

Chairman's Address 2010

Good evening ladies and gentlemen it is good to see so many of you here. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Adam Harkin and I am currently the chairman of camber parish council.

This is a meeting of the parish and not a parish council meeting, at this meeting the village gets together to see what has happened over the last year and what we hope to happen in the year to come.

So what has happen since this time last year, well to start, last year there were only 3 people on the council Richard, Julie and myself - we had no parish clerk but did have a handyman. The meeting got a little heated with members of the public shouting at the councillors and saying that we should all resign because we did not know what we were doing and that at least 7 people in the room were waiting to come on to the parish council. Well we did not steep down and after the meeting we had only 4 people put their names forward to stand as parish councillors, so it would seem that yet again those that shout the loudest do the least.

I would like to thank Ann, Trish, Terry and Dave for having the bottle to stand for the council and not just sit in the crowd criticising. With the 4 new members the council was now up to full strength, we just needed a clerk. We placed adverts in the local papers and on the web site and we had about 15 people apply for the job, we held interviews and Jennifer Childs was given the post. Jennifer's background is in information technology and with almost everything now being done by computer this, along with the fact the Jen lived in the village and was more than willing to do as much training as was needed to do the job we chose her. Jennifer has completed a lot of training since joining us and has been awarded the following, a Certificate in Working with your Council (the 392nd clerk in the country to be awarded this certificate by the University of Gloucestershire), the Certificate in Local Council Administration making her one of only 1000 certified clerks in the whole country (Cilca is made up of a very comprehensive

two year portfolio which is an essential prerequisite for a council to gain Quality Parish Status), the Power of Wellbeing and she has also been accepted as a member of the Institute of Local Council Management.

The play park fire that was started we think by a group of 6 kids messing around in the tunnel turned out to be much worse than anyone could have thought. The tunnel was made of plastic and this acted as an accelerant, which in turn helped the fire to be bigger and hotter, this resulted in 2 of the towers being completely burnt and another two being badly charred. The safety floor that we had installed can only be damaged by fire so the flooring was also very badly burnt and this makes it go hard and crisp. The play park was and is insured but each piece of equipment is only insured for what we paid for it when the park was first built, the link piece was the most costly at £17000 which is all the insurance company would pay out to us. We had to get 3 quotes before the insurance company would even come down and look at the damage, these quotes ranged from £32000 to £50000. It was only at this point that we were told that the insurance company would only pay out £17000 which the equipment was insured for. At a meeting with the assessor we did ask if the policy was new for old as most policy are and we were told that ours was but as we had only insured for £17000 that's all they would pay out, in the end we got about £20000 from them and had the new piece of equipment installed, we had the old tower unit made safe and new flooring added. This was the best we could do with the money we had. We have now upped the cost of all the play equipment on all the play parks for the insurance so if this should happen again the equipment will be insured for what it would cost to replace not what it cost as everybody does for household insurance. The police did an investigation into the fire and interviewed 6 teenagers, 4 boys and 2 girls - 4 of these were locals and 2 from the caravan holiday park, as all the kids were under 16 and each were blaming each other and using nicknames the investigation came to an end with no one being charged with the fire. The CCTV that should have been working had been turned off by someone in the doctor's surgery and was not recording on that day. The CCTV camera is now all up and running again with a new infer-red light and we are going to have the power hard wired so that it can only be turned off with a key.

Chris Avery our handyman works, it seems all the time, as the village is in a much better state now than it has ever been. Chris looks after all of the parish councils play equipment, bus stops and pretty much anything else we own. If the bus stops need to be painted Chris is there. He checks the play parks and bus stops every day and removes any rubbish that may have been left there. Every week he has to do an inspection of all the play equipment and these sheets are kept for 30 years, this is for health and safety and also our insurance, any faulty equipment that he can't fix, he removes until it can be fixed and put back in to use. The parish council have brought a ride on mower and trailer to transport the mower; this is so Chris can now cut the grass on Johnson's field and Jubilee green when we need to have it cut this used to be contracted out costing the council about £6000 per year. I'm sure you will all agree that Chris has done and is doing a fantastic job and I would like to thank him for all his hard work.

Local Action Plan, the parish council was a bit late in getting on board with this and we only had a few months to get it all sorted out. Angela Alexander who was paid to help get this important document done on time called a meeting in November with the Parish Council and some members of the public. At this meeting the LAP was explained to us all and the council put forward two councillors to sit on the steering group. The steering group was made up of two councillors, three members of the public and Angela. The first stage was to get a public survey of what the villagers needed or wanted to see done to improve the village, 600 of these were posted out and we only got back 97. This was very poor and the age group of most of the people returning the forms were all around the 50 year old mark so the steering group made the effort to go out to groups in the village and collect more data. With this all done Angela did some analysis of the data and got a list of things that most of the village wanted to see improved, these were then presented to the steering group who held lots of meetings to work out who each of these could be handled by and some idea of timescale. Once this was done the main body of the document could be completed with pictures and wording produced by various members of the group. The document did get finished on time and has now been printed and is available for you all to take a copy away with you tonight. Jennifer has been working with Action in

Rural Sussex and has already been offered a grant of £5000 to start doing some of the projects within the LAP, which is a great start to what has been a good piece of work by both members of the public and the parish council. I would like to thank everyone involved with the LAP for all their hard work and effort that has been put in to produce this very important document.

Probation team, the Parish Council has entered in to a contract with the local probation team for them to work on land own by the council, so far the team have spent 3 weeks weeding Johnson's field and putting in edging boards and new bark over the newly weeded areas. They are also going to concrete under the benches and table as when it rains the grass just turns to mud. We have been offered an old boat which we are planning to put on Jubilee field and plant up with bulbs some new and some that have been pulled out with the weeds this again will be done by the team. The only cost to the council is finding somewhere for the team to have lunch which they bring with them and refreshments for any breaks they have. The police have let us use their building on the central car park for this which has been a great help. The team will be here once a month or so to do any work which we want them to do, as long as it is within their capabilities but weeding of the flower beds will be an ongoing project that the team will be doing for many years to come.

Finally I would like to thank all the people that help the parish council out every year. I will start with the councillors who give their time for free and have to take the good with the bad as you will all know you can't please all the people all of the time so in no particular order; Richard Holt my vice chairman, Julie O'Shaughnessy, and the new members of the council Dave Greenfield, Trish Lock, Ann Young and Terry Hovenden. The County and District councillors - Nick Ramus who comes to every meeting, Paul Osbourne and Keith Glazier who come to as many meeting as they can all three of these councillors are a great help to both myself and the parish council as a whole with a wealth of experience and information that they have between them. Jennifer Childs, the parish clerk who has only been with us for 10 months has fitted in very well, she has completed a lot of training in a very short period of time and works it seems all hours of the day and night as we all receive emails at all times. Jennifer has taken over the

running of the website (saving us nearly a thousand pounds a year) which she has updated and added new pages to; if anyone has anything they would like to see on the website or would like a link to or from it please let us know. Jennifer also spends much of her time looking and applying for funding for projects in the village, she has recently secured a £10000 lottery grant for us to set up a film club. Chris Avery again never seems to stop working and as I have said before the village is a much better place because of him and of course all of you who come along to the meeting and help to support the parish council in what we are trying to do for the village - the more people that get involved the better the village can be.

So a big thank you to everyone.

Cllr Adam Harkin