

Hanley Castle Parish Council
Chairman's Annual Report 2026
A Whistlestop Tour of the Parish

We start our tour at the south east corner of the Parish where the floods cut us off from Upton (or possibly Upton gets cut off from Hanley) near to Pool House.

Travelling up Lawton's Hill we catch a glimpse of St. Mary's Church where we held the first of the consultations on the Parish Plan. This turned out to be a great event with a good attendance and interesting feedback on the many post its. The Parish Plan Team has done an awful lot of hard work preparing for this event, and the second one in HSVH, collating the responses and compiling the survey forms based on these events. I should like to thank all of them for their work to date; we look forward to the next stages of the process.

Approaching the village of Hanley Castle the newly installed white gates, together with the VAS machine, are physical indications of the desire to slow traffic past the High School at least to the current 40mph limit. Pippa and Sara, together with the residents group, have been tenacious in pressing for a reduction in the limit to 30mph, keeping up the pressure despite the continual knock backs and changes of personnel at WCC. They are to be commended for their efforts and supported as they continue the campaign. As we travel round the Cross Hands, further evidence of their work can be seen in the new VAS and more white gates at the northern end of the village.

Travelling towards the Rhydd and Bankside College we note that a national speed limit still applies past this dangerous junction and the exit from the college. Tom brought his concerns to a meeting but, not wishing to take the emphasis off the campaign for Hanley Castle village and HCHS, we decided to focus our efforts there.

Turning left at the Rhydd and along the Honeypots we pass the Priestfield junction which was causing concern as the visibility is poor when pulling out from the Guarlford end. Once again, Pippa and Sara took this to Tanya at Highways, as they had with the earlier flooding problems in the same area.

Looking to the left as we travel towards the Blackmore bend we see the Incinerator. The planning application on the paddock next to the incinerator was the result of enforcement but it was difficult to decide if it was in part retrospective or for additional buildings. The Parish Council objected but it would appear that it has recently been granted. Opposite the incinerator, the footpath to Broadacres Farm has remained blocked by rubbish (as it has for a long while) and Steve has been working hard to get this cleared. Steve does a wonderful job looking after the paths around the Parish and I thank him for his work on this and for taking on the role of Tree Warden as well.

Moving into the Worcester Road we pass the site of one of the many Planning in Principle (PIP) applications that appeared like a rash during 2025. In this case the application next to Cygnet Lodge was for between 1 and 4 custom or self-build dwellings; it was refused by MHDC and has gone to appeal.

And so to the ever popular Swan Inn, where parking, and traffic using the slip road, continue to be a concern for some. Several attempts to slow traffic swinging left across the front of the pub have failed to find a solution acceptable to Highways but they were amenable to providing a dropped kerb to allow disabled access on to the Village Green and this has been installed.

Down Roberts End now and the ongoing problem of flooding along the path to the Community Orchard (which I am told was called Hovel Lane) and more generally in this area. Wade Muggleton has suggested some digging out of the pond and ditches which may help, and he will undertake this work, hopefully soon.

More PIPs along Roberts End at various stages of the planning process; Mortimer Lodge, for up to two dwellings, was granted on appeal; The Grange, for one dwelling, has gone to appeal and a decision is awaited; Appletrees, for up to six dwellings, is at a similar point. We await news.

We'll turn right into Gilberts End, past the Pump Hose with its tiles repaired by Steve, and up to the last of the PIPs, in the paddocks before Holly Cottage. We have at least received a decision on the appeal at this site and it was refusal. The appeal decision was made just after the SWDP had been agreed so the timing was possibly significant as it would have been made against the plans current at the time with the SWDP having full weight.

I know Lesley moved from Brickwalls some years ago but that section of Gilberts End will always have an association so I will at this point mention her retirement from the Parish Council. She followed in her mother's footsteps when she joined us and her local knowledge of the area, and the farming community in particular, has been invaluable. I should like to thank her for her contributions, especially for taking on the Three Counties ticket distribution, and wish her well in her retirement.

Past the verge which has been destroyed by the numerous builders vehicles parked during the wet of the winter, but which we hope will be restored soon, and on to the junction with the Welland Road. Looking across we were hoping that a new dropped kerb on the Village Hall side would allow mobility scooters to more easily get onto the footway but it seems the work done by Highways in this area has not quite achieved our objectives.

