

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 2022

It is good to be able to report that, despite the continued circulation of Covid, Langford life is beginning to return to something approaching normal. It was always heartening to see the strong attendance at the outdoor events, such as Remembrance Sunday and Carol Singing, that we were able to hold during troubled times. Now we look forward to the return of Gardens Open in June, preceded by the Jubilee Celebrations for HM The Queen. There is also a flurry Of other village events, often helping to raise funds for the Church, Village Hall or Cricket Club.

Parish Council Personnel

The personnel Of the council has remained as I reported last year, and I would like to thank councillors, and our new Clerk, Caroline parsons, for all their hard work over the past year. The next formal Parish Council election Will be in May next year, and it would be good for village involvement if a strong field stands for election.

Our priorities over the past year

Let me report first on the four priorities the Council identified for its work over the past year.

1) Bringing the community land purchase to a successful conclusion

We did make what we thought was a very competitive bid for the Vineyard (the field adjoining the church), but unfortunately, we were not successful. We now know that the field has been bought by the owners Of the Bell freehold, though as yet we have no information on What the new owners intend for the land. In due course we will make contact with the new owners as a normal courtesy.

The good news is that the two parcels of lands closest to the Village — The Closes and the Back Fields — were bought by Langford residents, and both have kindly indicated that they are happy to continue with the policy of generous community access we enjoyed When peter had the tenancy.

2) Further work on a possible affordable housing project

Some, but limited, progress has been made on this. We judge that the only feasible plot for a limited development Of affordable housing is the field behind the school and Elms. This land is owned by WODC, and we have had preliminary discussions With WODC about the options for a small development. WODCs preferred development partner in any affordable housing project would be Cottsway, Who have undertaken to draw up initial ideas and plans. With the disruption of the pandemic we are still waiting for Cottsway to report.

Once there are initial ideas and plans the Parish Council Will of course undertake full consultation Within the Village, and in particular With the residents in the Elms and The Wickets.

3) Updating our Community Emergency plan

We are in the process of finalising a revised Emergency Plan. Our view is that the most important element should be a means of checking that residents are alright should there be a serious emergency or situation when the village is cut off from outside help — this check applies particularly

in the case of any vulnerable residents. The plan divides the village into ten manageable sectors, with a designated checker assigned to each (checkers live within the sector). We have drawn up a confidential register of people who could be considered vulnerable in terms of health, age or lack of access to transport, and this register along with emergency contact information is known to checkers.

4) Liaising with landowners with the aim Of making further progress on drainage improvements to reduce flooding risks

We are making steady progress on this aim, while recognising that it is always going to be an ongoing business. part of the difficulty is working with multiple landowners, but we have now mapped land ownership within the parish and identified key points (such as culverts under roads). The picture has also been complicated by the significant changes in land ownership With the farm sales of the past two years.

Village maintenance work

A further priority for action occurred during the year after the annual ROSPA inspection of the playground, for which the Parish Council is responsible. This inspection showed that there was an urgent need to replace the wooden posts of the shelter as they had rotted at the base and the shelter now posed an immediate safety risk. The two options were to replace with wood, like for like, or to change to metal posts; both options were a considerable expense (mainly due to the cost of the materials). We took the decision to go with metal posts, although this option was the more expensive we considered that it was a better and more cost-effective long-term solution as the posts would never need replacing - the total cost was a little over £5000. The finished work (carried out by Mike and Matt Simpson) looks excellent.

We decided that the Old wooden Elms noticeboard has reached the end of its life, and are replacing it With a new recycled plastic board. This will go well With the two recycled plastic benches placed at the Elms entrance in memory of Joey Gibbard — the money for which was raised by public subscription.

We continue our efforts to do low level maintenance work around the village — spraying, mowing, and litter picking for example. We have also continued our grant to the PCC to help with the costs of churchyard maintenance as we regard this as a benefit to the village as a whole.

Health and safety initiatives

Many thanks to the volunteers Who carried out a Speed Watch exercise within the Village — and particular thanks to Mark Skinner for co-ordinating the project. Pairs of volunteers, using a speed gun, checked vehicle speeds at four designated locations over a period Of a few weeks. The main aim of the exercise was to raise awareness amongst drivers Of the importance Of keeping to the 30mph speed limit. The great majority of drivers were within the speed limit (though the presence of people in high viz jackets may have had some influence on this). Operating a Speed Watch is a somewhat bureaucratic process requiring a good deal of co-ordination and volunteering, and we now have to decide whether or not we continue — the parish Council would be interested in peoples' views on this.

We looked at the possibility of acquiring a second defibrillator, to supplement the one at the village hall. On balance our view is that, while defibrillators have their value, a more important step would be to encourage more people to be confident in providing CPR in an emergency. TO this end we are

going to organise CPR training and refresher sessions which are open to all residents.

Council finances

All the parish Council's income comes via the annual precept, the amount the council requests as its share Of the local "rates" paid by each household. For the past few years we have used an agreed formula for calculating our precept - the formula aims to balance the wish to control expenditure with the need to maintain sufficient reserves to cover unexpected costs. This year, for example, we have put in for a slightly increased precept to rebuild our reserves after the significant of repair and maintenance work at the playground.

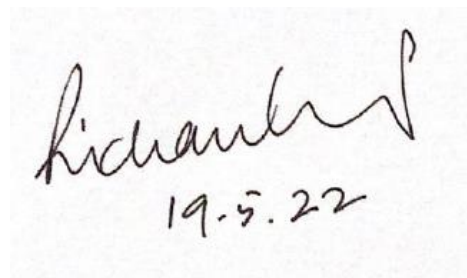
Looking ahead

The Council's priorities for next year Will include:

- Continuing to work with WODC to develop options for some affordable housing, and hopefully to be able to take initial ideas to a consultation stage
- Ongoing liaison with local landowners and OCC Highways department on further steps to improve drainage and reduce flood risk
- Organising CPR training sessions and encouraging as many Langford people as possible to attend

As a Council we are very conscious Of issues relating to environment and sustainability and we Will continue to explore if there are ways we can contribute towards these areas.

Richard Kemp
May 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Richard Kemp', is written above the date '19.5.22'.