

## **Spreyton Parish Annual Meeting 27 March 2013**

### **– Chairman's Report**

The past year has been a busy one for the Parish Council both in terms of local issues and the need to comply with new requirements and procedures resulting from the Government's 2011 Localism Act and associated new Standards Regime that came into place from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 (more about this below).

#### **1. Procedural Matters**

The Parish Council continues to meet every two months on the third Wednesday of the month starting with the PCC's Annual General meeting in May. In addition, an Annual Parish Meeting is organized usually in late March, including if possible relevant Councillors from WDBC and Devon County Council, when annual reports are given and discussed as we have this evening.

At our last AGM (16<sup>th</sup> May) at which Cllr McInnes also gave his annual DCC report, we had a change of Chairmanship in the election of Officers, Mrs Eve Collins was re-elected as Vice-Chairman and Clive Wootton remained in post as our Parish Clerk. It is appropriate again at this Annual Parish Meeting to express our thanks to Bill Porritt, for his many years in office as our previous Chairman.

In furthering public awareness of local council activities, the Parish Council provides regular leader articles for The Village Trust "Spreyton Flyer" Newsletter. In addition this past year, to spread the work load, and enhance communication within the parish, Councillors have each agreed to take on focal point responsibilities covering Village Trust Liaison, Community Relations (Church, School, WI, Good Companions), Local Businesses (Village Shop, Pub, Garage, Pottery), Farming & Environment (Tree Warden), Roads, Footpaths & Traffic, as well as dealing with minor planning issues, renewable energy (wind turbine) projects and participating in WDBC Eastern Link Meetings.

In compliance with new Standards procedures, the Parish Council adopted a new Code of Conduct based on the WDBC model (18<sup>th</sup> July PC Meeting), and Councillors registered their disclosable pecuniary interests (Councillors and spouse/partner), as well as other (non-pecuniary) interests likely to bear on

Parish Council business (Councillors only). The inclusion of spouse/partner pecuniary interests and Councillors' 'other interests' are new features of the current Code of Conduct over the previous 2007 Code.

Under the new Standards Regime, Parish Councils themselves (rather than previously Borough Councils) are now responsible for granting their own dispensations, to allow Councillors to take part in a meeting where they would otherwise have an interest. Spreyton Parish Council has resolved to grant the power for making dispensations to its Clerk for the life of the Council (21<sup>st</sup> November PC Meeting). A first dispensation, also for the lifetime of the Council, was granted by our Clerk (23<sup>rd</sup> January PC Meeting) for all Councillors to debate the budget and set the precept each year, as Councillors are all Council Tax payers and have an interest in these matters.

## **2. Local Issues**

The Parish Council has dealt with the following local issues:

### ***Community Funding Projects***

Following completion of the Chapel Park housing development in Spreyton, a sum of money (£12,000) is now available for improving community facilities through WDBC's Section 106 Grant Scheme. Applications for this grant money must be made within five years and fund-matched from other sources.

Related additional funding is also available and administered by DCC for educational facilities at Spreyton School (£8,331.20) and for footpath improvement (£8,000). Applications for these grants have to be made within seven years, and no fund-matching is required.

The Parish Council has held initial exploratory discussions with WDBC and DCC on procedures and requirements for accessing this grant money, and is working with Spreyton Village Trust to draw up project funding proposals. A large capital item identified for potential funding is the tarmac surfacing of the village hall car park that would also enhance access to the village shop.

Through the Eastern Link Meetings, The Parish Council is also aware of the Town and Parish Fund (TAP), a limited grant source funded jointly by WDBC and DCC for collaborative parish projects, as well as DCC's Locality Budget,

a contribution from which was applied for and gratefully received this year towards our new parish noticeboard.

### ***Roads Maintenance***

The Parish Council has made a concerted effort this year to bring maintenance issues to the attention of DCC's Neighbourhood Highway Office, with some favourable results. Deteriorated road surfaces, blocked drains and persistent flood areas have been highlighted, and parishioners have been urged to also use DCC's 'pot-holes hotline'. On the positive side, the poor state of the village main street has been recognized in DCC Highways' priority work and a complete re-surfacing is currently planned in 2014.

### **Planning Matters – Wind Turbines**

#### *North Beer Farm Turbine*

An anticipated planning application to erect a commercial scale wind turbine on a site at North Beer Farm was notified to the Parish Council on 21<sup>st</sup> September. The Council organized a Public Consultation on 8<sup>th</sup> October that attracted a large attendance and resulted in an exit poll of 89% parishioners voting against this planning proposal. The Parish Council decided unanimously to oppose this planning application and responded to WDBC on 16<sup>th</sup> October with its grounds for objection, namely scale and site selection, impact on landscape and setting of historic buildings, adverse amenity effects (visual and noise) on residential properties, and cumulative effects with other turbines (principally the Den Brook Wind farm). This planning application was refused by WDBC at its Planning & Licensing Committee Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

#### *Den Brook Wind Farm*

The Parish Council continues its work with the other parishes (Bow, South Tawton & Zeal Monachorum) and North Tawton Town Council that are due to host this wind farm. This involves both Community Liaison Group (CLG) Meetings with the developer, Renewable Energy Systems (RES), and inter-parish/town council working groups. A near final legal agreement for handling the Community Benefit Fund payable by RES over the operating lifetime of wind farm has been drawn up between the affected parties above and RES

(termed “Den Brook Energy Ltd” in this agreement). A draft constitution has also been drawn up by the affected parties for the purposes of how they will administer the Community Benefit Fund. In protracted discussions as to how the Community Benefit Fund might be shared, Spreyton Parish Council played an active role in forging an ultimate agreement with the other parties.

Construction of the wind farm continues to slip as RES work through their planning condition commitments with WDBC, especially on noise where RES wish to make significant changes to the present stand-alone condition for levels of permissible Amplitude Modulation. Spreyton Parish Council wrote a letter to WDBC (6<sup>th</sup> December) expressing deep concern over this move by RES. This highly contentious subject will shortly be given a full WDBC Planning Committee hearing when RES formally submit their revised proposals.

Ken Whitaker