

Statement delivered at Annual Parish Meeting March 2025

The Council is now halfway through its four year cycle.

Since the Parish Meeting last year we have been able to recruit a new Clerk and so Jane Mills joined us in June last year. Jane brings a wealth of experience in local government to this Council.

Our main focus as always is what we do for the parish and we trust the residents have noted and welcomed the various tasks that have improved the village environment

APC has completed the installation of the second defibrillator in the centre of the village. This has been funded largely from the Fullabrook wind turbine community scheme. We are grateful to Martin and Sandra for allowing us to site the cabinets on their land.

We have purchased and installed 4 signs in Strand Lane, warning of pedestrians.

For the first time the Council used a contractor at the end of the summer to trim hedges in certain areas where the growth had made walking hazardous. We hope to do the same this year. We have also employed a North Devon Council road sweeper truck to remove several tons of leaves and other debris from the sides of the roads particularly in Adder Lane.

The Parish Council has continued the largely unseen self help jobs that I encouraged from my election in 2019. The clearing of drains, the cutting back of some parts of hedges and tree branches where they cause obstruction or impair visibility are just some of those tasks. The storms before Christmas caused a lot of debris to fall in the roads as well as 2 small trees and these matters were promptly dealt with. Repairs to street furniture have also been made. We are grateful to those councillors and residents who help with these often mucky jobs. There is no cost to the parish, despite the considerable amount of equipment, time and fuel that are used.

A very significant issue this year has been the flood on the road to Heanton. This road which is a service and schoolbus route as well as the main alternative when the A361 is unusable, has been impassable to many users for a considerable proportion of the last year. Despite numerous promises of remedial work, nothing significant has been achieved by DCC highways. The signage was inadequate, several vehicles were damaged, in some cases catastrophically yet DCC only closed the road at the very end of the problem. Therefore it was decided to take direct action in January this year and with the consent of the landowner and with considerable generosity by Nick Sampson, both in time and equipment, a breach in the hedge was made and the bulk of the water drained away. The road was then power brushed, leaving it safe and passable to all traffic. Further promises were then made by Highways to improve the road by clearing mud as well as opening the drain that has disappeared on the right hand side. To date nothing has been done. However an assurance has now been made that the drain network on that part of the road will be

worked on next month. A road closure has been publicised for 2nd April onwards. Time will tell if the situation is properly resolved.

I must emphasise that whilst we don't blame Cllr Pru Maskell for the lack of progress, there is a woeful lack of control and accountability in the Highways Dept of DCC. Sadly this is not confined to our problems, but seems to be a factor in many road issues throughout the area.

A litter pick was undertaken in May last year and we hope to hold another this May. Hopefully refreshments can be arranged again in the hall. Thanks to all who took part and thanks also to those who provided the food. Please join us again. Details to follow.

The Speedwatch group initiated by APC and coordinated by Ken Kies did not enlist any volunteers and so the scheme was never implemented

We are pleased to say that our precept has stayed the same for several years now and there will be no increase in the forthcoming year.

The Council made a decision in May last year to hold meetings every two months. This has worked well and saves costs. There is always the option of extra meetings if required and if circumstances change we can revert to a monthly timetable.

I thank my fellow Councillors for their attendance and commitment to this totally voluntary organisation and I hope we can continue to serve the village in a calm and measured fashion.

Philip Hughes
Chairman
March 2025