

THE CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT 2010

What has your Parish Council been doing the past year.....?

As Chairman I have come to realise how slowly any change takes place in the local government.

This year has been a year of change and threatening change. Firstly we have a new clerk and the handover from Jacki after 22 years has gone very smoothly, due to the hard work from both of these lovely ladies. Thank you very much to both.

Change is threatened by the withdrawal of services from South Hams District Council and Devon County Council.

Much time and money seems to have been wasted on setting up "The Boundary Committee" by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has paid for numerous court cases, only to disregard the Committees recommendations awarding unitary status to Exeter .This was an option that was not supposed to be considered and that goes against the Governments own rules for Unitary Authorities. The proposal is for the existing two tier system for the rest of Devon to remain in place. This leaves the County Hall, the administrative centre for Devon, in somebody else's patch.

Affordable housing seems to go round in endless circles without getting anywhere- although there is a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel.

One of my Councillors said "trying to get anything done is like walking through treacle" and I agree.

Planning still takes up too much time .To make our Meetings of a more acceptable length we now have a second Meeting purely to keep up with the current flow of plans that bombard us month in and month out.

As a Council, together with South Hams District Council our Planning Authority, we have not been doing well in the democratic process. Sometimes I become despondent at the lack of democracy in our planning process. Of course I refer to the planning appeals relating to "THE GREENHOUSE". "CRISPINS" and a property at "PERCHES CLOSE". Your Chairman has thought of a rooftop protest at the Palace of Westminster, or a hunger strike while chained to the railings. However I cannot stand heights and I do like my food!

One worrying aspect of our work as Councillors is to see the way Central Government is cutting subsidies to Local Authorities. The South Hams are constantly looking for ways to downgrade or cut services to you the Council Tax Payer. At the moment they are trying to off load services onto our shoulders with little or no money to provide these extra responsibilities for example; grass cutting, the provision of play parks and street sweeping. If this is the case we will have to increase the precept in future years if you as residents of Newton and Noss want these services to be continued.

Money is in fact not saved but the bill is just passed from one council to another.

Let me give you some positive news!

The Collaton Butts Park link is getting started.

Our foot paths have been maintained to a high standard under the expert eye of Cllr. Tom Taylor.

At the last Parish meeting I spoke about a list of targets to measure achievements of your council.

1. Quality Council - with the change of Clerk we have not pursued this but will review next year.
2. Local Employment - planning permission has been granted for Workshops at Membland. We work on the enlargement of The Co-Op and hopefully this will employ more staff.
3. Shopping opportunities - plans for the Co-Op seem to come and go. However our Post Office and Community Shop has been enlarged and is better stocked.
4. Housing- maybe something soon?
5. Parish property - we plan to repair the pot holed surface on Noss Hard and install boat and canoe storage racks, in fact generally tidy up the area. We also intend to improve the Noss play area which was flooded and almost unusable most of last year. We have a drainage plan that we want to implement soon. We would then like to look at methods of raising funds to improve the play park equipment.
6. The Butts Park Crossing is due to be improved to increase visibility for pedestrians. Not as much as we would have liked but anything will be an improvement.
7. Collaton Butts Park Link should have started by the time you read this. The start date has been delayed by bad weather.
8. The Sports Pavilion may come under the control of this Council as SHDC continue to cut services. We are hoping to make improvements to the building this year.
9. The Parish Plan has been updated and can be viewed as an appendix on the Parish Council website.

I must congratulate The Governors of Newton Ferrers Primary School on the completion of the new school building in the school grounds. As you know your Council held a Public consultation Meeting to discuss the issue, and after hearing the views of all the interested parties suggested altering the siting and the height of the building.

To end my report I hear that Gordon Brown is eating 9 bananas a day to sharpen himself up for the general election. I just wondered if with global warming, we could grow bananas on Gypsy Meadow as this may enhance the performance of your Councillors.

**Mr. John Young, Chairman.**