

LYDEARD ST LAWRENCE AND TOLLAND PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023-24

General

The gales of early December caused considerable disruption across the area, with many roads blocked by fallen trees; damage to power lines meant that most places within our parishes were without power for varying periods. Excellent work by landowners and County Council contractors ensured that most major roads, and many minor ones, were reopened quite quickly. National Grid workers, operating in very difficult conditions, restored electrical power as soon as was feasible. Our thanks go out to all these people.

Planning

As usual there were several applications to consider, many of them routine applications regarding trees in the Conservation Area, and none of them controversial. The Parish Council did not object to any of the proposals.

Highways

Highway matters have been an ongoing problem this year, particularly in the smaller lanes around Westleigh and Chapel Leigh. The flooding near Dyer's Barn, which seemed briefly to have been successfully dealt with, returned. A road closure on the northern approach to Chapel Leigh, where a tree uprooted in the December gales destroyed much of the road surface, has been a significant problem. Serious pothole damage to Hoccombe Lane is yet another issue. All these issues have been raised with Somerset Council and our local MP, and progress is (I hope) being made.

Broadband

Work on new broadband connections continues to take place throughout the area on an occasional basis.

Financial

The Council's finances remain in a healthy state, with funds in both the Community Benefit Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy. Monies are still ring-fenced for footpath repairs, clock maintenance and play equipment upkeep.

Once again I thank my fellow Councillors for their support over the last year, and our new Parish Clerk Neal Gossage for his very competent start to his new post with us.

This is my last Report as Chairman of Lydeard St Lawrence and Tolland Parish Council. I have enjoyed doing my best to serve our community, but after ten years in the post I feel it is time to take a back seat and hand over the reins.

The current Parish Council comes to the end of its term of office this time next year. We shall then be losing at least four Councillors, and we are already one Councillor short of a full complement. Does this matter? Well, if you want a Parish Council to work for you in our two parishes then yes, it does. New people will be needed to fill those vacancies; if they are not filled I can foresee the Parish Council being - of necessity - absorbed by a larger neighbouring council, and thus losing the very local voice we currently have. The ball is in your court.

Jonathan Marshall
Chairman