

## **2024 Chairman's Report**

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to all my fellow Councillors and Clerk, without whom things would never have been achieved. This year has seen many improvements which I will cover later. Again top of the list for thanks must go to Dorset Unitary Council's representative, Cllr Jane Somper, who does so much on our behalf; also there is Geoff Peters and his team of stalwarts for their work whatever the weather, to keep our Community Speed Watch one of the best in the County. As a result of their work the village has been chosen as a site for an Autospeedwatch Camera, another initiative designed to work alongside and complement Community Speedwatch.

Our planned face to face and zoom meetings have again gone well with no complaints from the community that they are not seeing enough of us. Everything we discuss continues to be properly recorded and appears on the Parish Council Website for all to see.

Our Areas of Responsibilities have stayed much the same this year even though there have been two new inclusions to our team. We have lost Brian O'Lunaigh who dealt so adeptly with all our Planning applications but have now gained Hazel Marsh who has already proved a considerable benefit. To replace Arthur Evans, Keith Skinner has taken on the role of Village and District Liaison and is fitting in well with what we do. Next year's responsibilities will all be rearranged once the new Parish Council is elected in May. On the subject of elections we are hoping that new applicants come forward for consideration, as I am sure that there are plenty of villagers who have ideas on how to take part in the running of the village. If anyone else wants to be part of this team, please let either our Clerk or me know of your interest – there is still time.

I have already mentioned what many of the team are doing but to pick out some of the specifics:

- Kerry O'Connor, our Vice-Chairman, continues to plan the new Play Area and when complete should see the village with a new and better area for the young to use.
- Nicky Phillips continues with her usual enthusiastic approach and provides first-rate administrative support as our Clerk.
- As mentioned above Hazel Marsh has already shown us what a first rate choice she is with her abundance of knowledge regarding Planning matters. Sadly we might be losing her as she intends to move back to the North.
- Susan Trim remains an extremely valuable asset with her amazing knowledge in social media and IT matters. She is developing as a centre of excellence for communication in the village. Her work with the Emergency Planning Team was one of the reasons the Plan has been admired throughout the County.
- John Goodliffe has now become one of the longer standing members of the team and has become an influential authority in regards to environmental issues. His work on the Resilience Plan should be commended, as this became such a useful

document on things that the village will need in the future. John also leads in matters relating to Highways, which is always difficult with the high levels of water our seasons are throwing at us.

- Anne Thomas has indeed settled into the team as a true professional. Her medical knowledge is first rate and sits well with what the village needed with subjects like Defibrillator machines and CPR training. Anne also leads on the Footpaths & Rights of Way front, where her love of walking came to the fore. She has developed contact with both the local estates and is encouraging new permissible paths with the Iwerne Estate as well as innovative ideas with Ranston – for instance a new bench overlooking the village from Preston Hill, with which she had considerable help from John Goodliffe.
- It is yet too early to fit Keith Skinner into the picture but he has already contributed to many of our discussions and I have no doubt that he will find a specific area of responsibility when the new Parish Council finds its feet. In the meantime he has been helping the Clerk with information about the DAPTC North Dorset branch and surrounding villages.

Before leaving this part of my report I must commend the work done by a small sub-group of villagers in the writing and planning for our Emergency Plan. In particular Jeff and Heather Overton whose knowledge and experience has been outstanding.

Finally, and why I always leave her till last, is because the village only continues to be recognised as the place it is, due to the tireless work Monique Goodliffe puts into editing the Village Newsletter. This is a very professional and informative communication that the village is proud of, thank you Monique.

Best wishes to everyone and stay safe.

**Cllr S Trim thanked the Chairman for his hard work, all Councillors and Clerk also expressed their thanks.**

#### **Cllr S Trim Report for Parish Council Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

There was a total of 20 tree applications during 23/24 compared to 15 applications in 22/23. The Iwerne Minster WhatsApp Community has been set up during 23/24 and membership of both WhatsApp and Next Door have grown, enabling the village to share news and information.