Crossing the road and continuing up Gravel Pits Lane we pass the Playing Field. The Parish Council has joined with the Football Club to access funding from the Football Association to improve the pitch and I should like to thank Graham for all his work on this. Graham also looks after the Play Area and has kept a regular eye on this and undertaken ongoing repairs – so once again many thanks.

Heading for the Hills and along the bridlepath we pass Little Hanley Farm where Sue & I visited with the owners before the application for glamping pods was submitted and subsequently approved. Possibly as a result of this application, we then commented, favourably, on a certificate of lawfulness which was submitted for The Bridge.

We are now at the western edge of the Parish and opposite the Three Counties Showground. We are very grateful to David Prescott, the Chief Executive, for coming along to our August meeting and responding to all our questions and comments. We are also pleased that we continue to receive the free tickets to the main shows which we are able to distribute to our residents. Big Al is mastering the ticketing app and recipients are most appreciative of the TCAS's generosity. Further along towards Poolbrook, we note that work has started on the holiday lodges in Langdale Wood, before we turn right onto Blackmore and head for Lucart Hygiene Ltd. Aka 'The toilet roll factory'. This of course is the recognised route for lorries accessing the factory – not, as has happened on a few occasions recently, via Park Lane!

Returning that way to the centre of Hanley Swan we alight upon the new build on the site of the British Legion Club. The work seems to be progressing well but the boundary fence has encroached on the land looked after by the Parish Council and we are trying to address the incursion.

The Pond, the centrepiece of the village, is looking as lovely as ever and once again we have to thank Nick the Pond and his large team of volunteers for all their hard work. Parking on the verge here has caused some damage, particularly in the wet weather, and we are hoping to discourage this.

Over the crossroads and along the Welland Road and we can pause to admire the street trees which have been planted by the Hanley Environment Group and which will hopefully grow well and enhance the streetscape. This is one of the many and various projects instigated by the HEG over the year and we must admire them and thank them for their unwavering enthusiasm and for the diversity of the projects they undertake.

Turn left in to Picken End and we are all about planning and development. The site on the corner which was part of the allocations in the NDP was given approval on appeal for 14 affordable dwellings (not ten as in the NDP) and work has now started. We are keen to monitor progress at the site to ensure compliance with the granted permission and to work with the developers to help with the affordable housing element. Further down the lane and turning into Winnington Gardens, we have the extension to Apple Tree Gardens which was granted on appeal. Further amended applications have followed on this site and some are yet to be determined.

Hopefully some better news from Winnington Gardens is that our quest to lease the Allotments from Platform Housing and make them more readily available to local residents may at last be progressing. It has been a very slow process trying to get the solicitors on both sides moving but after a large amount of work by Hilary Fowler and sustained pressure from Becky we hope that we are nearing the end.

Back onto Picken End and Steve's house (and indeed Tim's) are a reminder that the Hanley Castle NDP was made in June 2025 after a huge amount of work by them and the rest of the NDP Group. It has served us well and will I'm sure continue to do so even though the SWDP has now been completed.

As we look along the Welland Road we are conscious that things outside our Parish boundary also have a bearing on our activities. We submitted comments on the development at Glynchbrook in the Forest of Dean as we felt that there was the potential for a large increase in traffic through Hanley Swan if it went ahead. We have also been supporting the siting of a mobile phone mast on the Hook Bank as it had the potential to transform the signal for many people in Hanley Swan and Angela has put a tremendous effort into the promotion of this. Even though we have recently heard that the mast has been refused permission even on appeal, we should commend Angela for all her efforts; I don't think she could have done any more.

And finally we come full circle, from the sometimes flooded road at Upton to the temporary traffic lights at Danemoor which were trialled when the Hanley Road was indeed flooded; they appear to have helped with the safety at the crossroads and we were pleased to hear they will be used again when the floods return.

It just remains for me to thank everyone for their hard work over the past twelve months, to wish Lesley well in her retirement, to welcome Helen to the Council and in particular to thank Becky for keeping us all on task throughout the year.

Sue Roberts

21.5.2026

VILLAGE HALL May 2026

Six Committee meetings were held during the year at which issues regarding the users and the running of the hall were discussed and mostly resolved.

