

## **Chairman's Report 2010**

### **Wiltshire Rural Housing Association**

6 new homes for local people due for completion in November are being built in Cherry Orchard. After consulting with Sally Thomson on the site history it transpired that the land, as depicted on the 1841 Tithe Award for Codford St Peter is described as an enclosed meadow, 'a croft'. It was owned by James Slade and occupied by him and his nephew Thomas Slade Whiting. Sally suggested that 'Slade's Croft' would be appropriate; this name for the new development was supported by a majority of councillors.

### **Village Policy Limits & Development Control**

Over the years the Parish Council have had reason to complain about the quality of the response to local concerns from Development Control in West Wiltshire. At a meeting convened a meeting in January 2008 at the District Council Offices between members of the Parish Council together our District and County Councillors and WWDC Officers the standard of communication from Development Control was discussed at length. The main issues were ignoring Parish Council correspondence and incorrect and contradictory information to given by planning officers to members of the public and blaming the Parish Council for matters not in their control.

Despite assurances that although the process regarding possible residential incursion into agricultural land was likely to be protracted, we would be kept informed of progress after the result of a Planning Appeal in September 2008 was known, we received no further information for a year. At the September meeting 2009 we wrote to Development Control for an update. In November 2009 we were told that after a site visit 22<sup>nd</sup> January that year the enforcement officer decided that the matter was of little significance and not worth taking further. At the December meeting the Council agreed to contact Brad Fleet, the Service Director of Development to make an official complaint about the standard of service. In February Mr Fleet responded, accepting and apologising for the failure of communication on the part of the Unitary Authority, saying since the decision in 2009 the site was re-inspected and concluded there is now definitely a breach of planning control and action will be taken.

On 10<sup>th</sup> March by e-mail the Parish Council were made aware that once again a Compliance Officer said action was taken as a result of a complaint from the Parish Council. The Council complained again to Mr Fleet about the officer's alleged comment as she must have been aware that the PC complaint had been about the unsatisfactory level of service and poor communication from Development Control. Apologies have been received from Mr Fleet and Area Development Manager David Hubbard confirming that the Wiltshire Council does not consider that our recent letter was a planning enforcement complaint and this is not the

reason it is being pursued. Hopefully this is the end of the matter as far as the Parish Council are concerned.

### **The Unauthorised Barn in Chitterne Road**

After six years, three retrospective planning refusals, two dismissed Appeals, a High Court Challenge and a Public Inquiry the barn was finally removed last summer.

### **Veterinary Surgery**

The Parish Council supported the application for the new Veterinary Surgery that opened at the end of last year. Thanks to Margaret Collins we now have a beautiful building with excellent facilities that sits comfortably in the landscape and provides an important service to the surrounding area.

### **New Road Service Station**

An amended Planning Application for the new building supported by the PC has been resubmitted, and hopefully building will begin shortly.

### **ANZAC Service**

Was held as usual on Anzac day 25<sup>th</sup> April at 6.30am in the Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery. This is an annual event that is well supported by villagers, the Royal British Legion and by a growing number of Australian and New Zealand nationals. This year Evelyn Read with helpers from the Codford Circle organised the Gunfire breakfast at short notice. Many thanks to her, and to Ann Levick, Sue Poolman, Jay Claypoole, Jane Collins, Vera & John Gibbens for getting up so early and serving such a splendid breakfast.

### **Australian Badge Clean**

We owe a vote of thanks to the Codford Badge Committee Tom Thornton, Colin Beagley, Iain Cameron & Alex Saunt for organising the Badge Clean Up last year. It still looks remarkably pristine after the re-chalking.

## **Wylve Valley School**

The future of the Wylve Valley School has been assured after the School Governors voted that all the children are to be educated on the Codford site from this September. The possibility of moving the youngest children to Steeple Langford had caused great concern in Codford and the surrounding villages, the Parish Council were approached by many concerned parents and ensured that their misgivings were relayed to the Governing body prior to the meeting. Special thanks to Chris & Kate Brayne for organising a very successful online petition at short notice allowing parents and villagers to have an input into the process.

## **Seat and bus shelter Broadleaze**

In response to the request from older villagers for a seat near the bus stop in the middle of Codford Charlie Woollard agreed to contract with Dave Osment to redesign the shelter by building a new wall and attaching a seat. Dave did a brilliant job, having to repair damage to the brickwork immediately after he began. We are very grateful for his efforts on behalf of the community

## **Community Flood Plan Committee**

A large part of Codford St Mary around the River Wylve and the Chitterne Brook is now designated by the Environment Agency Flood at the highest flood risk 3. With this in mind the Parish Council have appointed a Flood Risk Committee comprising of Louis Hoareau, Tom Thornton, Colin Beagley and Don Bartlett to prepare a flood plan, as recommended by the Environment Agency. Louis attended a Flood Risk Seminar at Chippenham on 13<sup>th</sup> February and obtained a number of support documents for progressing the plan.

## **Community Payback**

The Clerk liaised with the Community Payback team to help with some local projects. The team came three times to the Millennium garden where they re-dug the path, laid a membrane, put wooden edges on the path and put a mixture of wood bark and sand on the path. The Millennium Committee paid £15 a day for the work and for all the materials.

The white railings in the High Street, Chitterne Rd and New Road need either cleaning or repainting and hopefully the team will return during the summer months to do the work.

## **Textile Bank**

The Parish Council asked the Village Hall Management Board if they would find a site for clothes and shoe bank in aid of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance. They have agreed and the new banks will be sited on the recycling site in the village hall.

