

2026 Chairman's Report to Annual Parish Meeting 12th March 2026

If my records serve me correctly I think that this is my 11th report to the Parish Annual Meeting as Chairman of the Parish Council. The format will be similar to previous meetings, not that I am idle or lack imagination, but the work the Parish Council has to deal with and respond to is much the same from year to year.

Access to information as to the work of the Parish Council is readily available from a number of sources. The new website continues to develop under the guidance and work of our Clerk. Most have mastered our new email address. We have the Facebook site and we are grateful to other sites in the village which pick up and share entries. We have the three noticeboards around the village and then there is the bi-monthly magazine which is delivered free of charge to every household in the village. The magazine is put together and delivered by a dedicated team of volunteers to whom the community pass on grateful thanks.

These communications keep those in the village who are interested up to date with the detail but I will just briefly touch on some of the main things that have happened as a reminder.

- There should be twelve Parish Councillors but at present we only have ten. We have lost two councillors over the past year and have recently been joined by a new member. That still leaves us with two vacancies and so we would be very pleased to have more members of the community come forward to join us. We have a wide divergence of experience which aids our discussions and decision making.
- The Precept has been set and there will be no increase in the Parish Council portion of the Council Tax. Although costs have risen the additional houses at Fox Mill Gardens have 'taken up the slack'. All details are in the magazine and on the website. That site has now been finished and hopefully the nearby roads will be repaired and brought up to standard by Devon County Council.
- The play areas are still being well used and a new set of toddler swings have been supplied as replacements in the Jubilee Field. Sadly this area has been subjected to some criminal damage and reports to the police turned out to be an absolute waste of time in that our local officers were not told by 'the system'. Hopefully we have found a way to overcome that. Please make sure that you all report matters to the police at the time.
- Dean, our new handyman has settled in well and is giving good service. One of his early successes has been the establishment of a wildflower meadow in an area of the cemetery extension.
- Sadly, John Holmes our long serving litter picker had to retire unexpectedly during the year and he has been replaced by Paul Bright who seems to be settling in well.
- The new grounds maintenance contractor is looking after the cemetery and the small fenced play areas. Verges, Jubilee Field and Orchard Way have continued to be looked after by the current contractors but some of those will change after the awarding of new contracts from this year.

- We have had our fair share of potholes and flooding and we hope that everyone is reporting them to Devon County and not leaving it for others to do. Someone with a sense of humour did point out that Willand did not want to be amalgamated with Cullompton but they thought that the establishment of the moat between Five Bridges and Millenium Way may have been taking matters a bit far.
- A new company, Devon Green Power, has taken over the anaerobic digester site behind 2 Sisters and they have been in discussions with the Parish Council and are now submitting planning applications to Devon County Council to make some changes. We are hoping that it will be run better than the previous operators did and there is the potential for the community to benefit financially.
- Hopefully residents will have seen the outline planning applications for a further 130 dwellings off of Silver Street between Rowan Lea and the garage. It looks as if they may get the go-ahead as we are being consulted on monies to be made available for offside public open space provision. Not sure where they will find that ground – they are building on it. There is also another site for 170 dwellings just outside the village past the Halfway House but it is in Halberton. It will have more of an effect on the facilities in Willand rather than Halberton.
- Councillor Jason Scott continues to look after the VAS machine and produces monthly records which are available on the website. Thank you, Jason.
- Some may have been affected by the works going on In Somerlea which will result in 7 more 3 bedroomed homes but there will certainly be more parking problems and suggestions by the Parish Council to provide some more spaces has been rejected by MDDC and our Ward Councillors appear to be ineffective to help. We have been trying to keep on top of the various breaches to the planning conditions but certain MDDC officers seem to be a law unto themselves.

Many organisations continue to arrange events around the village and hopefully we will hear from them as to their efforts on behalf of our community. There has been a definite move to trying to look after those in the community who may be elderly and/or lonely with events being arranged. Thank you to all the volunteers who make this happen. I am sure that more support will be welcome.

The proposed rearrangement of councils is still going ahead with consultations but there is little information coming forth as to how this will affect Town and Parish Councils. One thing we can be sure of is that we will be landed with more work, probably less representation at the higher level and that it will cost a lot.

I finish by expressing my personal thanks for the time, effort and support given to me by my fellow councillors and particularly by Debbie our Clerk.

Please look after and support our community. Making it work for us all is the responsibility of all not just the few. This applies even to the few keyboard warriors on Facebook who may one day say something positive!