Work that has been undertaken over the past year includes:

- Fluorescent tube lighting in main hall, entrance and kitchen replaced with energy efficient LED lights.
- Car Park entrance improved.
- Paving slabs by the school gate removed and replaced with gravel to remove trip hazards and improve safety
- Partial landscaping of the area at the front of the building (the outside area previously used by the Pre-School).
- New cooker hood fitted in main kitchen.
- New hot water boiler fitted in small kitchen.

Work currently in hand:

- Improvement to disabled access into the small hall by installing a low-level threshold and associated work to the existing doors.

The plans for the coming year (subject to grant funding) are:

- Refurbishment of the storage area between the two halls.
- New Double Doors to provide an exit to the old Pre-School Garden.

Once again there have been a number of jobs to the Hall infrastructure, to this end various electrical, plumbing and heating maintenance tasks have been undertaken.

Report on the Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council May 2026

Work started on the review of Neighbourhood Plan in Q3 2023 and was completed on the 24th of June 2025 when the plan was formally adopted. The plan runs to January 2030.

Your committee decided not to change any policies or allocations to the original plan (as made in 2016) as this would require a referendum and the invitation of interested parties to submit proposals for allocations. Consequently, a material review was conducted, however the process of conducting such a review was almost identical to a substantial review but without a referendum. This was a significant body of work. None the less we were successful in reviewing our plan and were described as “exemplary” by the examiner.

Planning is a notoriously complicated, bureaucratic, and temporal process involving policies at the National level (NPPF), County level (SWDP) and local level – the Neighbourhood Plan. Given that timescales involved are long and Governmental policies change it is little wonder that the process is unwieldy and compromised. The current Governments determination to build can (has) overruled policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, usually on appeal, as the County could not show a 5-year housing supply. Strictly speaking the Neighbourhood Plan if in date should be respected.

The SWDP has now been adopted and the Neighbourhood plan has full, undisputed weight.

Going forward and given the timescales required to produce a Neighbourhood Plan the PC will need to take a decision in early 2027 whether to commence work on a new plan. The planning rules relating to Neighbourhood Plans change often and it will be important to check with MHDC at that time to determine what the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan are to decide if these benefits outweigh the cost and resources required to deliver a plan.

Financial support has largely been withdrawn for Neighbourhood Plans and the PC will have to fund the Plan. As a guide I suggest the following amounts. £15k for consultancy, £5k for promotion, communications. Allow for £25k in total allowing for a contingency and inflation. If examiners fees are also to be for the PC's account allow another £10k. This will undoubtedly require an increase in the precept.

Key learning points from the review.

- 1) Keep the plan as simple as possible. Reduce content, limit background information, do not describe the process but show compliance to it. A short concise plan enables an effective review.
- 2) Limit the number of policies to no more than 10, less if possible.
- 3) Do not include policies relating to transport, road safety or other matters that are managed by the Council.
- 4) Do not include matters that are managed by the PC in the course of their duties.
- 5) Reduce discussions justifying policies to evidence that support the policies. Surplus information will be used by developers, and planning officials to work around policies. Being concise has benefits but will require strong informed arguments to avoid dilution by planners and the examiner.
- 6) Place supporting data – evidence in the appendix not close to the policies.
- 7) Do not conduct a council supported housing survey but conduct a residential survey. This allows the plan to be based on genuine local needs free of Government policies moreover it identifies the values and identifies what is important to our community.

As a reminder while the SWDP has not allocated any land (other than business use) in our parish, however developers regard our parish as being highly attractive as premium prices can be charged.

Finally, I must thank the following for their help, advice, local knowledge, and hours spent in front of PC screens. Sue Roberts, Sue Adeney, Angela Hartland and Tim Feast.

S. Gogerty

Village Pond Annual Report 2025 - 2026

Thankfully another year without the need for a JCB!