## **Donations**

Among the donations we made during the last twelve month was £200 to the free live community event 'Riding Lights' organised by both churches and £100 towards the set up costs of the Wylde Coyotes Parent & Toddler Group where parents and toddlers will meet once a week and share a healthy breakfast. We also donated £100 to the Rapid UK Haiti Fund.

## **Freemen of Parish**

The Parish Council have decided that they will subscribe to a new initiative authorised by government legislation that allows villages to grant a Freeman of the Parish Award to members of the community who have, in their opinion, given outstanding public service to the community over many years. The Parish Council have selected two names in accordance with the criteria laid down by the legislation.

## **Roads and Pavements**

The Clerk has identified pavements and road surfaces that are in need of repairs and many of these have already been attended to. He has also concluded a grit bin audit

Ongoing safety issues awaiting funding include re-siting speed limit signs in Chitterne Rd, New Rd and the High Street and in Green Lane to the High Street junction to the New Rd/Green Lane junction. The Highways are attending to rerouting of heavy goods vehicles from the bottom end of Chitterne Road.

Henry Collins has agreed to subcontract to the Unitary Authority to clear roads with farm vehicles during extreme weather.

## **Mike Cotterill's legacy**

Mike bequeathed £1,000 in his will to the Parish Council. It has been agreed that when the new shop is built at New Road a Parish Notice Board in his memory will be placed nearby. The new board will be lockable and for Parish Council notices only. As a tier of local government there are official notices that need to be made available to the public, at present very often an important notice that must be displayed by law will often be covered up by a poster advertising services or appealing for a lost pet. The other notice boards will remain in situ for all other notices.

## **Thanks**

My thanks to all members of the Council for their hard work and support during the past year. A special thank to Louis, it is the Clerk who does the hardest work in ensuring that things get done.

## **Village Policy Limits & Development Control**

Over the years the Parish Council have had reason to complain about the quality of the response to local concerns from Development Control in West Wiltshire? Despite an ongoing planning issue that began in June 2005 regarding the appearance of residential incursion into agricultural land, and various attempts to clarify policy and to obtain answers that culminated in a meeting convened a meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2008 in the District Council Offices. The Parish Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman together with Councillors Andrew Davis and Christopher Newbury met with Mr Darsley and David Hubbard to discuss the standard of communication from Development Control. Correspondence from the Parish Council was ignored for months until a second or third attempt to gain information. Another major issue was that officers in the planning, specifically to do with compliance and enforcement, were giving incorrect and contradictory information to members of the public, and blaming the Parish Council for matters not within their control. The result of this was to cause misunderstanding and create tension between some affected residents and the Parish Council regarding an issue that was not within its power to resolve. At this meeting all parties were reassured by Mr Darsley and Mr Hubbard that the matter would be dealt with and communication from then on would improve.

This issue has remained ongoing over many years, with the Parish Council seeking clarification and the District Council, now the Unitary Authority procrastinating- first until the land where Church Acre stands was agreed an exception site, then until Planning was granted, until the homes were occupied, until the result of a Planning Appeal in September 2008 and finally until the Unitary Authority came into being a year ago.

The Parish Council had received verbal assurances over time that although the process was likely to be protracted we would be kept informed of progress. When the result of the Planning Appeal was decided we awaited further developments, having received no further information for a year at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009 we agreed to write to Development Control for an update. At the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting we were given a verbal update that the case was closed followed by a letter stating that between 29<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> February the planning contravention notices served on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008 had been returned. The site was monitored, the last time on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009 and the enforcement officer decided that the matter was of little significance and not worth taking further.

The Parish Council had been waiting for over a year for a response from Development Control in the belief that as soon as the decision was taken we would be informed. Once again we were dissatisfied with the inefficient and unprofessional service despite earlier assurances that communication would be improved. Neither the occupants concerned nor the Council had been informed of a decision taken ten months earlier. At the PC meeting on 14<sup>th</sup>

December it was decided that the Council would contact Brad Fleet, the Service Director of Development to make an official complaint about the standard of service.

In February Mr Fleet responded, accepting and apologising for the failure of communication on the part of the Unitary Authority. He stated that one of the outcomes of the recent review of the enforcement service there had been a general feeling from towns and parish's that the information flow from the new authority could be improved, especially with regard to breaches of planning control identified in their areas and the action being taken. He said that since the On 10<sup>th</sup> March e- mail received from one of the occupants of the houses affected contacted the Clerk. He had spoken to Mrs Sue Morgan the Compliance Officer and been informed that the action was taken as a result of a complaint from the Parish Council. The Clerk responded that the PC had not complained to the WC regarding the decision but about the unsatisfactory level of service and poor communication from Development Control.

We then wrote again to Mr Fleet to complain about Mrs Morgan's alleged comment that was felt to be at best unprofessional and at worst mischievous as she must have been aware that the PC had not challenged the decision but rather complained about the service over a period of time.

Mr Fleet replied on 29<sup>th</sup> March investigating the PC complaint and confirming that the unauthorised change of use was not being pursued in response to a complaint from the PC. On 16<sup>th</sup> April we received a letter of apology from the Area Development Manager David Hubbard that the reason for the action attributed to the PC by an officer of the Authority was a view wrongly divulged to one of the concerned parties, concluding with the fact that the WC does not consider that our recent letter was a planning enforcement complaint. As far as we are concerned the enforcement issue is between the Wiltshire Council and the parties involved