

Symondsbury Parish Council Newsletter

Issue 1 - February 2007

These are exciting times for local government, and believe me, we can have exciting times in local government!

This is our first newsletter, which we hope to get to every home in the parish and will be a six-monthly event and of course we would welcome any comments you have.

We can feel a little isolated at our bi-monthly meetings, but our range of councillors across the parish do strive to find out what projects will enhance the area, and what issues we can help with. Our parish is now working towards Quality Status and this will give us extra powers to run more affairs in the parish, such as street cleaning, drain maintenance, lighting and other small jobs which we hope will enhance the lives of parishioners. Our major projects at the moment are affordable housing, striving to improve the A35 and working with Symondsbury School on their Extended Schools Activities. This is an opportunity to utilise the marvellous facilities in the school during non-school hours and we really welcome the positive way the School wants to involve us and be involved with us. Let us have ideas.

We have our local elections coming up in May and this might be an opportunity for you to become involved and help shape the local community. Many of our councillors are co-opted as they have replaced those who have had to retire during the past four years. But in order to have a strong council, we need all our new councillors (8) to have put themselves forward for election, with the appropriate sponsors. I don't know yet how many current councillors may want to retire this time, but we really do need representation across the parish in order ensure that we can help every area. Please think about standing and contact someone on the council for more information.

A Message from the Chairman

Around the Parish The Parish Council meets at Symondsbury School every two months and all of their meetings are open to the public. The first item on the agenda allows anyone to speak on matters of concern in the parish, after which they are free to leave at any time. (You do not have to sit through the whole meeting unless you so wish).

Did you know that the Symondsbury School can now offer a meeting room for parish groups, which is both comfortable and warm?

Don't know your Parish Councillor? See how many you recognise on the centre pages!
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West Cliff

The Council were pleased to welcome Jane Nolting-May as a co-opted member at the November 2006 meeting. Jane has been a visitor to the area for many years, finally re-locating about a year ago. West Cliff has not had a representative on the Council for some time and we are sure that Jane will serve the residents well.

Pine View

A lot of people travel along Magdalen Lane in order to reach Alexandra Road and other destinations, but how many know that Pine View is in the parish of Symondsbury. Neat modern houses enjoying countryside views to the westward. It is some years since a Pine View resident sat on the Parish Council. Perhaps at the upcoming election (May 2007) we shall be able to welcome a volunteer with an interest in the affairs of the community.

The Tythe Barn

The Colfox Estate is keen to learn the views of the community on possible future uses of the Symondsbury Tythe Barn. Plans for the re-development of this ancient building, together with the surrounding area, are being moved forward. How do you see it being used? Craft shops, tea rooms or something different? A museum, a community centre? Whatever your views, why not let us have them. Write, email or phone the clerk; details on this page.

Make your mark in Election Year. On May 3rd we have Local Elections. Every four years councillors must offer themselves for re-election. This year your representatives will be reduced to eight, as required by the 2004 Electoral Reform Act, and we shall be looking to secure representation in all areas of this widespread parish. Would you like to serve the community? Local Councils are consulted on nearly everything that happens in your area, taking an active part in decisions which affect the community. Some people may think that their opinions do not count, or that local action will not make a difference. That is simply not true. The reality is that if you vote, YOU decide what gets done. It's an important way of having your say on the issues YOU care about and in choosing who will take decisions on your behalf. From the right to make representations on planning applications, to the state of the footpaths, parish councils make decisions which affect your everyday life. Surveys have shown that people wish to be involved in the decision making process but are not sure how to begin. If you are aged 18 and over, ring the clerk to find out how.

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Undoubtedly we live in a beautiful part of Dorset, an area which attracts a great many visitors who provide a welcome boost to the local economy. Often overlooked is the contribution made by the farmer, whose vital work goes largely uncompensated. True they do receive payments from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and other sources but these funds do not meet the cost of the landscaping work carried out at the farm. Most farmers do not consider it to be only about money. They accept the responsibility to keep the landscape at its best for future generations. Hedgerows, ponds and woodlands require time and sometimes the services of skilled craftsmen to do the work and these are not

always available. A recent survey jointly commissioned by CPRE and the NFU reveals that annually farmers complete over £400 million worth of landscape management work outside of any agri-environment schemes, an average of £2410 per farm. Our farmers deserve a BIG thank you.

We're on the WEB! www.symondsbury.org.uk

Tranquillity. The Tranquillity map of England has been produced and our Parish lies squarely in a green (most tranquil) area. A recent survey has shown that 49% of the people visiting the countryside, do so in order that they can find tranquillity. Exposure to nature has been shown to reduce blood pressure, reduce heart attacks, increase mental performance and soothe anxieties, while nature based play has a positive impact on children's development. It has been hard for decision makers to protect tranquillity because they have not been able to measure it. WE WELCOME YOUR VIEWS.

This is our first Newsletter, designed to inform all members of the community on those matters which affect them. It is a focal point of contact and it would be good to know if we have got it right. Tell us what you think! More than that, tell us your opinions on matters which affect the community, the improvements you would like to see. We can work best when we know what you would like to have done.

DID YOU KNOW - That the chairman of the Parish Council has a duty to convene an Annual Parish Meeting. This is not a council meeting but a meeting arranged for the electorate of the parish though the press and public can attend without taking part. It is a meeting where the electorate can discuss any issues or matters which concern the community as well as receive reports on the performance of its council. The meeting must be held between the 1st of March and the 1st of June each year, this year it is the 3rd April 2007.

DID YOU KNOW - That there is a website sponsored by the government which has searchable databases that make it easy for you to keep on top of local planning information. This can be found on www.planningportal.gov.uk. Another worthwhile source of information, not only on planning matters but also giving a wealth of local information, is the County website which can be found on www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk / www.dorsetforyou.com

Why not take a look at the Parish Website at: www.symondsbury.org.uk, visited by locals and holidaymakers alike. For local information or to use it to promote your business by linking to it, contact us

We are looking for a title for this Newsletter. What do you suggest? Something exciting, vibrant, interesting, eye-catching, truly for the community? Send your entries to the clerk. £10 for the one judged by the council to be the most appropriate.