- The water level dropped considerably during the dry, hot summer months as would be expected. However, it was very encouraging that even at its lowest we still had waist high water rather than the waist high sludge experienced prior to the dredging of 2022. With the seemingly inevitable trend of these conditions this will no doubt become normal. Hopefully villagers will get used to this seasonal rise and fall as a few concerns have been raised, sometimes rather accusingly, about low water level!
- A willingness for villagers to volunteer for working parties continues with groups meeting in late spring and late summer. The main tasks undertaken was trimming of the perimeter willow and grasses together with cleaning the duck houses.
- It is interesting to note that most recent volunteers are relatively new to the village and see participation as a way to meet likeminded people and to contribute towards keeping the pond looking like it did when they chose to live here.
- Further investigations were made to assess the overflow pipework, following work by Severn Trent. This continues to be rather inconclusive and requires further follow up.
- Inconsiderate car parking has caused damage to the grass verge next to the pond along the Worcester Road. The worst of this has been filled in and will be re-seeded after preparation in the early autumn. Polite signs will be produced and deployed.
- The new residential building on the site of the former Royal British Legion social club nears completion. A modest 'land grab' appears to have taken place but there is now a 6' timber fence bordering the land behind the pond which does give a solid boundary and is better than what we had before.
- A recent exercise by Paul Davighi -Edwards and myself to remove the duck houses to inspect them and refurbish the finish has shown no signs of decay or movement in the timber. They have been on the pond since February 2023 so this bodes well for their longevity. Paul sanded them down and reapplied the protective coating.
- Participation in the 'Parish Day' at the Café Market at the end of January resulted in two potential new volunteers. Our display of a large plastic tub containing water from the pond may have puzzled some but shows we can have fun while being public spirited!
- Pond Updates have been produced regularly for the 'Parish Link' magazine throughout the year.

Nick Harper

PLAYING FIELDS REPORT

1. The field continues to be well used by the children after school and in the holidays; Hanley football team on Saturdays and children of village generally.
2. The seat on one of the large swings was tampered with causing a child to fall off, the seat has been replaced and regular safety checks are now made. There has also been some minor damage to the side on the small climbing frame. The blue shelter has some graffiti scratched into the paintwork and the PC might perhaps consider repainting the shelter.
3. The field has been recently fertilised and scarified and will be re-seeded along with other work as part of the continuing Football Foundation grant. As part of the grant agreement the PC are due to fund work to the value of £1000 this year. However, due to their system the next £2,200 due from the Football Foundation can't be claimed until October 2026 so I ask if the PC can (as last year) fund the work until the claim is paid and then a refund made.
4. I continue to liaise with Grant from New Farm and advise him when and when not to cut the football pitch, this seems to work well.
5. To help avoid potential conflicts of use, I continue to keep a diary of bookings for the field:
 - Hanley Swan Cafe and Market use the side of the field near the lane for extra parking when needed and there have been no real problems.
 - A request from the Amelia K Academy dance school in Malvern has been received to use the field on Thursday 28 May 2026 for a fund-raising family fun day etc.
 - A company called Questars have asked to use the field on 18 July 2026, as this is a commercial organisation I believe a reasonable charge should be made.
 - Hanley Show will probably ask to use the field for a car boot in August 2026.
 - New football season due to commence beginning September 2026.

Graham Holmes, Playing Field Warden

Parish Tree Warden's Annual Report – 2025-26

Steve Pennant – May 2026

I registered myself as the parish tree warden with the county tree warden co-ordinator Wade Muggleton. The role of the tree warden is to plant, protect and promote local trees. Some of the projects Tree Warden groups have done include:

- Arranging local tree planting days
- Pruning, watering caring for local trees
- Working with local authorities to plant & care for street trees
- Rejuvenating local woodlands
- Raising funds and finding land for tree planting projects
- Going into schools to talk about the value of trees.

So, in fact, the role in Hanley Castle is already being carried out by HEG except for regular contact with schools – which HEG is addressing in it's communications strategy.

There is more information on the Tree Council website - <https://treecouncil.org.uk/tree-wardens/>

Sue Roberts handed me some very useful files used by previous tree wardens.

I also discovered it is very easy to get Tree Protection Order information from <https://plan.malvern hills.gov.uk/>
You simply type in part of the address you are interested in and then on the next screen click on TPOs.

Oak trees on Hanley Swan Village Green

I noticed that the oak trees on the green do not have TPOS. I queried this with Chris Lewis-Farley, the MHDC tree and landscape officer. Chris replied that in order to make a TPO, there has to be some sort of catalyst for doing so. Some sort of threat. The parish council is the owner of the green and has no malicious intent towards the trees. So, no there is need or justification for the creation of a TPO. Were the ownership of the land in question, or perhaps ambiguous in some way, then perhaps a TPO might have been justifiable on a precautionary basis.

