

Report from Dr Mandy Green ~ MPC Chair ~ 7th May 2025

I have been a Parish Councillor since April 2021, and at co-option and then election, I have always been the Chair of the Parish Council. This past year has been particularly challenging, and I would like to begin my report by thanking sincerely those members of the public and colleague councillors who have consistently supported my effort ~ including the times when you have told me kindly but honestly, that I may be getting things wrong.

I would also like to pay tribute to the support of our District Councillor Steve Pashley and County Councillor Tracey Taylor for their wisdom and guidance as we have navigated together some situations that none of us had experienced before. I want to take this opportunity to offer sincere thanks on behalf of our community to Tracey as out-going County Councillor. She has served in that role since 2019, and before then, was a busy District Councillor. Party politics aside; I have seen her behave consistently as an energetic representative of all of us, in particular supporting the anti-fracking campaign by becoming personally informed about the potential impact to our community. I believe she will be a significant loss to us; but that's how democracy works.

The only legitimate reason for any of us to be prepared to stand for election as Parish Councillors is a genuine desire to do our best to serve our community. Last May, despite being the only candidate prepared to stand, I was elected to the office of Chair by a majority vote of Parish Councillors, and so from commencement did not enjoy the unanimous support of my colleagues. It's a sobering fact of this job I do as a volunteer, that I either have to get on with it as it is, or stop doing it altogether. Therefore, you'll hear no whining from me, simply a commitment to keep trying to serve our community as best I can.

Parish Council time has been consumed this year with three main items of business; the 23/24 AGAR, moles on the village green, and the inconsistent service of a permanent Parish Clerk. The Council was also advised to reduce the number of meetings to be bi-monthly, and subsequently voted to do so until a review in November 2025. I include these matters in this report.

MPC business this year has included an internal disagreement about what was recorded in our Annual Governance and Accountability Return (known as the AGAR) which subsequently resulted in a formal objection to the national auditor being raised by a serving Parish Councillor. I am grateful the individual has now agreed to attempt internal resolution of their objection with the help of a third party mediator. Resolution through the formal external route could potentially consume the whole of the MPC Reserve Fund to pay the costs of the national auditor who has become involved, and an informal resolution would considerably reduce the bill we will already have to pay as a result of the objection being raised at all.

This year has also been the year that moles infested the Village Green and caused a small group of passionate residents to petition the Parish Council and attempt to persuade a majority of councillors not to terminate them. I am sorry about the negative impact this issue had on so many individuals, and the significant abuse felt by parties on both sides of the argument. Sadly, it is the nature of democracy that someone is always going to be upset about the decision finally reached by the Authority elected to make the decision on behalf of everyone. It is a fact that Misson Parish Council will never be able to satisfy all of our community all of the time, and as an elected Parish Councillor, I do accept that fact and understand the dissatisfaction expressed toward me personally as a consequence, however unfair or unreasonable it actually is.

Our Clerk is a non-elected officer of the Parish, and is the appointed Responsible Financial Officer whose role it is to ensure Misson Parish Council conducts its business transparently and lawfully. During the period May 2024 until now, four different individuals have undertaken this role. Today, the post is vacant once again and recruitment is live. The slower frequency of Parish Council meetings together with the turbulence created by the interregnum periods without an appointed Clerk, have increased the workload of the elected Chair and Vice-Chair, and so I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr. Mark Watson for his support and friendship over this past twelve months.

With the splendid services of our excellent Lengthsmen and women, Misson Parish Council has been able to keep the local environment in good order. With the help of volunteers, the restoration of the church wall has also progressed. The collection of current elected members do not work easily as a cohesive whole, and I accept, legitimate challenge of what we do, whether internal or external challenge, is part of the democratic process and should serve to improve the service the Parish Council can deliver. On balance, we come to the end of this civic year in one piece, and I for one have learned much along the way.

The role of Parish Councillor is suited to anyone who is community minded enough to want to serve at this first tier of elected Government. In April 2027 the whole of this Parish Council stands down. I would encourage others to consider whether or not they would be prepared to stand for election when March 2027 comes around and it is time to declare interest.

