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The year started with elections when we welcomed six new Councillors to the Parish Council from May 2015 and a new District Councillor, Val Ranger. We’ve since said goodbye to Alan Murchison, who unfortunately had to leave the Council, and welcomed Rosemary Walker in April 2016.

**Planning Committee** – The Parish Council is a consultee on applications that are submitted to East Devon District Council for decision. The Planning Committee considers minor planning applications and the full Parish Council considers applications for new houses. The proposed development of 40 houses and a new surgery at land off King Alfred Way has had several revisions during the year. The Council engaged with the community at each revision and submitted detailed responses for consideration at the District Council’s Development Management Committee. The Council voiced its opposition to the recent application as it believes it is vital to get the best possible layout, most suitable drainage, and provide the optimum mix of affordable housing.

The Parish Council commented on **36** planning applications in total, some of which involved site visits to get a better idea of the impact of the proposed plans. Our comments took into account the views of the community. The **Neighbourhood Plan** that is being developed (led by Emma Taylor), will give more weight to the views of the community regarding where development should take place.

**Finance Committee** – chaired by Councillor Chris Burhop. Under his chairmanship the finances are now presented as income and expenditure accounts. We also have a better idea of how much we are spending in each category. During the year £5000 was paid off the capital of the loan for Webber’s Meadow and a microphone system was purchased for meetings to ensure that everyone can hear the discussions. For the financial year 2016-17, the Council has budgeted so that we did not need to increase the Parish portion of the Council taxes.

**Policies and Personnel Committee** – chaired by Councillor Val Ranger, this committee develops policies that the Parish Council need to have in place and looks after staffing and personnel issues. During the year, the Council’s Standing Orders and Data Protection policies were revised. We also set out a policy and process for maintaining the cemeteries to ensure these were improved and discussed personnel issues.

**Communications** - We changed the way that we engaged with the community by opening up more opportunities and time to hear the views of people at Council meetings. We decided to stop the newsletter and instead endeavour to publish information in the Parish Magazine produced by the Church. We welcome the regular reports we receive from County Councillor Channon, District Councillor Val Ranger and PC Steve Lee. These provide an opportunity to engage directly with them and discuss topics that affect the Parish and Devon.

**Fireworks and Community Day** – two amazing village events were held in the past year, the Community Event day on 28 September, which brought together a whole host of organisations, businesses and charities centred around Newton Poppleford. The bonfire and fireworks in November were fantastic and the weather was kind on both occasions. Our thanks go to the Councillors, Neighbourhood Planning team and all others who arranged and made these activities a great success. In the meantime, the Council has purchased a set of walkie-talkies to ensure we have the tools to run events smoothly. We look forward to more events!

**Pavilion and Playing Field** – The Council are managing Trustees, so we meet several times a year to discuss the management of the foundation. Councillor David Zirker manages the Pavilion on a day-to-day basis, with Geraldine Swan providing cover in his absence. Brian Woodley has drawn up plans for an extension to the kitchen so that quotes and planning permission can be sought. David Zirker has been raising funds towards the kitchen, but there is a way to go before we have sufficient funds to do the work. The Parish Council negotiates with sports teams who hire the playing fields, ensures the children’s playground is inspected regularly and contracts out the grass cutting & maintenance.

**Traffic** – One of the biggest issues facing the Parish is the volume and speed of traffic passing through on the A3052. The Parish Council decided to use some of its reserves to purchase an electronic speed sign for the village. Councillors Coppell, **Lipczynski, Kemp and Zirker** have volunteered to maintain the sign when they are trained. Then we are ready for the County Council to install the poles required for the sign, so that it can be moved to different locations in the village.

**Allotments** – The allotments provided by the Parish Council are located next to the cemetery in Venn Ottery Road. Councillor Makala Tillotson administers the allotments and takes care of their maintenance on behalf of the Council.

**Pathways** – Ted Swan is the Pathways Coordinator for the Parish and regularly walks the whole network of paths to check their condition, often making repairs where needed or flagging up issues to the Parish and County Councils. Councillor Anita Kemp will now deputise for Mr Swan.

**Grants** – during the year the Parish Council provided grants to: the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Ottery Help Scheme, Village Hall and Harpford Hall. The Council was also successful in getting grants in: a lottery grant of £2400 for funding audiovisual equipment for use in each of the halls, and a Community Resilience grant of £250 for developing an emergency plan for the Parish. We also applied to use funds from the Parishes Together Fund along with Ottery St Mary to improve the scout hut at Tipton St John.

**Looking forwards:**

We have a few events coming up including a celebration of the Queen’s birthday on 11 June – which will include a community lunch/picnic, activities throughout the afternoon, topped off with a band and dance in the evening. The Parish Council will also support a bonfire and fireworks event later this year that will be open to more people this time.

We’ve also been working with:

* the school to identify what other playground items could be funded through the money set aside from developments in the area,
* County Council and the Environment Agency to look at options for tackling the river bank erosion at Harpford and replacement of the footbridge there, and
* The Quarry Liaison group to help manage the impact of the quarry on the area.

**Our thanks go to the many volunteers in our community who help organise social and leisure activities and keep our village a safe and enjoyable place to live in. We could always do with more help, so if you want to get involved please contact the Chair.**
Hazel Jeffery

Chair of Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council, May 2016