

Chair's Report - Cllr Gregg Manning

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council May 2023 – May 2024

Good evening Ladies and Gentleman I would like to welcome you all to tonight's Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Our chairman, Gregg Manning cannot be with us tonight but has prepared this report for me to read out to you. Gregg is not standing for Chair this time but will remain an active councillor.

For those of you who not know me my name is Gregg Manning, I have lived in the village for 18 years and the village matters to me a lot.

I shall be presenting to you a summary of all the things that the Parish Council have been involved in over the last 12 months.

The parish council is made up of 10 councillors which is 7 for Princetown, 1 for Hexworthy, and 2 for Postbridge. It is not always easy to keep the Council up to full strength due to a number of reasons. Having lost a councillor quite recently we will soon be looking for a replacement from Princetown.

All councillors are unpaid volunteers but we do as a council employ three people one is our clerk who keeps us all in order and most importantly legal. By this I mean that she ensures that council business is conducted correctly and within the law. She also organises all the paperwork for meetings and deals with letters etc. Without our clerk we could not really function.

I also wanted to thank Jake Cook our litter picker. He keeps the playpark tidy which is most important as our park gets many visitors from outside the village.

Another employee is our Lengthsman – He works around the parish and we as residents accept what he does without blinking an eye. So, I wanted to share with you what it is he does.

Lengthsman's Duties:

Grass Cutting throughout the Parish:

- DCC Highways for cutting back roadside verges at junctions
- Duchy areas - Play Park, around PCC, War Memorial
- Postbridge Cemetery approx 1 day a month from April - Sept
- Princetown Football Club pitch cutting through season (Charged at £60.31 per cut x10 pa)
- Princetown Churchyard cut twice last season (charged at £38.92 for 2.5hrs cut)

Clearing roadside ditches and culverts to prevent surface water flooding roads (mainly in Jan/Feb)

General Maintenance:

- Putting up signs, 5mph speed and no dogs etc around Play Park and PCC Play Park – removing faulty elements, repairs to various elements, cleaning
- Refurbishing the Bus shelters, painting and putting in bench seating

Tidy Princetown Session A small group of villagers who meet every first Sunday of the month. We meet at 10 outside the post office and we spend an hour around the village. It might be removing the weeds along the edge of the pavement or litter picking around the village. We need more to help so all volunteers welcome. Although this group still exists it has been hard to keep people on board this year so we need a new recruitment drive. After all we all want a tidy village.

LOVE project - new initiative April 2024 – local businesses sponsor planters/troughs around the village. Currently 4 organisations/businesses have sponsored 6 planters/troughs. Recruited 2 volunteers to assist with planting and ongoing maintenance of planters.

The Parish Council was Instrumental in setting up **Churchyard Maintenance Fund/Group** to look after St Michael's Churchyard. Now into it's second year we have seen this project move from strength to strength.

I only mention this group as it still contains a lot of councillors, but these are as individuals not councillors. Whilst It is no longer a Parish Council project it's very much a community event with the churchyard being such an important part of the village. None of the funding from this group comes from the Parish Council in fact the PCMF actually pay the Council for any grass cutting that Dave does for them.

So now let's look a bit more at the work the council itself does.

Planning Applications Considered and Responded to:

17x applications (including 3 for Works to trees in a Conservation Area) 15 voted In Support, 1 Objection, 1 No view taken,

We do not have the final say on planning but if we object to a planning application then it can no longer be dealt with just by a planning officer but needs the full planning council.

At least two councillors will have visited the site and considered all aspects of the application and whether it fits within the criteria laid down in the planning regulations. They then prepare a report and present to the council where it will be debated. The remaining councillors will have read all the relevant paperwork for each application.

'Welcome to Princetown Signs' - donations received from Charity Shop and High Moor WI to replace 2 missing signs.

Refurbishment of 3 Benches by war memorial - in conjunction with HMP Dartmoor

Pots and Plants – A council initiative now into its second year and still doing well. The plan was always to brighten up the village and I think that has been achieved but still the work goes on.

Speedwatch Sessions - This initiative was started back in 2016 and since that time has carried out hundreds of sessions. During that time we have seen the overall speed of vehicles drastically reduced. This we hope has meant fewer animals killed on our roads. For every animal hit there is a real possibility of serious injury to the driver and passengers or even death. I also need more volunteers for this so anyone interested please get in contact with me.

Responsible for Community Assets:

- Postbridge Cemetery – Burial Authority – responsible for the grounds, burials, memorials and plots.
- Defibrillators – maintain in Hexworthy, Postbridge now also in Princetown.
 - New batteries, pads for Venville Sept 23
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- Bus Shelters (Princetown) – new seating installed, to be re painted when weather permits
- Princetown Play Park – maintenance and repair of all elements. Weekly inspections by Councillors. Action plan agreed to respond to issues identified by annual RoSPA inspection in March 24. Total expenditure of £1880 to effect repairs as identified in March 2023 RoSPA inspection.
- Noticeboards – Hexworthy replaced with kind donations from local businesses
- CCTV Princetown- annual maintenance/servicing and monitoring as required (Crime Prevention)
- Put up and decorate Christmas Tree in Princetown Dec 23 (Tree donated by HMP Dartmoor)
- Telephone Box – WW1 Memorial Princetown

Lobbying:

- When we become aware of things that may affect the village that is when the council takes action.
- BT – cleaning and refurbishment of phone boxes Princetown and Rundlestone
- BT - closure/removal of phone box, Tavistock Road Princetown – unsuccessful
- 4 major banks regarding closure of branches in Tavistock
- DCC Highways – to cut back gorse on B3357 Dunnabridge - ongoing
- Duchy – re Old Prison Officers Mess – to make site safe and tidy up
- Plymouth City Bus – buses not stopping at bus stop in Princetown
- Support for 20's Plenty initiative
- Natural England Proposed Stock Reduction on Dartmoor

Events we have organised:

- Public meeting to present proposals re additional CCTV and double Yellow Lines – attended by 5 DFPC Councillors, 1x WDBC, and 1x DCC councillor plus 12 members of the public.

Responded to a number of issues raised by local residents – including:

Parking issues, road safety, fly tipping, litter and dog mess in and around the village, noise from neighbour complaints, rust staining on war memorial, BT removal of land lines, reporting pot holes and drainage issues to DCC highways, buildings in disrepair, safety issues regarding the fencing around the Old Officers Mess, large lorries accessing Brewery

Finally, there are some things we have to pay for

Insurance cover – all activities, Play Park, CCTV, assets, public liability

WDBC – for emptying of 4 dog poo bins fortnightly – agreed to purchase additional bin to be sited at top of Burrator Ave.

WDBC Cemetery Rates – Postbridge Cemetery

NALC/DALC – subscriptions for training, advice and information

Rent – to Duchy for Play Park

Donations made to West Devon Citizens Advice and 'Around and About'

Finally the council sometimes has to take difficult decisions such as the decision to increase precept by 3% this year having remained the same for 3 years. Our money comes from the precept and there is only so long we can ignore the price rises that are happening all around us. As a resident you can be sure that every penny is accounted for, nothing is wasted and we as a council always seek to get the best value in everything we do.