The Preston Lane Post Box has been relocated and is now at the entrance to Oakwood Drive.

Neighbourhood Watch held two events over the last year, both were well attended. The first was a Pop Up event where we hosted a number of organisations and the second was a bike tagging event held with Dorset Police. We have arranged another Pop Up event which is due to take place on Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup> between 10am and 12 noon in the Iwerne Minster Village Club.

## **Cllr A Thomas Footpath and Rights of way Annual report**

Inevitably due to Wet and windy weather we have a lot of mud and there have been a significant number of incidents of rights of way obstruction caused by fallen trees and bushes, mainly dealt with speedily by relevant landowners when made aware.

### **Permissive Paths**

There had been issues for both estate and village concerning the area west of the A350. The estate was keen to increase wilding of the land and protect various areas and were concerned by significant and random wandering off footpaths, whilst village concerned that several of footpaths significantly overgrown and impassable and signage poor, (acknowledged by estate) and there was a request for establishment of a circular route if possible.

As a result of discussion several Permissive paths to the west of the A350 route have been granted by Iwerne estate thus providing a circular walking route linking to N65/22 and N65/5

This was combined with clearing of overgrown paths and improved signage and displaying of new routes on village notice board combined with encouragement to all to stick to footpaths and permissive ways. Well, received by both parties and appears to be working well.

### **Damaged Bridge**

#### **June 23**

Badly and unsafe damaged bridge N65/22 west of A350.

Roped off .and in a queue of 10 North Dorset bridges for replacement but no funds, hopefully may be some this year???

Iwerne estate has kindly provided a bypass circular route.

#### **N65/21 Top of Preston Hill March 2024**

A five-bar gate has been erected by Ranston estates in place of the movable section of barbed wire fence at the top of Preston Hill, which will prevent any further issues of barbed wire being thrown across the footpath with potential for injury to walkers and dogs.

**Entrance to west Lodge from road** No resolution to Lack of signage

### **Benches**

#### 1) Preston Hill

As a result of request several villagers for a Bench on Preston Hill at the junction of the N65/21 and private track to Preston Hill Farm the process was set in motion last summer. James Gibson Fleming has kindly leased a small piece of land to the Parish council for a peppercorn rent. Hardstanding constructed in early January and a composite bench sited 2 weeks ago.

#### 2) Tower Hill

Long established bench, wooden struts badly damaged and unsafe, removed in November for drying out and repair and will be reinstated when weather improves! This has now been included in the Ranston lease above.

### **Cllr H Marsh Planning since October 2023**

There have been limited Planning Applications since I was appointed in October 2023. In summary:

- Minor queries regarding planning issues have been addressed and where appropriate guidance given or referrals recommended to Dorset Planning Department.
- Smaller applications have been reviewed and recommended for approval and subsequently approved by Dorset Council.
- Major input was required on the 2 Crossways Applications where objections were approved by the Parish Council. An Objection Report was submitted for the latest Application and a decision is awaited by Dorset Planning.

### **Cllr K O'Connor**

There has been a public consultation on the proposal for new equipment for the play area, which was very well attended. Out of the meeting a schedule has been produced for relevant companies to complete secondary drawings and prices, that can be put forward for consideration and to apply for grants.

### **Cllr J Goodliffe Highways Report for AGM 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

The weather has been particularly challenging this year with high ground water levels, and consequent wet roads, as Iwerne Minster lives up to its reputation as being the village with the most springs in Wessex. The result has been wet, and sometimes, dangerously icy, streets, which are now getting slimy with fine silt and algae. Our situation is made more difficult by the confusion of legacy pipework and blocked ditches in the village.

I believe we are being well served by DC Highways. Reports made through the online facility on the 'Dorset for You' website are quickly acknowledged, their urgency assessed, and an interim response made to the reporter. I encourage everyone to use this facility.

The flooding outside the Talbot seem to have been sorted out, BUT THE DRAINS WILL ALWAYS GET BLOCKED with leaves and other detritus. PROMPT REPORTING RESULTS IN PROMPT ACTION!

