

## **Chairman's Report April 2019**

The last year has been a very busy one for the Parish Council and I would like to thank every one of the councillors & staff that work for the Parish Council for the hard work that they have put in. Every councillor is active in the many different aspects of what we do. It may be thought to go unnoticed, but if not done, certainly would be noticed by all of us living in Kewstoke.

This time last year we were waiting to see what the then incomplete traffic calming system would do to combat speeding traffic going through the village. The system is now complete with only a couple of flashing 'slow down' signs left to go in. We had one on trial in Crookes Lane for a month or two, which did visibly slow down a proportion of the traffic travelling down Crookes Lane towards the Village Green & Play Area. The mixed 25mph on the Toll Road to 30mph to 20mph along Kewstoke Road isn't ideal but is out of our control. We have now created an environment to slow the traffic travelling through the village, but all the traffic calming in the world alone, won't stop those that disregard the law. However, if what we have done saves one life, it will have been a worthwhile ongoing exercise.

This brings me nicely onto the reasoning behind the 'unofficial' yellow signs directing Coaches and Lorries on Kewstoke Road down into Crookes Lane. In the summer last year, coach drivers mainly, were taking their passengers to the M5 junction along Kewstoke Road. They got stuck, traffic backed up and the coaches had to be reversed until they were able to get down into Crookes Lane or Anson Road. These stoppages were blocking Kewstoke Road for periods of over an hour. Should there have been an emergency at the school or at any of the houses in the area affected, the emergency services would not have been able to attend. We have applied for a Traffic Order banning these vehicles from entering Kewstoke Road after the junction of Crookes Lane. It's now a year away from coming into being. Until that happens, our unofficial signage will stay in place. The signs are not on the 'highway' and North Somerset Council officers are sympathetic to our cause. There have been concerns from residents in Lower Norton Lane about directing heavy traffic past the Village Green & Play area, but it seems to be the lesser of two evils and it really only happens during the summer months.

Paying to Park in the Terminus and the car park opposite the Commodore is another issue that we have had to deal with. North Somerset Council own the Car Parks. It was their decision to close the small carpark near Crookes Lane.

It's their land. It's their decision to make people pay to park and not the Parish Council's. We needed to protect our residents in Beach Road from having people avoiding the charges by parking outside their houses and blocking the road. This is why we insisted that a traffic order was put in place making parking an offence during the times that the car park was pay & display. It's taken a long time, there have been many delays, but at the time of writing, I believe the pay & display is active. The dodgy yellow lines will have to be redone, we are on their case. It's in their own interest to save them from being a laughing stock.

When the next stage of North Somerset Council's plan to bring the smaller carpark near the Commodore up to the level of the larger one, it will be going ahead with material from the improvements to the Portbury Hundreds next to the Gordano motorway junction. The currently closed Boardwalk will be dismantled and a path created to get full access to the carpark. The boardwalk is closed because the timbers are failing and the Parish Council think that trying to repair it in the short term, is just throwing away money, when it will soon be replaced anyway.

On the flip side we do now have a have a very smart new car park which when it tones down with age, will be an asset to the village. It's certainly better than what was known as Sand Bay Marina in the winter months. We are negotiating with North Somerset for them to pay us an annual fee for maintenance of the bordering areas. We will be planting trees and shrubs in the autumn. One resident has already contributed by donating a couple of trees, agreeing to maintain them during the dryer summer months.

The kiosk that we created a few years ago from one side of the toilet block in the carpark is proving to be a great asset for the village. The franchisee, Dave Page is doing a great job. Not only is he paying the Parish an annual rent to run his kiosk, he is a help to visitors by giving change for the toilets, making sure that the doors are not being left wedged open, giving free access. He is opening more than the required March until October, which means that we can keep the toilets open longer for visitors. It also earns the Parish more money to offset against the cost of keeping the toilets open.

With a grant from the Environment Agency the Parish Council have installed new chestnut fences in various areas of the dunes leading to the beach. The idea is that the sand builds up behind the fences. It is the hard work of Russell Adams our 'Grumpy Old Farmer' that we have to thank for making this

happen. The fences have not been installed to stop walkers or horse riders gaining access to the beach, but to protect our homes from flooding. Already one length of fence has been used for making a fire. This will be replaced and the fences monitored throughout the coming months.

Our village and beach orderlies continue to do a sterling job, clearing litter and rubbish from our village as well as Ronnie keeping the toilets clean.

Mike Hardwick our Parish Clerk has settled in well. He is currently overhauling our standing orders and putting into place systems that will make sure that what we do going forward is always fit for purpose. One of the jobs in the coming weeks, is to look at the Parish Council element of the 'Kewstoke Website'. It needs to be more up to date, interactive and serve as a 'go to' destination for residents seeking information about current matters & issues. Currently it isn't. I would like to see those residents that use the internet be able to find out what's going on, find out why something has been done or not as is the case, without resorting to the Chinese whispers that are abundantly given on the Kewstoke Facebook page. The Parish Council newsletter will still be produced a few times a year and delivered to every household.

The Facebook page moderated by Councillor Karen Jenkins is hugely popular with residents and visitors, with nearly 1000 members. It is in its early stages and a bit like a grumpy teenager. Karen does an excellent job of moderating and controlling the comments made. As I see it, it isn't ready yet to be used as a communication tool by the Parish Council. There are people who use the page as a platform to complain about anything that they deem worthy of mention. There are a number of serial offenders that use the page to push their opinions on whatever they see fit. This often causes distress to others. As the new parish year progresses I think that we need to address this as a council. Where does allowing free speech but also the censure of cyber bullies & bad mouthing meet? Do we need to remove the privilege of being a member of the group from those that continually offend?

The Parish Council are looking at producing a resident's survey, similar to the one done in 2002. This time it won't be paper copies, but internet based. We will get residents with the internet to help their neighbours have their say. It will be hugely less timely consuming to compile and complete. The results will help the Parish Council in making decisions taking into account residents wishes going forward.

There have been a couple of contentious planning applications made in the Parish in the last year. The application for 20 dwellings off Crookes Lane was turned down by North Somerset Council. Subsequently an appeal has been lodged by the applicant. This is expected to be heard sometime in July onwards. Affected residents will shortly be receiving notification of this from North Somerset Council. The Parish Council opposed the application and will shortly be getting in touch with affected residents to organise representation at the hearing.

The other application that has caused concern is that for over 300 Holiday Cabins & supporting buildings. At the time of writing we still have no information with regard as to whether it has been turned down or accepted by North Somerset Council.

I feel that it is now time to round up this Chairman's report, especially as due to circumstances beyond my control, I haven't been able to deliver it personally.

I must in closing mention the retirement this year from the Parish Council of Cedric Thomas. Cedric has given many, many years of service to the Parish Council. His local knowledge has been unappreciated and his time freely given. Cedric still wishes us to keep him up to date with events. We know that if we need information about the history of a piece of land and its use, he is the 'go to' man.

Thanks Cedric & thanks again to councillors giving freely of their time to keep this such a great place to live.

Jim MacDonald