Oak Tree by the Four Winds property on Gilbert End

This tree has been identified as causing subsidence to the adjacent property. Envirotrees, a tree services company, was commissioned to treat the tree but first establish ownership. The tree lies outside the curtilage of the Four Winds and on land not claimed by the highways department. There seems to be a sliver of land to the south of the roadside ditch and north of the Four Winds boundary line. Envirotrees posted a notice saying the tree would be removed unless the owner came forward before 5th June 2026.

Parish Path Warden's Annual Report – 2025-26

The usual maintenance tasks were carried out throughout the year, these being checking and replacing waymark signs, clearing brambles and nettles from around signs, stiles, gates and footbridges and cutting back overhanging branches. During the summer the paths requiring most attention are often the ones which run between hedges and fences as they do not get grazed. The heaviest vegetation growth sections are the Riverside path, the Glebe, the path across the fields north of the Community Orchard, the path alongside the incinerator, part of the bridleway at Merebrook and part of Arles Wood. There will be a need to recruit volunteers to clear paths during the summer months. Particularly heavy growth will be undertaken by commissioning the lengthsman. In August 2025 the lengthsman worked on the following in one day:

- Arles Wood path 505 - 220m in the top part of the wood
- Roberts End community orchard path 523 - 370m as far as the brook
- Path by the incinerator, fenced off, path 515 - 100m
- Gorse plantation, path 546 - 380m through the wood
- The Old Vicarage, Hanley Castle, path 571 - 200m
- Riverside path from Quay Lane, path 574 - 480m north half only
- Hanley Castle Steps path 599 - 100m
- Hanley Castle by the Glebe to Gilberts End, path 565 - 250m

Total metres = 2,000m

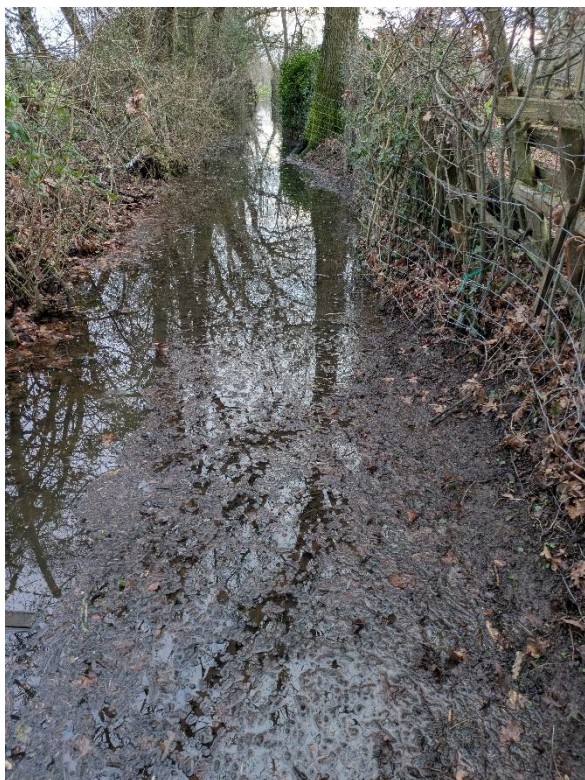
As the Worcestershire County Council budget is under severe strain there may be a need for the parish to use its own funds for replacing the most damaged stiles and bridges.

A WhatsApp group was created in 2025 which now has 19 members. Members are able to share footpath

issues which can either be addressed by the warden, volunteers or if necessary, the County Council. Issues requiring the County's resources include unsafe stiles, bridges and fallen trees. Any member of the public can report an issue with the footpaths on

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/report-road-or-path-issue/report-problem-public-right-way>

The wet winter created problems for walkers through mud and in some cases quite deep water. The path between Picken End and Gilberts End is particularly liable to flooding which we can do little about. The accompanying photo was taken in January.



Steve Pennant – May 2026

Community Orchard Activity

Following last year's bumper crop that produced 600 bottles, with 250 bottles left over (now sold), this year's much reduced harvest yielded just over 200 bottles of Vera's apple juice. Clive's Fruit Farm charge £2.10 per bottle and we sell for £3, with a 50p discount to the Hanley Swan stores, who sell most of it.

