Parish Council Report April 2014

As has become the practice in recent times at these annual meetings, Pamela Bennett, Chairman of the Parish Council presented a report on the Parish Council's business over the last 12 months with a brief look-ahead to the future.

Governance:
May 2013 saw the start of the 4 –year term of office of the current Parish Council. 8 Councillors had put themselves forward for re-election and were appointed unopposed. Since then, the Council has co-opted John Barnes and Roger Rowe, both of whom are warmly welcomed and have been actively involved in Council business. Cllr Barnes has taken on a major role with the website and Cllr Rowe has joined the Finance and Traffic groups. At the Parish Council AGM in May last year Pamela Bennett was re-elected as Chair, with Cllr Ed Gilby as Vice-Chair. The Parish Council prides itself on working well together as a team. Permanent working parties, which focus in detail on matters such as finance, personnel and traffic, continue, as before, to provide in-put and expertise to the full Council. All Councillors willingly take responsibilities and co-operate in or take the lead in other projects, as and when required.

During the meeting residents heard about two such Parish Council-led initiatives: the extensive work underway on the Neighbourhood Plan, led by Cllrs Harrison and Gilby, and the plans to mark the Centenary of the start of WW1, and to refurbish the War Memorial. On behalf of the community the Chairman thanked Cllrs Harrison, Davies and Gilby for their leading roles in these parish-wide projects, and acknowledged those local residents who are also directly involved.

Councillors also represent Winsley at meetings of other agencies both in Winsley and outside.

Last May an election was called for a Wiltshire Councillor to represent Winsley. Since then the Parish Council has been working closely with newly elected Wilts Cllr Magnus MacDonald to ensure Winsley's voice is heard at County Hall. He was thanked for his continued support. He takes over from Cllr Linda Conley, who had served this Parish for a number of years and whose death was announced in October 2013.

4 Traffic –related matters

1. One of the very first issues with which the whole community became involved was the **bus route.** Residents will need no reminder about the crass way in which First Bus had chosen to re-route the 264/265 through the village. There had been no advance warning of this from the bus company, and no consultation with local residents. They simply did it! This caused a great deal of upset in our community, culminating in an open meeting with Jonathan Barnard, one of the bus company's directors, who was left in no doubt as to the strength of feeling on the issue. The decision to change the route had apparently been taken before he was appointed and he was at a loss to explain why it had been done, calling it, in his words, a "bonkers decision". He promised to do whatever Winsley

wanted. Residents were consulted and the Parish Council put forward a recommendation, based on local views, to First Bus. This new route was introduced on Feb 2nd. A positive working relationship has subsequently been established between the Parish Council and Mr Barnard, who seems genuinely keen to listen.
He had been invited to the meeting, and was keen to attend, but unfortunately his work commitments prevented it. He sent his apologies that morning, together with his best wishes to Winsley community. He reiterated his wish to hear from us with any concerns.

2. Parking
Residents heard about the proposed restrictions to parking along Bradford Road. It is hoped this will ease traffic flow for all drivers and for pedestrians too and all residents are urged to take part in the forthcoming consultation. In addition, Wiltshire Council has also said they will add road markings indicating the bus stops in Tyning Road in a bid to avoid these stops being blocked by parked cars.

3. Speeding
It is not just stationary vehicles, but the speed of much present-day traffic that causes concern. Wiltshire Council recognised that speed reduction in certain defined places might be appropriate and has published a **20mph policy** and the Parish Council was asked to submit an area to be considered. Following a consultation of residents, a recommendation was put to Wiltshire Council for a 20mph restriction on the road through Turleigh and continuing up Dane Rise, which has become something of a 'rat-run' from Bradford to the by-pass. Cllrs Ladner and Rowe, who represent the Parish Council in the local traffic forum, with support from Wilts. Cllr MacDonald, have worked hard on our behalf to push for this to be implemented. As a result Wiltshire Council Highways will undertake a feasibility study into the need for a speed limit in this area.

4. Finally on a more positive note: We have a new **bus shelter**! This has been a long time coming, but, it is hoped all will agree, it has been worth waiting for. This shelter has been installed to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, It has been paid for from Parish Council funds with support from the Area Board at Wiltshire Council and with money raised during our Jubilee celebrations here in Winsley. A print-out of the bus timetable from this stop, to be displayed in the shelter has been requested from the bus company.

Communications:

1. Winsley Community Website, which has now been operational for 3 years, continues to develop. It holds information about the various clubs and organisations within the village and posts regular news updates concerning just about anything which might be of interest to the community and which needs to be shared in a timely manner. The majority of local businesses are listed, for which they pay a nominal annual fee. The revenue from this is held for funding future website development. The Parish Council pays for the hosting cost.

The website is fast becoming a “one stop shop” for information. Even how to report a pothole! If you want to sell something then there is a “Trading Post” and what’s on is to be found in “The Diary of Events”.

It has recently become a very useful method of collecting **residents’ opinions**. In particular it proved invaluable when, last autumn, the Council ran 2 consultations: The Bus Route and 20MPH speed limits. By using the website we were able to use maps and plans to explain the consultation process and its implications and we provided a link for residents to make their response. During both of these on-line consultations, visits to the website more than doubled. The Parish Council uses the website to post agendas and minutes of Council meetings and regular updates on the Neighbourhood Planning Process with an archive of information being held on the website.

