

LONG ASHTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2004 –2005

North Somerset Large Village of the Year

Chairman's report

What difference does the Parish Council make?

This report will give an idea of the many aspects of village life the Council affects and some of the issues the Council faces.

The year started well with the **Quality Council** award. There are 10,000 parish and town councils in England and Wales who could apply, and at present only 154 of them have been awarded Quality Council status. So, we have done well to be in that comparatively small group.

Another award came in September, when we were named as **North Somerset's Large Village of the Year**. The judges were favourably impressed with the general lack of litter and high standard of maintenance given the size of the village. This award is a tribute to all the unsung heroes who contribute energy and hard work to village life.

The Council supports and is very grateful to the **Community Association** who run the Community Centre; they arranged the **Activity Fair** last May, which raised the profile of the Centre and the many organisations that use it, especially to new residents. There have been some excellent improvements to the complex and the playground, and this is appreciated by many different users.

The Council is involved with **LAMPRO**. From the developers of the Research Station, £346,000 will be paid for the upgrading of the Community Centre when the 100th new home is occupied. LAMPRO is considering how best to use this money and you will be hearing more about those possibilities in the coming months.

Crime and anti-social behaviour remain major concerns. The Council often work with the Local Action Team, which was set up some years ago as a forum for volunteers concerned on this topic. Last summer Bristol University analysed the **community safety survey**, which the Council had carried out the previous year. It is vital to have evidence like this when we present our case to the police and it is also an effective way to get some problems out into the open.

The Council followed up the survey in various ways. We met again with the Police District Commander. It is agreed

June 2005

Parish Council website launched

This will be a process of continuous improvement. Within 24 hours of the Village Spring Clean and then the Village Festival, there were photos on the website... the Council works to bring the village together and to help new residents become involved.

Log on and receive email updates:

www.longashtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Don't forget the computers in the library for free internet access.



Village Spring Cleaners

Community spirit alive and well !

- ? First **Village Arts Festival** a great success
- ? 50th anniversary of **Good Companions**
- ? for the first time, the British Legion invited the Council to lay a wreath on **Remembrance Sunday**.
- ? **Welcome LA** and the distribution of the **Village Newsletter** involve networks of people throughout the village.
- ? A new edition of the **Village Directory** is being worked on.
- ? The entrance to the village opposite Lodge Gates is looking lovely
- ? As part of the wider picture, a new school is being built, the doctor's surgery has been extended and the new cycle path is proving popular.

The Council has been involved with all these, directly or indirectly, eg through grants.

The village is thriving now, but how would you like it to develop over the next 5 years or so?

*Take part in preparing the **Parish Plan**.*

that a second full-time Beat Manager will be assigned here and a **Community Support Officer** has just been recruited. It is also noticeable that the police are being seen more frequently in the village.

But anti-social behaviour can take many forms: speeding has a major impact in a village, especially on the safety of children. The Local Action Team do a welcome task with **mobile speed cameras**. They would be glad of more volunteers. Litter is another source of complaints, but 19 volunteers did an excellent job at the **Village Spring Clean**, and no doubt, many more residents cleaned up their own particular part of the village.

New legislation will be giving residents more control over their local areas and Parish Councils are seen as a good way of ensuring grass roots representation. One new law gives Parish Councils powers for handing out **on-the-spot fines for dog-fouling and littering**. Will we have volunteers willing to spend their time on this; or should the Council employ a warden and raise Council Tax accordingly?

The Council wants to facilitate **physical activity for all**, but this does impact on adjoining householders. The residents of Fenswood are concerned about the possibility of a new sports pitch. We are still hoping for a skate park, but there are issues of noise. How can we protect the woodland behind Providence from the mountain bikers? The Council encouraged the University to agree a Code of Conduct to protect the footpaths and avoid parking on Providence Lane.

