

## TWYFORD PARISH COUNCIL – Chairman’s Report May 2014

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I think that it would be fair to say that the past year has been the most exhausting since I had the privilege of being elected Chairman of the Parish Council.

It has, of course, been made somewhat easier by having a set of councillors who are prepared to become involved. I must, therefore, thank those who currently serve and those who have been involved during the year and who, for whatever reason, have found it necessary to relinquish their positions. Particular in this latter regard is Trevor Cook, known to all and sundry as “Denzil”. He has served as a PC for many years and his input at meetings is missed. Happily he has agreed, with Ashley Knibbs, to continue to maintain the Church Clock and associated hour and quarter chimes.

Your County and District Councillors have also attended the majority of meetings during the year and thus provided a link to these two levels of local authority.

I also thank my Vice Chairman, Ant Wood, for his sage advice, which has probably saved me from being rather more impetuous than is good for me, Alan Riley, who has taken on the task of reviewing the Parish Plan, Alan Dodd, who has harangued and cajoled TfB in equal measures over our roads, Will Abbott, who brings a wealth of knowledge about land and planning to the table, our newest recruit, Simon Bristow, who has already made his mark with the recent tree planting, of which more anon, our Parish Clerk, Andrea Curtis, who has kept the books impeccably and ensured that our money is well spent and accounted for. My very special thanks, however, goes to Rae Sloan, who has worked tirelessly on the village’s behalf in representing us at many, many meetings where the subject has been HS2. In as much as we have been able to apply some pressure to HS2 and even to try to understand what they are up to and what other groups are doing to fight them off we must thank Rae, without her it would not have happened.

I shall come back to HS2 in a moment.

So, apart from this, what have we done? Well, we ensured that last winter would be virtually frost free by installing grit bins, we have supported the school by agreeing that the Recreation Ground will be available for their use when they take on the two additional years of pupils, and in this respect the Cricket

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Club have been very helpful in standing alongside the PC and I would like to thank Michael Roberts, and his crew of ground custodians, who not only keep the ground in fantastic condition during the summer, as, of course, do TUFC in their season, but have readily agreed to mark out whatever pitches the children will need. The PC has also started to discuss with the CC and the school how the pavilion might be upgraded to allow multi gender sport to take place and how the increasing demands for space with all these huge bags of kit carried by cricketers nowadays can be met. The additional benefit of these changes would be that the FC would be able to host most prestigious matches as the officials would be segregated from the players. The CC has, of course, been extremely successful in recent years and has risen to the highest division of its league. This has brought its own problems however in respect of use of the ground and the PC is working with all interested parties, I hesitate to use the term “Stakeholders”, to find a resolution to this. Now that the CC runs three teams it would be so nice to have a much bigger ground available for the village’s use, so if anyone knows anyone who could deliver this . . .

The PC has also continued to challenge the designation of Mill Lane as a restricted byway and is looking at the apparent conflict between the way that BCC through TfB describe the lane and how the Rights of Way group regard it.

Most recently our Millennium Oak was unspotted and placed in the ground in the Recreation Ground and my thanks are due to Simon for the very professional way that he prepared the ground and installed the appropriate protection for the tree. The children who attended took part in the planting by adding soil in a manner that makes me think that should there be the need for new royals they are all in this village! In due course we hope to add another tree representing the Diamond Jubilee and it is hoped that the school will produce a time capsule that can be buried along with these additions to the village treescape.

I am afraid that where we have fallen down in the past year is in providing electronic communication of our activities. Regular Newsletter have been written and distributed but the ability to provide a working and effective website has somehow eluded us. Unfortunately one of the skills that your parish councillors do not possess is that of web mastership. In fact the whole matter of managing village information electronically is something that we do

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not do well and is an issue that the other village organisations might like to join with the PC in resolving.

Finally let me come back to HS2. In the past year there have been three consultations, one select committee on the environment, and the depositing of the Hybrid Bill to try to read, understand and respond to and my word that has taken a lot of head scratching and long hours in front of a screen. The final, and probably most important, development was the depositing of the Hybrid Bill in late November last year and the first and second readings of same in December and April respectively. The second reading, which accepts the principle of the project going ahead, was carried by a very large majority but it has to be said that most of the MPs who voted in favour did so because they were whipped. The quality of the contributions from most of the supporters who spoke made it very clear that those members had not made a huge effort to look at the documentation but had accepted the spin that had appeared in many newspapers and heard only the half truths about the project. Rae, members of the PC and others in the village have struggled through the complexities of the proposals and after this AGM the parish council will be debating the draft response that has been prepared. We, as a parish council, have until Friday of next week to deposit our final petition at the House of Commons and the same timetable applies to every other resident in the village. For those who are unable to attend the following meeting a copy of the final agreed response will be available on the shop and parish council notice boards and can be e-mailed to you provided your e-mail address is known to us.

Finally, can I just remind you that the term of the current Parish Council ends in 2015 so should anyone out there fancy becoming involved standing for election is very straightforward.