Annual Parish Meeting.

Report by County Councillors Sara Randall Johnson and Ray Bloxham.

Representing the Parishes of Clyst St. George, Clyst St Mary and Sowton, Farringdon,

Rockbeare, Clyst Honiton, Broadclyst, Poltimore, Cranbrook, Clyst St Lawrence, Clyst Hydon, Huxham, Netherexe, Rewe, Upton Pyne, Brampford Speke and Stoke Canon.

We are both very grateful to you all for the warm welcome extended to us since last May; and to the Parish Clerks who have regularly providing us with a copy of agendas and minutes for parish meetings. With seventeen parishes within our electoral division it is often difficult to attend parish council meetings on a regular basis but we get to as many as we can. When several meetings arise on the same evening, as often happens, It has not been our practice to spend a few minutes at each delivering a verbal report on county related issues and then moving on to the next meeting. Instead we have, in most cases, tried to stay at one meeting with the aim of getting a better feel of what is happening locally and how we can best support the Parish Council.

We are committed holding the County Council officers to account and keeping them focused on improving the wellbeing of your communities whether it be highways issues, extending broadband and mobile phone reception. Of course we are available between meetings and liaise directly with Parish Clerks whenever anything arises that needs our attention. We do not have to wait for Parish meetings to respond but prefer to have an ongoing dialogue.

As your local councillors we have lobbied County Hall for the retention of the Locality Budget Scheme for another year because we have been particularly impressed with the commitment and resilience displayed by the parish councillors and one of our aims locally has been to identify what we can do to give tangible support to the excellent local initiatives that have come forward. One of the ways that we have been able to help is by providing financial support including:

Supporting Stoke Canon festival (£750) and Cranbrook summer children events (£500).

Repairs to Sowton village hall (£1200)

Purchasing two bicycles and other equipment to support Active Mums (£500)

Funding a defibrillator at Clyst St Lawrence (£500) and a defibrillator cabinet at Clyst

Hydon (£500)

Supporting fibre broadband provision at Upton Pyne (£2000)

Funding towards two interactive speed signs at Rewe (£2000)

Supporting Broadclyst Youth YMCA project (£960)

Providing a specialist examination couch for disabled and pregnant patients at Cranbrook medical practice (£800)

Supporting Brampford Speke pre school (£2500)

Providing trolleys to move chairs and tables at Brampford Speke village hall (£486)

Supporting Ebford residents community support scheme (£490)

Helping to fund a new community storage unit at Clyst Honiton (£1000)

Supporting the Poltimore Estate Research Society project (£750)

Providing a portable whiteboard and markers for Cranbrook Patients Participation Group (£200)

Funding an electric wheelchair for Clyst Caring Friends (£954)

This represents over £16,000 that we have been able to invest in our local community.

We aim to continue with this support in the coming year and have managed to secure some additional funds which are specifically intended for capital projects. So that means that we can continue to help parishes to be resilient by providing both revenue and capital support in the financial year commencing April 2018.

Councillors acknowledge the financial pressures facing the County Council and we have been fighting to make sure the scarce resources are targeted at delivering front line services to the most vulnerable. We have been successful in securing an additional £13 million into adult social care, £6.5 million for Childrens’ services and an extra £6.5 million into highways for pot holes and drainage work.

We are aware that the condition of the County roads is a matter that is very much to the fore and we are very impressed with how many Parishes are using a variety of schemes in how they are supplementing the efforts of the highway engineers by treating potholes locally that otherwise would not be treated either because they do not fit the safety criteria that highways employ or for some other reason.

Both of us have commitments at the County Council. Sara chairs the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. She also is chair of the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority, a member of the Devon Pension Board and sits on a variety of other County Council Committees. Ray is vice-chair of Development Management Committee and sits on Corporate and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee His role also includes chair of two local community liaison groups at Skypark and Greendale Barton, is a Governor at the RD&E, and has been working on a number of projects including broadband and mobile phone provision and a review of local policing.

Personal health and wellbeing is very much in our thoughts over a range of our responsibilities. Ray is a member of the Healthy New Towns Executive Board and very much involved in that work in Cranbrook and we are both supporting the successful joint bid by Exeter and Cranbrook to bring Sport England funding to the locality.