The Council must not overlook the 500 residents in **Leigh Woods**. The 2 Parish Councillors and the Leigh Woods Society keep us in touch and we had a useful meeting at Burwalls last year to air the different issues which affect Leigh Woods such as the road closures for the balloon fiesta.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Committee met in December 2003 to prepare the budget for the 2004/05 and a precept of just under £86,000 was agreed by Council.

Payments were made towards the upkeep of the Burial Ground, employing a Village Orderly, a contractor to empty the dog bins and other incidental costs, administration and some minor grants to local organisations. A substantial payment was made to the Community Association (LACA) to help with the running costs of the Community Centre – not least because of the cost of vandalism.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the future as well as the past. When we met in December 2004 to prepare this year's budget, had we accepted all the requests for grants as well as covering general costs, we would have had an increase in precept of over 25%. The

Young people

The Council held a drop-in session for young people to tell us what they want. There are problems living in a village, where there just aren't the activities and entertainments of a town; and teenagers don't have the transport to go elsewhere. The Council is actively involved in the Youth Club Management Committee and the Youth Partnership and we are acutely conscious that the Youth Club has not been running since last summer – apart from the **Judo Club**, which goes from strength to strength. We have volunteers who will run sports sessions, but we need to recruit a Youth Leader. If we could provide more for young people to do, some might not spend time just hanging around.

Thanks to all the Councillors for their hard work and support and to the Committee Chairmen for all that they do. Thanks also to Marilyn Addis, the Parish Clerk, for putting in so much to keep the Council running well.

Apparently being active in your community makes you a happier person. Whether this is true or not, many in the village are very concerned about its future. What is important is that we care about where we live and that we all take a pride in our village. So thanks to everyone who keeps Long Ashton and Leigh Woods running and puts something into our community.

Sheila Hardingham, Parish Council Chairman

Committee were quite brutal and kept any increase to under 10%: **a precept of £94,000 means that a house in Council tax Band D now pays £45 a year towards the provision of parish facilities.**

When a precept is set, it is divided between the number of dwellings and adjusted to Council Tax bands to give a final sum payable by each household. Next December there will be a significant increase in the number of properties in the village and one option is to significantly increase the Parish Precept using the increase in the number of dwellings to reduce the eventual effect on each household.

If anyone has any special views on this, please contact the Committee – before December.

Cllr Jonathan Skeeles, F&GP Chairman.

Planning Committee

In brief:

The Planning Committee met every month and considered close to 100 planning applications. The final decisions are made by North Somerset District Councillors and Planning Officers.

2-12 Long Ashton Road: amended plans eventually agreed for 20 instead of 24 units - details of the planning agreement are awaited.

Trees and hedges are very prevalent throughout our parish. Details of work to be done are considered by our Tree Wardens: thanks to them for commenting as necessary.

The Second Draft of the North Somerset Local Plan will be considered at a public inquiry commencing on 7th June at the Campus, Weston-super-Mare.

Being close to **Barrow Hospital** and knowing of the valuable work done there in the Mental Health field, it was with sadness that we heard the NHS Trust are to sell the site when the hospital closes in 2006. This should be shortly after new mental health facilities open in Bristol and North Somerset.

Although the site is in Barrow Gurney Parish, people in Long Ashton are naturally anxious to know what will happen there. The Trust intends to seek outline planning permission and held an exhibition in the Pavilion with their proposed plans. There was a certain relief to see mixed development consisting of employment, leisure, woodland, parkland and some residential where buildings have already existed. This is broadly in line with North Somerset Council's Local Plan for the area.

Leigh Woods:

Ferncliffe, North Road is to be converted into 14 flats. Initial plans were unacceptable but, after a site meeting and discussions, amended plans were given permission and work has been going on there for some weeks.

