**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING IN BURLESCOMBE**

**Held in the URC Hall, Westleigh**

**On Monday 4th April 2016 at 7pm**

**Present**: Les Neville (Chairman), Judy Downing, Karen Collard

 Leslie Findlay (Parish Clerk)

**Apologies**: Lee Lovegrove, Jan Campbell-Wood, David Sprague,

 PCSO Jonathon Sims

Four members of the Public attended

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and all the submitted reports had been printed out and were available for everyone to read.

1. **Chairman of the Parish Council Report**

My first year as Chairman has been quite a challenge. Getting up to speed with my legal responsibilities, and learning about Local Government procedures etc has been a steep learning curve. In this respect my attendance at Chairmanship training and the support of the Parish Clerk have been especially valuable.

During the year, together with the usual planning applications we have dealt with issues including, Affordable Housing, the proposed J27 development, Westleigh Quarry ROMP, Highways and HGV traffic, feedback from the Parish Survey, the Devon Minerals Plan, the Transparency Code, a new Parish Council Website and the Old Railway Line (ORL) project.

Together with the Chairmanship I am currently responsible for matters concerning the Grand Western Canal and PROW (footpaths). We are most fortunate to have the canal in our midst. Who does not enjoy the flora, fauna and leisure opportunities afforded by this Country Park? The Rangers, voluntary helpers and Wardens, do a fantastic job preserving and improving this ‘jewel in the crown’ of Mid-Devon. A new solar powered ‘tipping weir’ to be installed adjacent to the old sluice near Fossend should enable more effective control of water levels and therefore prevent a repeat of the near catastrophic breach a couple of years ago. Within the Parish, we have over 16 kilometres of PROW. These 18 paths, together with the 3 permissive footpaths along the Old Railway Line, through Park Wood, and along the western boundary of Westleigh Quarry provide excellent opportunities to enjoy our local countryside. The location of the PROW is displayed on the noticeboard by the railway bridge in Burlescombe.

This year it has been my special pleasure to represent the Council at both the Remembrance Service and the Carol Service held in St Mary’s Church.

In my wish list for next year I would have to include:

* More responsible behaviour from dog walkers regarding dog fouling along the canal towpath and our other footpaths.

* Less litter being in evidence throughout the Parish and especially at the ‘truck stop’ on the S bends above St Mary’s church.
* DCC and AI to be more proactive in mitigating the impact of HGV traffic on the residents of Burlescombe. A commitment made 10 years ago!
* The completion of the ORL project.
* More Parishioners putting themselves forward for election or co-option as Councillors.

I sincerely thank my officers for the time, effort and commitment that they put into their Council work in general and their individual portfolios in particular.

Les Neville

1. **Highways Report from Councillor David Sprague**

The roads in our parish are generally in good order, considering the small amounts being spent on them. With Eastbrook road, Beer lane and Westcott roads being minor roads of major concern. Eastbrook road has had the verges ploughed but I do not think the easements and ditches have been cleared. The pot holes and very poor surface of Beer lane are of continued discussion and Westcott road is always narrow, wet and dirty.

The major road through Burlescombe is for most part in reasonable order considering the heavy traffic that uses it every day, some of it is brushed on a regular basis in an effort to keep the road clear of muddy trails and dust, however there are signs that the surface is deteriorating from the church to the A38, this must be monitored and DC Highway’s informed. Thanks go to Judy and others who keep on picking up litter, the lorry drivers have a lot to answer for, but car drivers are equally as bad, not to mention builders waste being fly tipped on verges in odd places.

With little or no Lengthsman service the drains, footpaths and verges within the parish can only get worse, unless we do a little ‘self-help’/ volunteer or employ someone to do this work, the county are prepared to train and provide some equipment and some safety gear.

On the brighter side it would appear that parts of the parish are to be resurfaced or surface dressed this spring, perhaps some new signs will also appear.

1. **Planning Report from Councillor Karen Collard**

I took over the position of Planning Chair in the middle of the year and this is my first report so please accept my apologies for it not being very good as I was not sure what I was supposed to do. I will make sure I take notes for next year’s report.

