

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

This year has been a tough one, with the Merriott Parish Council functioning with the minimum membership for a Quorum for the majority of the year, which has added pressure on the remaining members, so I want to start by giving thanks to Jim Shorting, Bob Norton and Gill Merrick along with Marion Andrews our Parish Council Clerk, without their dedication and commitment we would not have achieved so much. I am glad to see that the Parish Council now goes forward with increased membership

Even with its limited membership the Parish Council has still managed to achieve a lot in the last 12 months.

### Parish Ranger Scheme

The Lengthsman Scheme which had been running in conjunction with adjoining Parishes was disbanded in August. Since then the Parish has been kept tidy by the appointment of the District Council Rangers undertaking the wide range of duties. Shyners Terrace has had a makeover with much of the hedging being cut back and a fence being installed.

### Dropped kerbs

With the support of the County Councillor the long awaited additional dropped kerbs have been installed improving access and movement around the village for everyone. Also grant money from the County Councillor has purchased a sitting bench for installation on the Crewkerne road for walkers to rest.

### Egwood

There has been some advance with the lease of Egwood for the benefit of the three parishes of Lopen, Merriott and Hinton and there are just a couple of details that the County Council need to respond on before signing takes place.

### Community groups and grants

Parish Council Grants have been awarded to the production costs of the Village Plan, the Allotment Association, the Church Lych Gate, and Somerset Wildlife

The Parish Council wish to recognise and are very thankful for the time given by Volunteers who produce the monthly Merriott Messenger, run the Village Planning group, the village Speedwatch and more recently the Parish Path group. Their time given is invaluable and is for the benefit of the residents of Merriott who have a means of communication, safer roads and tended footpaths.

### Annual parish meeting in June 2014.

The Annual Parish meeting in June was combined with the launch of the updated Village Plan by the Village Plan group who work in liaison with Parish Council. The meeting was very well attended and covered many topics of interest to the local community. The new updated Village Plan was circulated to 1,000 homes and many outside agencies.

### Surgery

The Parish Council and the Village Plan group were informed by the Crewkerne Surgery in December last year that they were withdrawing their support for the Development of a new build in Merriott due to the national problem with GP staffing. The Merriott Parish Council and Village Plan Group have contacted the NHS to express their concerns on this matter and I am sure that the Surgery will become a major topic for future Merriott Parish Council meetings, if we are to achieve the dream of bringing a surgery to Merriott.

### Planning

43 planning applications with various outcomes have been reviewed and commented on within the year. This included the successful objection by the village to the planned Berrow development at Boozer Pit, however the recent approval of the Gappers Pool application is a concern as it shows that there is a threat towards

future development on the green spaces at the heart of the village, it also raises concern as it could well have a major impact on the status of the Village Plan.

### The Community Pavilion

The Pavilion has been the most important project for the Parish Council and investment by the village. When I took on the Chairman's role in May 2014 I stated that my main goal was to complete the Pavilion project and it has definitely taken up most of my time.

With dedicated time from Cllr Shorting and the Clerk steady progress was made and the Pavilion finished in September with building control certification allowing opening at the end of September. The official opening took place on a sunny morning in November with past and present Chairman, dignitaries from local councils, the local sports clubs and the local community.

I am sure many of you in this room thought the day would never come when the Pavilion was completed, but with the help of the community I believe we have built a Community Pavilion that the Village can be proud of. It is more than just a sports facility, it is a Community building which provides much needed Public Conveniences open daily for users of the recreation ground; it has a hall that can be hired out by the public and social clubs and it provides amenities that family's young and old will benefit from for years to come.

Undoubtedly there are lessons to be learnt when we look back at the management of the Pavilion project. The building of such a Pavilion for any Parish Council not just Merriott would come with its own challenges from the initial raising of the funding through to the completion of the building. We have commissioned a review of the project management by the Somerset Association of Local Councils. I am sure there will be areas of weakness identified that the Parish Council will need to take on board and lessons learnt before embarking on such a large project in the future.

There are still challenges ahead for the Parish Council around the Contractor and the Parish has sought legal advice on how to proceed on this matter.

I hope the Council continues to remind itself that it has provided a valuable asset to the village and that the Council now looks forward and focuses on meeting the future needs of the community, such as seeking ways to bring a surgery to the Village.

### Recreation Ground

At the Recreation ground, the grounds man has kept it looking tidy, and the completion of the Pavilion has supported the increased use of the football pitch with the youth team, an additional adult's male team and for the first time a female football team now playing. This summer (if we have one) should see increased use of the cricket pitch now that the pavilion is completed.

An additional picnic bench has been installed at the Recreation as a memorial by the family of Mrs Cooper of Melbury Row. The village has also benefited from a donation of bulbs from SSDC which were shared between the recreation ground and Churchyard

There is of course always more to be done and the MPC can now turn its attention to the long term plan to update the car park and the play facilities.

### Stepping down

When I accepted the role as Chairman last year, I recognised that it was important for me to step in and ensure that the Pavilion was completed, which I am pleased to report of course that it is the case, however I mentioned at the time that my job required me to travel a lot. I now find myself in the position that I will be travelling significantly more and take up a new job based out of Marlow Buckinghamshire in

June. Although I am not presently planning to move house, I will no longer be able to juggle both work, home life and being a member of Parish Council, so sadly I have had to step down both as the Chairman and as a councillor.

I want to once again thank Jim Shorting, Bob Norton and Gill Merrick along with Marion Andrews our Parish Council clerk, it has been a pleasure and a honour to work with you over the last few years, without you and the help of the local community over the last 12 months we would not have achieved so much.

Thank you