

Annual Parish Meeting - Monday, 8 May 2006
Chairman's Report (Mrs Shirley D Beazer)

It appears that plans by B&NES regarding the future use of **Tyndale** (at present temporarily used as a Day Centre for Adults with Learning Difficulties) are either "sale to the highest bidder or alternative uses". We continue to lobby for its use as affordable housing.

To the distress of the residents of the **Sheltered Housing at Mountain Wood**, they were recently informed of the relocation of the Sheltered Housing Officer (Mrs Pat Dennis) to Bathampton as of 1 April 2007. We contacted Somer about this proposal emphasising the obvious lack of 'on-the-spot' contact so important to the residents this would cause, but their response was negative and disappointing. Pat has made a happy and visible impact on the residents and the appearance and use of the Community Centre.

The gap left as **Neighbourhood Watch** Co-ordinator is now under the watchful eye of Councillor Jean Vesey. Progress has already been made since the inadvertent lapse and will continue to be made.

The **Parish Precept** for 2006/07 has increased slightly from £19,200.00 to £20,475.00 - an increase of 22p for a Band A property.

Plans have been approved for 3 **affordable houses** at Mountain Wood, with priority to local people with village connections, who must however ensure they are included on this list held by Somer Housing. [*Somer Housing Tel: 01225-366019*]

Somer's intentions regarding the dilapidated garages at Mountain Wood are still vague. They will "either renovate some, or most probably, demolish all the garages and provide hard-standing for parking".

The **Parish Plan** now plays a major part in recommended improvements in many areas of the parish. Tremendous effort involving innumerable volunteers has provided a tangible document for future and permanent reference.

Enormous effort has preceded BEFA's (*Bathford Enterprise For All*) take-over of the **Community Shop** and although, as we all know, there is still much to be done, I am confident of their success and urge everyone to make good use of our local shop. Use it or lose it still applies. I commend the community spirit of Iqbal and Musama Suleman who gave us the golden opportunity to maintain our local Post Office and Shop.

The Strategic Health Authority have put forward proposals to reduce the number of **Primary Care Trusts** as part of new national Government policy. The area is served by 12 PCTs and the Local Authority consulted on two possible configurations:- one to create 3 new trusts - while the other would see 7 - whose borders would match local authorities with Social Services responsibilities. We supported the second option of 7. The final outcome has yet to be agreed.

I would like to make special mention of the day-to-day work of **Link** and its many volunteers which continues to contribute such a vital difference to the lives of so many parishioners and is so highly appreciated.

We immediately questioned the intention of **National Express** to discontinue picking up passengers at Box Road and Batheaston from April 2006.. Their reply (which did not accept the stop at Dunsford Motors) states “I have effected a timetable change to the Stambridge stop from 6 March 2006.The effect of the change is that our Batheaston customers still have a direct service to London but also have the option of travelling to Bath Spa or Box in order to get to London.”

The report (completely out of the blue) that **Bathford bus services** would be withdrawn on Sunday evenings and all day on Bank holidays as of July 2006 has undoubtedly caused great concern (especially since the recent introduction of the Diamond Travelcard) and we as a Parish Council (plus the recently formed Mobility Focus Group) immediately objected strongly to Sir Elgar Jenkins and First Bus stating our disappointment and lack of consultation, and for at least the service to be reduced, not withdrawn. We wait with interest for his reply.

In November 2005 we received confirmation that the **Wiltshire Hopper** would pick up passengers in Bathford en route to the Royal United Hospital but on the understanding it would not increase the cost of operation and the right to review the situation.

Double Taxation – Has long been a bone of contention. We (and other Parishes) question why we pay twice for play areas, playing fields, grass cutting etc but to date B&NES reject any proposal to address the situation.

And finally, the past year has proved to be one of our most challenging and once again has proved the worth of every Councillor. We have a team of dedicated and professional volunteers whom I consider are always more than capable of tackling any problem. Their enthusiasm - and most importantly follow-through - has resulted in the growth and expansion of the Council’s function in so many aspects, and indeed is constantly expanding and exploring new ideas, with the sole objective that each new project will sustain and enhance the fabric and future of the Parish and its Parishioners

I thank Ruth Holding our Clerk who has proved beyond all doubt to be our greatest asset and my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all my fellow Councillors for their hard work (above and beyond the call of duty) and most of all their continued and willing support through such a demanding year.