We have had a lot of applications during this period some we have agreed with and some we have not. We also had a presentation for the affording housing scheme which has been taken over by Mid Devon District Council to build.

We have had a few problems with only having a small team on planning as it is sometimes difficult to get a quorum with so few Councillors. Without a quorum we are unable to vote and make any comments.

I think the next year is going to be busy with the plans for the affording housing trying to get underway and the possibility of some plans for junction 27.

I would like to thank everyone on the planning committee for all their help and support and look forward to a good year.

1. **Quarry Liaison Report from Councillor Judy Downing**

WESTLEIGH QUARRY.

I have attended Westleigh Quarry Liaison Meetings on: June 22nd 2015, September 14th 2015, December 14th 2015 & March 7th 2015.

On 1st July 2015 there was a presentation for Burlescombe & Westleigh by Mark Goodman (Lemon Gazelle, previously Common Places) who had carried out an independent survey of people's views about Westleigh Quarry, this survey was funded equally by Burlescombe Parish Council, Aggregate Industries, Mid Devon Council & Devon County Council & the meeting was to inform the community of the results & openly discuss views, ideas & concerns.

On October 22nd 2015 I attended a meeting at the House of Commons with our MP Neil Parish & the Transport Minister Andrew Jones as to the possibility of an alternative route for transport from the Quarry which would not run through Burlescombe village, past the Primary School & over the narrow railway bridge (Main rail link to Cornwall), this had been one of the major points highlighted by most residents in Burlescombe with the Quarry Survey.

I was interviewed for an article highlighting these traffic problems in the Western Morning News on November 17th 2015.

Following on from this Les Neville (Chairman of the Parish Council) & myself attended a meeting with Neil Parish MP at Ray Radford's home on January 8th 2016 to discuss this idea further & from this it was suggested we have a meeting of all concerned parties at Westleigh Church Hall on 18th March 2016 chaired by Neil Parish MP who led discussions efficiently & fairly.

We will meet again in June 2016.

Most of the discussions at this meeting concerned ideas & avenues that could be explored as to how an alternative route could be funded & it was also suggested that recommendation be put to the Parish Council that 20mph electronic warning signs be placed in the village to slow traffic.

At the last Quarry Liaison meeting the manager of the Quarry stated that between January 2015 & December 2015 750 thousand tons of rock had been sold & it was expected that 2016/2017 would equal this!

The biggest output at the Quarry has been in the last 10 years!

The Rocknell area of the Quarry is the part at present being concentrated on & we were informed that all the major dust chutes at the Quarry have now been covered to cut down on excess dust in the area, also new cleaning jets have been installed to ensure that all lorries leaving the site are cleaned well & as much dust & rocks are removed before lorries leave the site.

The Quarry continues to pay for a road cleaning machine to clean the road from the Quarry to St Mary's Church twice a week.

We have been asking if occasionally this could be expanded to cover the road area from the church up to Town Farm Sand Quarry, this Quarry cleans the road to the A38.

In January 2016 complaints were received about dust at Canonsleigh(this was rectified) & complaints were also received about two blasts at the Westleigh Area, no more blasting has been carried out in this area!

Complaints of any sort should notified by phone to the Quarry: Tel 01823 672 353 & any specific complaints about blasting, dust or lorry traffic should also be notified with Devon County Council.

As residents of Burlescombe will be aware, much of the night time traffic is linked with Asphalt, mostly used for roadworks, since the new Hot Tar facility has been added this has shown a marked increase in night time lorry traffic & at present out of the 160 permitted nights the plant has reached more than 150 in this year period compared with 97 in the last year period!

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                                BROADPATH & HILLHEAD QUARRY.

          I have attended meetings on June 22nd 2015, September 21st 2015, December 7th 2015 & March 14th 2016.

There have been significant developments & changes with Broadpath Landfill & Hillhead Quarry recently!

Firstly the Devon Minerals Plan (DCC) & the proposal for Sand Quarrying at Penslade; concern has been raised especially with increased traffic in this vicinity & close to the A38.

Viridor Landfill is due to close in 2020 at present surface water drainage is being sorted & capping (phase 4) is to take place. The Environmental Agency inspects regularly & carries out odour surveys.