We held a pruning session in February at which eight volunteers helped prune the trees and clear brambles and other weeds around them.

Tree saplings supplied

During the year our tree contractor, Steve Harvey, gave us 2320 saplings left over from his various contracts. These were then identified by our two tree experts, Peter Goodyear and Julia Wylie, and then given to 38 eager planters who came to collect them from within the parish and surrounding ones.

Our team of tree planting volunteers helped plant another 2000+ trees arranged by Severn treescapes advisor Simone Mansi.

Café Market. Report to the Parish Council year to May 2026

The Café Market continues to play an important role in our community. It provides a valuable meeting point, a place for local stall holders to sell their wares and to fund raise for charities and local causes.

The market is a non-profit organisation, the stall holder fees cover the running of the market while the raffle generates income that is donated to good causes. In the last 12 months the following donations have been made. £1,000 to the primary school towards the creation of an outdoor area, £492 to the football club for new goal posts, £250 to Upton in Bloom, £185.00 to the Food Bank. We also funded the replacement of the clock in the village hall. Some smaller gifts of flowers and cakes were made to those who participate or attend the market and have suffered ill health or other domestic problems.

If other good causes are known to the PC please let a committee member know.

The market has become known as the “friendly market” with several stall holders attending simply because it’s an enjoyable experience. Our customers must feel the same way, as in March we recorded a footfall of 185 our highest ever.

The market is split across the two halls the smaller hall being used for crafts and flowers is always oversubscribed, except in January as the gifting season is over. Consequently, the Café Market funds the small hall for local organisations, including the PC, to exhibit. The larger hall is used for food and the café. Finding stall holders to sell food is becoming increasingly difficult but the committee works hard to ensure the hall is filled sometimes holding a stall themselves for in season products. The committee was pleased to support the Parish Council with the smart water campaign.

Like all other volunteer organisations succession is our biggest concern. Many of our food stall holders are aged or suffer from ill health and may not be able to attend the market in the very near future. If a critical mass of food-based stall holders is not maintained it is likely the nature of the market will change considerably.

We would like to thank the school for allowing us to use their car park, Graham Holmes for allowing us to use the playing field as an overflow car park and the many volunteers who help us run the market on the day.

S. Gogerty

ANNUAL ROAD SAFETY REPORT

The last year has seen one extra VAS machine installed at the north end of the B4211 Hanley Castle road and village boundary gates installed at both ends of Hanley Castle also along the B4211. Sara and I continue to monitor these stats recorded in the VAS machines and produce monthly reports to aid our fight to get the speed limit reduced along this stretch of the road to 30mph. A fair assessment of the gates effect still require three to four months of readings. We are awaiting from Highways the cost and maintenance costs of having 20MPH flashing lights outside the High School at drop off and pick up times. There would be a need for two of these at either end of the school grounds. Once these costs are ascertained a meeting with the residents of Hanley Castle, with whom at previous meetings have confirmed their concerns of the 40mph limit, is scheduled for June where it can be discussed how the funds could be raised to buy these lights and maintain them and also involve the school in these discussions. It is generally felt that by having these 20mph lights would be a major step forward in getting Highways to reduce the speed limit.

Our reports show that although the majority of drivers' speeds are mainly between 37mph and 41mph this is still far too fast for outside such a large High School with over 1200 pupils and staff exiting and entering on a daily basis - and so our fight continues. Outside any school should be a maximum speed of 30mph - FULL STOP!

Winnington Gardens Allotments.

Of the 6 allotments at the site, currently 5 are being actively managed by parishioners. It is interesting to see the different approaches to cultivation, but there is a good selection of fruit, vegetables and flowers being grown.

Two of the plot holders have existing leases with Platform Housing, but have not paid the rental that was due in April as per guidance provided by the PC and Platform.

The remaining allotment has yet to find a tenant, and I am not aware of anyone who has expressed an interest in taking this.

The plots are taking some time to fully recover being left fallow for such a long time and the boundaries are needing better definition and maintenance.

The hedge side of the site is somewhat overgrown, and would benefit from cutting right back to curtail blackthorn and brambles.

Those who are working the allotments, fully appreciate the value of the resource that the allotments provide, and are enjoying growing in such a lovely space.

Anyone wishing to work the last plot, should apply to the Parish Council.