Stowey.

### **Planning**

The core work of the Parish Council continues to revolve around Planning & Development as we seek to influence the decisions of the NSC Planning Committee with our comments and recommendations.

The Parish Council commented on 71 Planning Applications in the past year – there were 48 last year. Amongst these were 13 Trees Preservation Orders and 10 Listed Building Applications. 51 Planning Applications have been Approved and 13 Refused by NSC; we have yet to be advised of the remaining 7.

Our Councillors and District Councillors have invested much time listening to residents and conducting site visits. The Council has been represented at two Appeal Hearings this year, supporting the Applicant for development of land at Hillside Nursery and supporting NSC for its decision to refuse development at Tyntesfield Springs. Development of Dutch Barns has not been supported, one to the east of the Failand triangle, the other at Tyntesfield Springs; there will be an Appeal Hearing for the latter later this year.

The Parish Council expressed concern to NSC about the site of proposed development for a new Lidl store in Nailsea which would significantly decrease parking in the town. Whilst we recognise that this is primarily an issue for Nailsea, it is very relevant for our residents who use Nailsea for shopping, GP & community health services, dental services and the library. Parking is a key issue as public transport is not good for many of the outlying areas, particularly for those living in Wraxall village. It is expected that NSC will consider this Application soon.

NSC's Core Strategy is the main planning document for North Somerset and guides decisions on development proposals until 2026. It was challenged in the High Court in March 2013 on the scale of new housing - being insufficient and not justified. The revised Housing Policy was referred to the Secretary of State for approval in March this year and the outcome is awaited. However, this opens NSC to challenges from developers.

There are those who have aspirations for the Green Belt to be relaxed to the north-east of the Nailsea to support the development of industrial and commercial sites. Wraxall & Failand Parish Council are opposed to this.

Parking for GE Oil & Gas continues to be contentious. We did not support the development of Wraxall Charities land to become an extension car park for GE Oil & Gas. This subsequently went ahead but car parking along Lodge Lane continues (the car park extension was cited as being able to alleviate this). There is little that we can do about this. We did not support GE's latest application for a new Test Facility on their site as this would mean the loss of about 50 car parking spaces and it was considered that their Travel Plan, which advocated car sharing, was overly optimistic.

## **Pylons**

Former Councillors Chris Ambrose and Dr Hugh Pratt have continued to represent this Parish, and other groups which include Nailsea Action Against Pylons & Save Our Valley, in challenging the options proposed by National Grid for routing 400kV Transmission lines. Our Parish Councillors are advocating undergrounding and alternative technology. It is considered likely that the campaign with National Grid and Ofgen will need to continue for some considerable time. For further information and our reports please see our website.

## **Footpaths & Public Rights of Ways**

The Parish Plan recognises that the network of footpaths across the parish is a major recreational facility and the Parish Council has sought to improve them.

The results of the poll for the Wraxall Village walk were that 131 residents were not in favour of raising the Precept by up to £20,000 to fund the proposed northern footpath route, compared with 116 residents who supported the route. The Parish Council noted this and, recognising that there would be some disappointed residents in Wraxall village, agreed that the Footpath Working Group should continue to consider the southern footpath route option for improving access along the village.

## **Road Safety & Highway Maintenance**

Weston Road and Belmont Hill were re-surfaced last June. Future work that is planned includes surface dressing of the Clevedon Road from the junction with Oxhouse Lane to the junction with Whitehouse lane.

I would encourage you to report highways issues directly to NSC via the link on our website. Councillors take an active interest with the state of roads in our parish; important issues are reported to NSC Area Officers by the Clerk.

Councillor Bob Sheppard has been leading a small group, which includes residents, to see what measures can be introduced to improve road safety, meeting officers from NSC along with our District Councillors. The introduction of Quiet Lanes was considered but regrettably, was not deemed practical. For roads designated as Quiet Lanes a speed limit of 20 mph helps to change the culture of road users aimed at prioritising use for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians.

### **Buses**

Since November 2013 when there was a reduction in bus services through Wraxall village, the Parish Council sought to influence the situation and improve matters, representing residents at the NSC consultation in February this year. NSC have analysed the responses: 11% of responses were from Wraxall and over 20% of all comments related to the route through Wraxall village. Any changes will come into effect this summer.

### **Allotments**

Historically, there have been allotments in the parish on land owned by the Tyntesfield estate. Subsequently, the Wraxall Village Club was built on this land. Following a representation at a Parish Council meeting over a year ago requesting land for allotments, various options have been investigated, and a small Working Group has been established led by Simon Beck, a resident on the Elms.

The field off Lodge Lane, Wraxall is designated as an 'existing outdoor playing space'. It falls within the Elm Farm public open space and is one of the key green lungs on the edge of Nailsea that is maintained by NSC. Since last year the Parish Council has received further advice from NSC, which concludes that it is a feasible site for allotments and NSC are keen that it is used by residents from both our parish and Nailsea. Wraxall and Failand residents were invited to respond to a questionnaire which indicated that there are approximately 25 residents in our parish who are interested in having an allotment. 145 residents supported having allotments on the proposed site off Lodge Lane, whereas 61 had concerns about this site. The Parish Council agreed that the Allotments Working Group should take the Lodge Lane site forward, contacting those that expressed an interest in having an allotment and reviewing the concerns of those that did not support it to determine how these might be addressed. Only a few residents expressed an interest in the village site and this has not been dismissed as a possibility.

The first public meeting is planned for 10<sup>th</sup> June and will be held at the Cross Tree Centre.

### **Notice Boards**

Although the Parish Council website is being used to post notices on the home page and communicate with residents, we recognise that not all residents use computers. The Parish Council has replaced two of the Noticeboards that were deteriorating with new ones which are

low maintenance and easier to insert notices. The new Noticeboards are at the bottom of Wraxall Hill and the Yeo Valley Way play area in Wraxall.

### **Broadband**

Councillor Ian Malpas has been supporting Failand residents complaining of poor quality broadband services, by liaising with 'Connecting Devon & Somerset' that is working to improve the quality of rural broadband. From their current plans it looks like Failand will not be surveyed for an upgrade before 2016. Further details are on our website.

### **Community Resilience**

Councillor Martin Law has been our focal point on NSC's Community Resilience network which aims to build strong, resilient communities, prepared to deal with any emergency using local resources and trained volunteers. We would welcome more people to be involved with this. If you are interested in supporting this network, then please talk to Martin Law. Details are on our website.

### **Finance**

Councillors have been concerned about the budget pressures on NSC and the potential requirement for our Parish Council to supplement or take on responsibility for services that NSC may choose to reduce or relinquish. We continue to hold reserves to respond to National Grid's proposed route for Pylons.

The Clerk has again worked many additional hours voluntarily; she also works at home. Residents continue to benefit from this element of the Precept being significantly less than it could be.

### **Appreciation**

I wish to recognise the dedication and support during the last year of:

- our Clerk, Freda Shattock, supported by her husband, David, who delivers working papers to Councillors and notice-boards at his own expense.
- our Councillors, who are not paid, in their support to the community.
- our District Councillors, Bob Cook who did not stand for re-election and Charles Cave – in representing our interests, particularly for planning and footpaths, lobbying and liaising with NSC officers.
- our Neighbourhood Beat Officers, PC Peter Rooke, now replaced by PC Martin Faithfull, and Police Community Support Officers, Charlotte Thompson and Simon Tuong
- the Open Spaces Society Local Representative, John Ives
- those residents who attend meetings and contribute to the work of our Parish Council

David Robinson  
Chairman