

## **THE COMPTONS TOLLER AND WYNFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The past 12 months has thrown up problems.

Some on the face of it would appear easily solved and others being more complicated. The solutions and their timings have not followed their initial assessments.

#### **Vacant posts**

The Parish Council started the year with 3 vacant seats, one for each of West Compton, Wynford Eagle and Toller Fratrum.

Chris Bennet as a resident of Compton Valence stepped into the vacancy for Wynford Eagle, ensuring a quorum was maintainable through the year.

November saw the resignation of our Clerk, Michele Harding, who has comprehensively guided us through the procedures and requirements of maintaining a Parish Council, leaving us with everything from websites to health and safety policies in place.

In spite of advertising and tapping into local networks, as with many other small councils no response was forthcoming and we started 2024 on a self-help basis.

The Parish elections of May 2024 yielded only two confirmed seats a Compton Valence out of the reduced 7 allocated across the 4 parishes, partly due to ineligible submissions. On a re-run election, 5 seats have been filled unopposed, and 2 remain vacant in West Compton and Wynford Eagle. No one in Wynford Eagle was willing to step up and once again Chris Bennet has agreed to represent the parish.

Thankfully Michele Harding has been able act as clerk on a part time locum basis to ensure the relevant paperwork and procedures are complete.

#### **Openreach**

##### **West Compton**

Following a chance meeting with an Openreach surveyor, residents of West Compton and CTWPC became aware of the intention of Openreach to erect a line of new poles from West Compton along the roadway to the three sister aerials on the Roman Road. It appeared that this was being planned in a covert way and Open reach insisted it did not require any form of planning or notification to undertake this work within the highway boundary.

After involving representatives of Dorset AONB, Chris Loder MP, and an extensive submission by the CWTPC to counter the proposal, it is understood that these works to supply a 'private fibre line' to an undisclosed client Openreach will only proceed underground with the cooperation of the landowner in accordance with guidance and instruction issued by the Minister of State, Julia Lopez MP, in March 2024.

##### **Compton Valence**

Meanwhile Open reach continue to plan and facilitate the installation of 'Full fibre to the property' at Compton Valence, as the tail end of the line supplied from the Bride Valley. Initially there were a couple of properties not included in the scheme due to their remote location and after correcting Openreach's assumptions have now been included in the planned work for Autumn 2024.

## **Highway Issues**

### **Finger Posts**

The state of the Finger posts at the road junctions continue to degrade due to extreme winds and interference with passing vehicles. It is intended that these will be reinstated using contractors within the next 12 months.

### **Roadways**

The new highways managers in Dorset Council have yet to contact the CTWPC to address several issues of concern, from flooding to highway edge deterioration.

### **Grit Bins**

Following the icy spell in 2022 new grit bins have been installed on the road from Wynford to West Compton.

### **Public Rights of Way**

#### **Green laners**

West Compton continues to have regular disturbances from motorbikes and 'Greenlaners' using the 'Public Path' between village and Roman Road. CTWPC has expressed willingness to support the village in their efforts to stop these incursions but without the landowners taking the lead and seeking legal guidance the CTWPC is unable to act. It is understood Dorset Council will not act unilaterally.

### **CTWPC Future**

Due to the general lack of interest by residents in local issues and the lack of connection between the 4 parishes, combined with the difficulty of finding a permanent clerk of a suitable calibre, the next 12 months may prove to be the last as a combined Parish Council. Should this be agreed, the CTWPC will be dissolved and the 4 individual parishes continue separately, with annual Parish Meetings replacing the function of the combined Parish Council.

In so doing we can do away with the liability and costly exercise of employing a clerk to maintain: website,

- health and safety policy,
- code of conduct,
- grievance procedure,
- complaint procedure,
- disciplinary procedure,
- data protection,
- record retention,
- Financial Regulations,
- Standing Orders

as well as become knowledgeable enough to guide old and new members of the council of the ever-changing requirements.

The down side is that no Precept will be available and all maintenance will need to be done through Dorset Council.

**Charles Sclater**  
**Chairman**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2023**