An area close to the Landfill Site has been accepted for planning permission for solar panels- this is 'on hold' as it is financially not viable at present!

Aggregate Industries are in the process of preparing the Hillhead Houndaller Quarry (previously 'mothballed') for commencement of sand & gravel extract later in 2016 &a mobile plant will be put in on the Eastern side of Clay Lane to process minerals. Concern has been raised as to this increasing traffic especially at the exit point near the bottom of Lambs Hill on the A38.

Composting operations are to continue at the present level until 2017. Green Waste, food waste & cardboard being collected separately has made the composting process easier!

A slight drop in composting has been noted since the charges introduced by Mid Devon Council compost bin collection but this is affected by seasonal demands.

The Blockworks continues work in this area also.

I will be representing the Parish Council & their views at Hearing Sessions with a Government Inspector who is looking at current legislation & 'soundness' of the Minerals Plan being put forward for Devon.

I have to attend parts of 4 days between Tuesday 24th May & Friday 27th May at County Hall Exeter.

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On a different 'note' I continue to pick up Litter between the top of Burlescombe & A38, mostly 'fast food' rubbish & I have notified the Mid Devon Council Fly Tipping Dept when larger items are dumped!

I also often notify Town Farm Sand Quarry when the road needs cleaning or their hedge needs trimming!

1. **Parish Clerk Report from Leslie Findlay**

It has been a challenging year with the new transparency code regulations coming in but it has ensured that the Council has all the necessary documents required. So there are new Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, various policies on freedom of information, reserves and the requirement for a website.

The Council applied for a grant from the Transparency Code Fund and received £1010 to enable a website to be designed by Vision ICT, with a government domain and new email addresses for all Councillors and Clerk. The new website is at [www.burlescombe-pc.gov.uk](http://www.burlescombe-pc.gov.uk)

The Notice Board in Burlescombe has been built by Howard Pope and the two other boards at Ayshford and Westleigh have been renovated, they will now be maintained on an annual basis.

Cutbacks in district council funding have resulted in the cost of grass cutting to rise and the cost to cut the grass in the Westleigh playing field rose considerably, therefore a new and less costly contract has been agreed with Countrywide.

Training: The Chairman attended a new Chairman’s Course and Councillors Lee Lovegrove and Jan Campbell-Wood attended the new Councillors Course run by DALC.

The Parish Council received the following funding in this financial year:

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| Precept | £9000 |
| VAT reclaimed (from 2012 – 2015) | £2052.19 |
| Parish Paths Partnership | £620 |
| Transparency Code grant | £1010 |
| Town & Parish Fund grant 2014/15 | £805.20 |

Play Areas: The contract to maintain the play area at Westleigh with Mid Devon District Council is due to expire shortly and will need to be reviewed. It is likely that it will cost more for this to be maintained and possible that funding will need to be found from the Parish Council.

There are currently three Councillor Vacancies on the Council.

1. **County Councillor Ray Radford Report**

Dear Residents,

I have been very proud to be your County Councillor for this last year and look forward to the next year. It is difficult to please all the people all the time, but I try to do my best.

 This current year County has had to take out £27m from their budget. The canal was threatened with huge cuts from MDDC and was diverted by strong representation from local councillors, therefore funding for the canal is the same as it was this last year.

Generally, the cut of £27m will have an effect on Burlescombe Parish somewhere, the commonly affected will be the highways, as always, because of the reduced funding, County will have to continue prioritising where it spends its funds. County has worked up a marking system for their roads, A and B roads will attract a higher funding, because it is claimed that 80% of traffic travel on 20% of the roads, quite understandably why we must keep A & B roads up to scratch.

Because of the cut backs and because Town and Parishes are being asked to do more for themselves, I have always supported that Parish Councils should be able to increase their precept, I feel that Parishes then have to opportunity to raise local money to fund local initiatives/projects. For County to be cut by £34m worth of funding from Central Government, this is one way Parishes can provide services that County has no option but to reduce, while devolving more responsibility to Parishes. This applies to District as well.

