

Preston Parish Council Annual Report

May 9th 2013

Preston Parish Council consists of myself Chris Sutton as chair, Scilla Chestermaster, as vice chair, Rex Canton, , Regine Freyne, Nick Price, Julie Tomblin and our new member Sue Cameron who joined us last July.

Our **District Councillors** are Clive Bennett, Juliet Layton and Esmund Jenkins.

Clive and Juliet have been very helpful throughout the year. Our new councillor and our parish clerk have yet to meet Mr Jenkins.

Our County Councillor is Shaun Parsons who I believe is to be congratulated on his re-election last Thursday.

Our **Parish Clerk** is Caroline Braidwood, who also looks after Tetbury Upton Parish Council

It has been a relatively quiet year. We started the year with the Queens Diamond Jubilee Celebration Village party at the end of May. The Parish Council (PC) provided free commemorative mugs for the children of the village and for sale to the adults, and union jack bunting. Good use was made of the village hall, though the weather did allow use of the traffic free street as well.

Village hall. The PC continues to repay the Public Works Loan Board through its income from the Parish Precept. In this year's budget we also allowed £2000, to address the lack of adequate heating during cold weather.

It was decided by the Village hall Committee and Parish Council together that we needed to fit secondary double glazing to the leaky windows and a suitable quote obtained. As a matter of course we had to see if any grants were available to assist with the cost. This unfortunately has led to long delays. We are able to get a grant from the Cotswold Conservation Board for half the cost, but of course it will now be next winter before we feel the benefit. In the meantime the village hall committee bought some extra convector heaters which have helped a lot.

Our other asset is the **Playing Field.** We have an annual safety inspection and act on that. Rex Canton keeps a regular eye out for problems and the grass is cut bi weekly in the summer by Bibury Garden Services. This is on a 3 year fixed contract. In response to a request from a parent, we have purchased a toddler seat for one of the swings. This will be fitted imminently (if not already done). The Council does rely on parishioners to let us know their needs.

During the year we have also purchased an extra dog poo bin and a new grit bin for the top of the village.

The PC also now contributes 50% of the cost of grasscutting for the **Churchyard** .

The **Village Newsletter** is still edited by Dot Warren and taken to the printer and distributed by Regine Freyne. Sue Cameron helped out with editing an issue whilst Dot and Tony were on their long vacation. We owe thanks to them and to the band of people who distribute the finished product.

Many people now receive their copy on line and it is also posted on the **Village Website** www.prestonpc.com Caroline has now used new software and greatly expanded the website. Please pass on any photographs from the past or items of interest for inclusion.

Neighbourhood Watch This is headed by Regine Freyne with representatives in all parts of the village.

Actions Our main concern this year has been about the effect that the closing of **Preston Toll** bar and the provision of a new roundabout at the entrance to the proposed Care Village will have on the village, especially on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists crossing the A419. To that end we met, along with concerned residents, with Scott McCauley Jones from Highways and later with Inspector Brian Clifford from the Local Policing Team. The main outcome has been to request a reduction of traffic speed between the Kingsmeadow roundabout and the junction with the A 417. Cirencester Town Council would also like a reduced speed limit on the Inner Ring Road. This will require an initial survey of the current traffic speeds on these roads. We are working together with the Town Council and Highways to action this.

We were also concerned about traffic speeding through the village. Rex Canton, Julie Tomblin and John Lynn have been trained to use Speed watch equipment. They monitored traffic passing through the village for 2 days this spring, noting 6 offenders – despite warning notices! The aim is to raise awareness of the 30mph limit.

Last July Caroline and I met with Mike Barton the **footpaths** officer from Gloucestershire County Council with a view to his team repairing the fallen stile at the back of Village Farm and providing waymarking of village paths. He was keen to do all of this but despite many contacts since, nothing has happened. Mrs Chestermaster has since organised the cutting away of vegetation to allow safe circumnavigation of the fallen stile. Mr Barton assured us that although the path through the spinney at the back of village farm is overgrown at present, it will always remain a legal path.

The **footpath** through Kingshill Meadow remains closed as building is still progressing.

Precept Although strictly speaking this should come in the financial report, I would like to mention it here.

Most of the new Kingshill Meadow estate falls within the Parish of Preston. The PC therefore receives the Parish Precept part of Council Tax for the occupied houses. It is expected that in April 2015 there will be changes to the Parish Boundaries and that Kingshill Meadow will become part of Cirencester Town. With this growth in the number of properties in the Parish but by keeping the precept for each house the same as last year, the income to Preston PC will increase by about £12K.

Rather than reducing the precept for 2 years then raising it again when the boundary changes, we propose to keep it level then use the money to pay off part of the loan raised to renovate the village hall. Because of the terms of the loan, it will be more advantageous to put the money on deposit until interest rates rise again, than to pay it off immediately. The long term effect will be to lower the parish precept because of reduced loan payments.

It just remains for me to thank the District and County Councillors for their interest and support, the Parish councillors for the tasks they individually do and the Parish Clerk for the work she does behind the scenes.