This time last year we welcomed Judith Bishop’s offer of a trial period as **Webmaster** and we thank her for her work. Unfortunately her work commitments became too onerous for her to continue. We are very grateful to Cllr Barnes and to our Clerk, Fleur Shanahan, who between them keep the site up-to-date. Whilst this arrangement is sustainable for now, it is hoped that a community group can be established to take it on and develop it further.

Having received many **e-mail responses** to the consultations, the Parish Council decided to establish a mailing list to inform residents, on an occasional basis, of matters of importance or interest. This was first used to remind residents of the closing date for the Winsley Housing Needs Survey and more recently as a reminder of the annual Parish meeting. If any resident, not already signed up to this, would like to be kept informed this way, please follow the link on the website.

2. Notice Boards Alongside the growth in use of the community website, it is the main notice board in Tyning Road which remains for many residents the principle means of communication. As was promised last year, the Parish Council has replaced the other 2 **notice boards** in Conkwell and Turleigh and thanks go to Tricia McGuffie and Judith Bishop for continuing to act as key-holders.
Through the Weaver, the website and the notice boards, the Parish Council aims to keep residents as informed as possible at all times.

3. Communications from residents to the PC
The Chairman took the opportunity to remind all residents that matters of general concern should be addressed to the Parish Clerk. Her contact details are on the boards, the website and in the Weaver. Action can only be taken if the Council is informed, so please contact the clerk. As an example, there have a number of instances recently of what you might call petty vandalism or nuisance, which have come to the Council’s attention through residents getting in touch.

The regular routine tasks of the Parish Council remain those of undertaking maintenance and scrutinising planning applications.

1.Planning There have been one or two potentially controversial **planning** applications in the last 12 months and the Council has been actively engaged in challenging the presumption in favour of permission to develop, based on the need to preserve the very distinctive character of our Parish. This is a key element in the work of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Maintenance of areas either owned by the Parish Council or for which the Council is responsible, include a considerable number of trees, plus some walls, grassed areas, play areas, the Churchyard, and the Peace Garden. The Parish Council is pleased with the quality of routine green maintenance undertaken by the contractor, James Lock. He is occasionally engaged by the Council to undertake additional work, and in the last 12 months this has included work in Crossways Path and the Peace Garden, repairs to the Village Hall wall and the White Horse Road play area. In addition the local community is very grateful to John Presland and his team for looking after Murhill Bank Nature Reserve and Ashley Ponds. Thanks go also to the Winsley Gardening Club for planting and maintaining the roundabout, the tubs by the Health Centre, and, more recently, the Peace Garden. Mr Brian Micklam was thanked for his initiative to improve access to footpaths, particularly those to the north of the by-pass. Together with Cllr Poulsom he has undertaken a review of all these footpaths. His recommendations for improvements such as kissing gates have been submitted to Wiltshire Council in a bid for funding from the local Area Board. This application will be considered for approval by the local Area Board on May14th. Residents will be kept informed of the progress.

Council Finances
Maintenance, both regular and unforeseen, is the major draw on our limited **finances** and we are grateful to the Parish Clerk and the Finance Team who were thanked for their work in recommending the annual precept needed to sustain the level of service to the community. A regular sum is put aside as a prudent measure against the need for major repairs, tree surgery or emergencies. Winsley's finances are well managed and we are pleased that there was no need to increase the precept this year.

Parish Clerk
All the work of the Parish Council is supported by the **Clerk**, Fleur Shanahan; the first point of contact with the Parish Council. She will respond immediately whenever possible to concerns or will forward the matter to the relevant department at Wiltshire Council for action By its individual and personal nature much of this work goes on behind the scenes, but is hugely appreciated by those directly involved. The Parish Council as a body is more than satisfied with the quality of the Clerk's work. This was reflected again in the annual appraisal of the Parish Clerk, held 28th April, when Councillors on the Personnel working Group were able to assess the work of the Clerk over the past 12 months and to set targets for the next. Fleur keeps all Councillors informed and advised and works tirelessly on behalf of the whole community. Thank you, Fleur.

Looking ahead to the Council Year May 2014 –April 2015 now.

The Parish Council will continue its regular scheduled tasks of maintenance and the scrutiny of planning applications and will respond to matters of local concern. Residents were reminded that the Council meets on the first Tuesday of the month. The agenda is published both on the notice board in Tyning Road and on the website and residents are always welcome. There is a regular slot for Cllr McDonald to pass information to and from Wiltshire Council and whenever possible an officer from our local Police is present to give a report and answer questions. Regular up-dates on the important matter of the Neighbourhood Plan will be published on the website, notice boards and in The Weaver, and residents are encouraged to get involved as things progress. We hope very much that the parking proposal from Wiltshire Council, if approved, will help keep the road clear for all users. We will keep residents informed on this matter and we encourage everyone to respond to the consultation.

Residents had heard about ideas being considered to mark the anniversary in August of the start of WW1, thanks to Cllr Davies and the WW1 Team for putting together so varied and interesting a programme. It is hoped this will be well supported. By all accounts Winsley is much further ahead with its plans than many other local areas - this fact has been noted at County Hall!

As residents may know, a WW1 fund has been established which will help pay towards restoring our War Memorial. We are very grateful to the Appleby family at The Seven Stars for hosting a most enjoyable Quiz and Curry night, which launched this fund to the tune of over £400. Donations can still be made to this fund via the Parish Clerk.

The Chairman ended by thanking those present for their attention and support. The Parish Council will continue to serve the community to the best of its ability for the benefit of all.