

## Chairs Report 2023-2024

The year started with Andy Keys Toyer stepping down as Vice Chair and John Rundle taking on the mantle. It has been a pleasure to collaborate with John over the last year.

John has announced that he will be stepping down from his PC duties in May. Thank you, John, for all you have done over the last 5 years. Your contributions have been invaluable, and we appreciate all your hard work.

In June 23 we welcomed two new PC members Chris Jose and Mareike Beyer. This left one vacancy in Yarlington. This Yarlington Vacancy remained vacant until March this year when Claire Leavold joined us. I am sure much to the relief of Maria who has been holding the fort in Yarlington for over 12 months.

All three villages have been remarkably busy in the last year with ongoing works as they all recover from the flood of May 23. This seems to have dominated much of the year.

Thank you to Maria and Mareike for their ongoing work in this area. As result of the works, we now have monitoring devices on the river Cam to alert us of rising water levels. We are still awaiting the full section 19 report on the floods.

Following on from this the individual Villages are putting together their own Emergency Plans which will then feed into one plan for the Parish. This will consider the wider issues of all aspects of emergency planning.

Galhampton Village Hall has now become a CIO and therefore no longer falls under the remit of the PC. This allows the Village Hall to work for the village in diverse ways. This means that a member of the PC does not need to sit on the Galhampton Village Hall Committee

John Rundle has worked tirelessly consulting with Highways to ensure that the state of our roads are kept at the forefront of Parish business, this is a thankless task as a pothole is sorted another has appears. Our roads are much safer for the work that has been completed by Highways following Johns reporting.

Nick has been keeping an eye on our rights of way and has worked with Susan Fone to ensure we can walk the beautiful countryside we live amongst.

Johnnie is now able to support Tim Gilbert with strimming across the Parish.

Andy has attended all LCN network meetings which are now working towards three work streams.

Highways, Footpaths, and flooding. Working parties are now working on these areas from across the wider community.

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Following notification from Somerset Unitary Council that they may be issuing a Section 114 notice meaning that more responsibility could be decentralised to local Town and Parish Councils. This has been published to us as opportunities we can take. The PC had to make the hard decision to raise our precept by 25% (an average of £8.90 per household) to ensure that the local services we support can still be supported in the coming year. The raising of the precept was not something we wanted to do but could not see any other way of supporting the Parishes as Somerset Council have handed a vast array of -responsibilities- to local PCs.

We are fortunate this year that the Section 114 did not materialise however it is better to be prepared that caught out with such issues.

The PC have continued to undertake on site planning meetings and in the last year we have attended over twenty across the parish Councillors have continued to give up their own time to attend these meetings. This is a big responsibility for all the PC members to undertake to ensure that planning applications are given their due diligence and fits in with the Neighbourhood Plan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have given their time to attend and remind all that this is a responsibility that must be undertaken by ALL councillors to ensure there is a quorum at each meeting.

Work continues behind the scenes as Johnnie and Alan work to ensure that the Neighbourhood plan still is fit for purpose. There has up to now not been any resolution to Clare Field and the planning application currently still with Somerset Council Planning dept.

The works conducted by the Newt continues to be high on the agenda for the whole Parish. Work has continued at Avalon Farm with the industrial buildings nearing completion. The work on the hill has changed the view of the hill forever taking away the rural outlook from the villages of Galhampton and Yarlinton. We continue to see Yellow Brick roads crisscrossing the countryside around us.

The consultation on Manor Farm Yarlinton has been on hold for most of year and the five parishes surrounding Emily Estates are now coming together to consult with each other about any plans the Newt may have and have attended each other's PC meetings.

We were assured at the start of this PC year that we would get to meet with Mr Bekker unfortunately apart from a small group of people this has not happened and there still seems to be a disconnect between the community and the Newt. Zoe Young has joined the Newt as a liaison officer. Hopefully, the current divide will begin to disappear as Zoe embeds herself into the community.

We are unfortunately experiencing an increase in antisocial behaviour across the Parish with alleged drug dealing, cars travelling at high speed through the villages and even an assault on one of the Parishioners. Supervising PCSO Amanda Ward has attended in person our meeting in March to discuss the ongoing issues and to look at ways we can work together in the future to improve the situation.

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This is not behaviour any of us wish to experience and we all have a responsibility to report all such sorts of behaviour to the Police. Heard numerous times that the Police are aware of the issues. However, they currently do not have the reported incidents to provide a higher level of surveillance. They are not able to work on hearsay alone.

My final and most important thank you goes to Becky our Parish Clerk without whom none of us would be here. Becky does an enormous amount of work in the background always to an exceptionally high standard and hold us all to account for the roles which we hold. We appreciate your behind-the-scenes dedication more than words can express.

Diane Rickers