Resurfacing of Watery Lane with the installation of two spring boxes seems to have been successful, though a dry summer will be the proof of that pudding!

The closure of Tower Hill for the Wessex Water mains pipe upgrades allowed for a very fruitful litter pick (several kg of rubbish), and clearance of fallen branches. Sadly, more

branches have appeared since then, due to winter storms and dead ash trees. Ash die-back means this will be a problem for several years to come.

In the past year North Dorset Highways Officers have been conducted on two 'walk-about' visits, which have been fruitful.

In July 2023, Mr Alaric Little, the temporary Community Highways Officer for N Dorset, visited the village, and we highlighted particular areas of concern. Within a week DC Highways flushed through the gullies on Tower Hill outside Heddle House, resulting in far less water flowing around Heddle House and down Church Hill. Highways also carried out repairs to the drains outside Crossways. Sadly, this has been seriously damaged afresh. A similar walk with Mr Patrick Carpenter, the recently appointed full time Highways Officer for N Dorset, occurred last week. The continuing problem of the seeping manhole at the corner of Old School Lane, Watery Land and the path to the children's playground was stressed. This caused thick ice in January and now the road surface is very slimy. The problem drain outside Crossways was discussed: Highways are unlikely to do anything until the work at Crossways is completed.

Progress has been made in the last year on cutting back hedges along the A350 in the south of the village. The hedges must be progressively cut back to ensure a pavement of at least one metre wide, to allow the free passage of buggies and invalid carriages.

### **Environment & Resilience Report for AGM 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

As stated in the Highways report, ground water is, and will remain, an issue for the village. Together, we must ensure that drains, gullies, ditches and the like, are kept clear and maintained so that water can flow rapidly away. Everyone must feel free to report issues on the 'Dorset for you' website.

There have been no serious environmental issues in 2023/24. A few more dwellings have installed voltaic panels, and it is noted that planning restrictions on these seem to have been relaxed, though in the conservation area planning controls still apply.

As individuals in our community, we must continue to strive to minimise our environmental impact, reducing the number of vehicle journeys, limiting water, oil, gas and electricity use. This will, of course, save you money! A double bonus!

It is worth noting that the work carried out in early 2023 by Wessex Water to re-line aging sewer pipes in the village may well have saved us from sewerage seepage due to the raised water table.

A bench has been installed halfway up Preston Hill beside the footpath. This gives a grand vista east, north and west across Brookman's Valley.

The Resilience Guide was researched, written, reviewed and issued in 2023. See the Parish Council website. Things have moved on since then and the guide will be revisited in the coming months, seeking to add further information regarding Wessex Water, telecom

provision, the Environment Agency, and adding a new section on how to prepare for hot weather.

### **Abingdon Hall Report 2024**

The hall only had one major expense this year which was the window above the door to the kitchen. It was in a sorry state. This repair will enable the tapestry to be hung there safely when it has been completed. The light bulbs have been replaced with LED'S which has been an improvement.

Jules Power has kindly taken over as bookings manager which has taken some of the pressure from the secretary. We are a bit low on bookings which has prompted us to look into the possibility of setting up a website.

Our Christmas meal was a great success thanks to Sue Le Prevost's organisation and boosted our income.

I have obtained new hessian sacks for the sandbags around the silent soldier and these will be in place soon.

Our biggest disappointment this year is that we haven't been able to start the roof repairs. We had a bat survey done which was fine and planning consent was granted but we have hit a stumbling block with Conservation and Building Control. Conservation want old tiles on the front and new on the back which is fine but they are not happy with the new tiles we sourced because being metric sizing they are slightly bigger than the original Iwerne Estate tiles. As the new ones won't be on the same side as the old ones we can't really understand the problem. They also want special insulation which makes it more expensive.

Building Control have now notified us that as we aren't replacing the ceiling they now require a condensation risk analysis. All this is pushing the price above our budget so it doesn't look as if the roof will be done for a while.