From a wider perspective, I serve on four of the main committees that cover the whole of Devon, and those committees are; The Place committee, which covers all infrastructure and environmental issues, Planning committee, Corporate Services committee, Investment and Pension, HOTAC as well as many other sub committees and Liaison Groups, as well as attending 11 Parish Council meetings.

But I like my job and please contact me at any time, I may be able to help over something.

Ray Radford, Your local County Councillor. 01884 820000; ray.radford@devon.gov.uk;

1. **Police Report from PCSO Jonathon Sims**

Report available as separate document from the Parish Clerk

1. **History Group**

The Burlescombe and Westleigh History Group have spent the last two years researching the history of St. Marys. As there are virtually no primary records prior to the 19c the group has found the same difficulties as previous historians in piecing together when the church was extended from its humble beginning and why. However, much research and a careful study of the beautiful building itself has meant that it has been possible to put together the most likely development and changes to the building from Norman times.

It has always been the History Group’s intention to publish a history of our ancient church in order to raise money for the Friends of St. Mary’s. We have completed the booklet and we are now looking to charities to find support in getting it printed. We have raised about a half of the finances we need. If we can raise the rest then all receipts will be for the benefit of St. Mary’s. If anyone has any ideas of suitable charitable organisations that may be willing to help then please contact David Beard (01823 672907).

The History Group, established in 2005, is active and thriving with an increasing membership. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the URC Hall, Westleigh. Everyone welcome.

1. **Craft Club**

The craft club started in April 2013 with 12 enthusiastic ladies attending our first meeting. We meet every two weeks on a Tuesday afternoon 2-4pm.

We have 16 members on our books with 2 living outside of the parish; our meetings are very social occasions, doing our own crafts.

We try and organise a demonstration about every 6 weeks, these have included felt making, recycling Birthday and Christmas cards into gift boxes and Christmas decorations. We are looking forward to a pottery demonstration later this month.

New members are always welcome. Contact Christine Hammond 674431

1. **BURLESCOMBE AND WESTLEIGH COMMUNITY HALL**

The most significant event in the last year has been the setting in train of alterations to the Hall to make it a more flexible venue. The entrance will be modified and the main store room will be transformed into a smaller independent meeting room which will make possible two simultaneous events.

A substantial grant has been made by Viridor Environmental Credits from the Landfill Communities Fund and hiring’s and fund-raising events have raised the rest. Special mention should be made of the Tea Dances which have raised a magnificent £15,000.

As well as the Tea Dances the Hall is regularly used for the Young at Heart Club, Young Farmers’ rehearsals, Bingo and Whist Drives and the Hall Committee runs regular Ploughman’s Lunches and Quiz Nights. A musical evening by Wellington Operatic Society was a big hit and will be repeated later this year. The Hall is also a popular venue for private parties.

The Hall’s Annual General Meeting will be held in May. All residents are welcome but most of all some who would be willing to join the management committee – none of us is getting any younger. PJW

1. **BURLESCOMBE AND WESTLEIGH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

Sadly, membership of the Society has fallen recently and consequently the winter programme is more restricted than formerly. We have had speakers on three occasions as well as the Spring Show for members only and a Christmas meal.

Garden visits through the summer months remain popular and a full programme of six visits has been arranged for this year.

New members are always welcome.

**12. ST MARY’S CHURCH**

Services are held on three Sundays each month interspersed with Team Services around the Team when there are five Sundays in the month.

During the last year the floor on the south side of the nave has been replaced and improvements have been made to the vestry entrance.

With financial help from the County Council and the Parish Council the War Memorial in church has been refurbished.

The church membership is keen to ensure that the churchyard is kept in good order and we are grateful for a grant from the Parish Council towards the cost of grass-cutting.

We are grateful also for the support of the Friends of St Mary’s who help to fund the cost of maintaining the historic Grade 1 Listed building.

**13. FOOTPATH CLUB**.

I have run the Footpath Club for nigh on a decade and it has been a very enjoyable experience. We have had a number of loyal followers and each walk, which usually ended with tea and cakes at the home of the leader, was always a memorable and friendly occasion.

Unfortunately I have arrived at the point where I can no longer continue and sadly the Footpath Club has come to an end.

David Beard

The meeting was closed at 7.20pm

Les Neville

Chairman