Bracken Hill House and Gardens: Bristol University decided to remove the Botanic Gardens to Stoke Bishop and sell the property in Leigh Woods. Sunrise Senior Living Ltd was named as the preferred bidder. Their proposals are

- To renovate Bracken Hill House for independent living apartments
- Safeguard the gardens and open them to the public at certain times of the year.
- Provide an Assisted Living home with 57 en-suite rooms including specialist care for about 24 elderly residents with Alzheimers or age related memory impairment.

An exhibition was held in Leigh Woods in March. No doubt there will be differing views on the proposals when the official plans are submitted.

The largest development this village has ever seen is now taking place on the Long Ashton Research Station site. George Wimpey commenced working on the north side of Weston Road and a start has been made on the southern site where eventually more than one contractor will be working.

The work has not been without its problems. At the very beginning it was necessary for the Parish and District Councils to act quickly when Wimpey intended to close the main Weston Road, for up to six weeks, for drainage works. However, a speedy meeting led to quick action: an alternative route on a temporary tarmac surface overcame what would have been a tremendous problem.

Before development commences in each area Wimpey have to submit detailed plans to North Somerset and these come to the Parish Council for comment. On more than one occasion we have not been prepared to accept the design of some buildings, particularly those that will front onto Weston Road. Some amendments have been made but I know some of you have thrown up your hands in horror when you have seen some of the properties being built. Developers have to follow government guidelines which indicate the number of properties per hectare, which means a high density.

As part of the development at the Research Station, land which lies behind **Fenswood Road**, off Keeds Lane, is to be transferred to the Parish Council for sports and recreational use. Because the first plans caused such great anxiety, particularly to residents in Fenswood, a group of councillors has met representatives of Voices of Fenswood Association, on a number of occasions, to try to resolve the problems. The latest proposals are still causing some concern so further discussions will need to take place but at present Wimpey have not submitted a planning application.

Cllr Miss Uppington, Chairman Planning Committee

Highways & Burial Ground Committee

Further work has taken place in the middle of the Burial Ground by installing a new wrought iron hand rail to compliment the new steps. In the lower area, new clock stones have replaced those damaged by frost and wear.

Sadly there has been some vandalism at Birdwell Recreation Ground with one of the trees being cut down and being placed on a bonfire and fencing being cut down. On a more positive note, negotiations are continuing with the school to allow children access to the school without using the road.

Providence Lane will be closed shortly for work on drains and resurfacing. Every effort will be made to allow residents access but patience will be required.

A new sign and bus shelter is to be placed in Leigh Woods after negotiations about the site are finished.

On the A370, the bus lane, which is back in being, allows for easier passage into Bristol. The High Occupancy Vehicle lane is still to be evaluated.

My thanks to the Village Orderly; also the gardeners and all those who help keep the Burial Ground and other parts of the village neat and tidy.

*Cllr Ivor Scoones,
Highways and Burial Ground Chairman*

VISION 2026

The Parish Council Planning Committee have commented on national and regional documents. Probably the most important is the one published by the West of England Partnership indicating directions for change and the Vision of the West of England 2026. Suggestions for expansion on the south side of Bristol could bring 20,000 new homes! If this comes about it will have a detrimental affect on our present environment and alter considerably our way of life – the Parish Council feels it is totally unreasonable.

Monthly footpath walks

First Sunday of every month: 2.30pm
Harry Williams, Vice Chairman of the Parish Council Highways Committee, invites all residents to join the monthly walks – to see more of the delightful highways and byways of the village.

Dog owners: please clear up after your dog

Further dog bins are to be placed about the village as it is both unhealthy and unpleasant to see dog mess. With the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Bill, there could be £100 on-the-spot fines for dog-fouling, littering or even placing your rubbish bin out on the wrong day!



Take Art, Take Part: Circus skills at the Village Festival

Congratulations to the winners of the Parish Council Best Kept Street competition:

Best Kept Road: Lampton Road

Best Kept Cul-de-sac: Park Homes,
Kingcott Mill

Long Ashton Parish Council Annual Report 2004 –2005
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For more information about the Parish Plan, log onto the website:
www.longashtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

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