Hopefully I will have a more positive report next year.

### **REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE CLUB 2024**

The Village Club has enjoyed another happy and successful year.

It began with the ever popular "Call-My-Bluff" which involved some audience participation. This was followed by the Celebration of King Charles III Coronation, the club room providing the hub for an afternoon of picnic and fun. Members staged an exhibition of memorabilia from previous Coronations, there was a fantastic cake and the children produced some fabulous crowns. We had quizzes – always popular and coffee mornings. Unfortunately after a spell of very hot weather, the annual "Boules" Tournament was cancelled due to a very wet spell. At a very well attended AGM members heard of the very satisfactory financial state of the club funds and also future ideas and plans for the building in the year ahead. It was good to see a large number of members and friends at the first coffee morning of 2024. As usual the clubroom was in regular use for pantomime rehearsals. This was performed on 3 nights at the end of February beginning of March. A hugely successful show for which we thank Adrian Delso and the cast. This is our major fund raising event and just over £2,000

was added to club funds. It has been very encouraging to see the club being used more. Table tennis takes place on a regular basis on Tuesday afternoons followed by pilates in the evening and there seems to be more snooker being played. We now have a regular cleaner and plans are afoot for re-vamping the snooker room so we look forward to another happy, busy year.

### **Sue Le Prevost – IMPHA report**

The past year has been quite a challenge from a gardener's point of view. The summer was warmer and wetter than average, with a record-breaking June, an unsettled July and August, then Autumn was again milder and wetter than the expected normal, followed by an extremely wet October and a run of named storms. We have had an interesting variety of speakers during the year and congratulations to Penny for organising our programme and the enjoyable visit to the Yeo Valley Organic Garden.

Gold Club Daffodils, grown by members were again on display in April and after public judging, £202 was subsequently donated to Marie Curie. Heather lead various committee members to provide a very successful plant sale on the Parish Field and afterwards honesty boxes at Dwell Deep and The Hollow added to the profits, all of which went toward helping fund the Summer Show. And what a Show, the day was enjoyed by everyone, with a record number of entries and a high standard of exhibits. An amazing raffle and various stalls all contributed toward a record profit, so we were again able to make substantial donations to our chosen charities of Air Ambulance and Julia's House. Entertainment was provided by the village's own Sara Jones Band and Rob Smith kindly presented all of the prizes. The WI prepared and served very well received afternoon teas and the Steam Car was again a highlight of the day. Anne Andrews very successfully took on the task of organising the Judges' and helpers' lunch, which was enjoyed by all who partook. Christine O'Lunaigh has been our Show Secretary for several years and has done a sterling job but sadly due to family commitments, has decided to stand down from the committee. I and the other committee members would like to thank her for all of her patience and hard work in helping to produce our wonderful show and also thanks to Heather Overton for agreeing to shadow Christine last year and for taking the job on this year. With especial thanks to Richard Andrews and his team, work has continued on the new Shed/garage to organise its interior and make it weatherproof inside. The Christmas Social in early December was enjoyed by all who attended and thanks to Pam Payne and Penny for organising a delicious buffet. I would particularly like to thank all members of the hard-working committee for their support, ideas, commitment and enthusiasm. Finally, thank you to you the members, who support the meetings, raffles and events in so many different ways, as I have previously said "you are what keeps the Association going from strength to strength. We look forward to a new gardening year with all of its challenges and please do encourage new people to participate in our various activities.

### **Speed Watch update sent from Maria Attwood – Dorset Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator.**

From March 2023 to March 2024 the following information has been recorded:

- Number of CSW sessions 57
- Over 30MPH incidents 730
- Number of letters sent, 1<sup>st</sup> letter 622, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter 27 and 3<sup>rd</sup> letter 4

- Total of vehicles monitored 14752
- Trucam – (where the police do a speed check) Deployments 14, offences 139

It was also noted that Iwerne Minster has been picked as one of 12 rural areas for a speed survey project that Dorset Police are trialling, the speed cameras are in place.