

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 2025

Parish Council Personnel

At the end of the Parish Council Meeting of 20th November 2024, Richard Kemp notified the Council of his decision to stand-down as a Councillor. Such actions take immediate effect. Richard has served on Langford Parish Council since 2013, most of that time as Chair. His contribution to Langford surpasses that of most, extending well beyond the role of a PC Chair. Most recently his energies have been directed into The Vineyard as a project to provide Langford with freehold Community Land. Langford PC would be very pleased to see Richard's contribution to The Vineyard continue as mentioned later in this report.

Council resignations automatically trigger WODC Democratic Services to hold an election where Parishioners request one. No election was requested and so it fell to the PC to co-opt. The PC approached Mark Smith are pleased that he will serve as a Councillor taking our numbers back to 5.

Mark has lived in Langford since 2008 and has a long-term commitment to our Village. He actively contributes in the Village and has pursued a professional career path that offer's the Council valuable and highly relevant experience.

Langford are fortunate to have a full complement of serving Councillors. They have my thanks, as does our Clerk, Caroline Parsons, for their contribution to our village.

Our priorities over the past year

Our priorities over the past year have been dominated by the Community Land Project – The Vineyard. In May 2024 we held an EGM that resolved to purchase The Vineyard subject to the outcome of a village consultation. 101 Parishioners submitted survey returns, of these 84 said Yes and 17 said No. The consultation asked Parishioners to agree to an annual rise of about £39 for Band D households.

At 1:00pm on 28Feb25 the transaction completed and LPC took Title to ON377314, The Vineyard.

A summary of the acquisition is available in document "Report to Council ON377314 – Final "

In May 2024 we also set priorities that included: 1. Further work on a possible affordable housing project and 2. Contributing to measures promoting sustainability and environmental improvement. The matter of a 20mph speed-limit also overlapped into 2024 and concluded with the installation of new road signs.

Current status:

1. Affordable housing - WODC went totally cold on the project that was their initiative and on their land. Attempts to progress with WODC have led nowhere, likely due to personnel changes.
2. Environment - Whilst an aspiration, our aspirations did not result in anything really significant but they remain as key aspirations when opportunity presents. Langford Parish Council are very appreciative of the efforts of Jim and Cyndy Johnson in the Back Fields, and Bo and Jonny Potter in The Closes.

More minor aims of the Council were also to register presently unregistered land. To date this includes The Pitts (working together with Peter Kirby) and Bushes (sometimes called Butchers) Orchard Lane or Vicarage Lane. In due course the Council would also like to collaborate with the Village Hall and The Langford Charity to register the land of the Village Hall and The Allotments.

Council finances

As the Chair's Report of May 2024 and as the Village Consultation regarding The Vineyard Community Land, the annual precept needed to rise significantly to cover the costs of the acquisition of the land. Parish Council's use the Band D rate as a comparison/reference figure. The 2023/24 Council Tax Band D Annual Rate for Langford was £38.20. The rate for 2025/26, which includes loan repayment, rose to £72.35. Given that the Total Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 is £2,382.41, the Langford Parish Precept is some 3.6% of the total bill.

Now however Langford Parish Council has a very significant asset on our balance sheet. 1.8 acres of Community Land located near to our village centre.

The challenge now is to bring The Vineyard into community use without bearing too heavily on Council finances. More on this below.

Please see document "Summary of Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025"

Looking ahead

Looking ahead our priorities are to develop The Vineyard and maximise its value to the village. We plan to do this by setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which will be financially separate from the Parish Council. It is hoped that Richard Kemp will play a very active role in the CIO as Chair. The CIO will be able to raise revenue and apply for grants and donations in its own name. The CIO will be run on a break-even basis. The Parish Council will retain title to the freehold on The Vineyard and the Langford Community Land CIO (LCL CIO) will be responsible for managing the land on behalf of the PC and the Village.

An Objectives document will be developed as part of the registration with the Charities Commission. An Agreement document, between the PC and the LCL CIO will also be developed which will define responsibilities.

Many Parishioners have put forward views on what they would like The Vineyard to incorporate, an immediate challenge for the LCL CIO is to pull these views into an overall plan and ensure that the overall plan carries the broad support of The Parish.

We will also progress the land registrations mentioned above.

