

September traditionally marks the beginning of a new year for all Town and Parish Councils and here in Beer the Councillors look forward to being able to serve all our residents to the best of our capabilities. The first meeting of the Parish Council was sadly marked with “two good byes”. The first to mention is our former Chairman Martin Richards. Martin has devoted over 25 years serving as a Councillor and his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed. It is widely known that his family has suffered tragic personal problems during the last two years or so and Martin felt that it was time to step back from public office and concentrate on looking after his family. Beer owes him a huge debt of gratitude as he has worked tirelessly during the last 25 years, being the longest standing Chairman and Councillor it has had. We wish him and all his family well and we thank him for all he has done for the village. He will be a very hard act to follow, but we feel sure that the person we have elected to be the new Chairman is up to that challenge. Tim Stevens has served as a Councillor for a number of years and as the new Chairman, Tim has already shown good leadership skills. Filling Martin’s shoes won’t be easy, but Tim has pledged to try his hardest to do so.

The second “good bye” was to our former Clerk Mrs Nicky Ingarfield. Nicky has served as our Parish Clerk for a number of years and she has given the village an exemplary service during that time, frequently going above and beyond her duties to ensure the smooth running of village matters. Nicky has been rewarded with promotion in her principal job and as a result she felt she was unable to continue to serve the village to the degree she has strived to do so throughout her term of office. We wish her well in her future and say a big thank you for all she has done. We are very pleased to warmly welcome our new Clerk Mrs Tess Nishino who took over from Nicky at the September meeting. Although being new to the role of a Parish Clerk, Tess has had experience in management circles and is keen to embrace her new challenge to the best of her ability.

During the first Parish Council meeting of the year, details of the forthcoming challenges facing Beer were highlighted. Good progress towards resolving the housing problems at Peasens Flats was reported by District Councillor John Heath. He told the meeting that work to improve the living conditions within the flats is now underway, following his lengthy negotiations with EDDC housing dept. He also reported that work has commenced to tackle the great number of deep potholes in the roads around Beer. Once favourable weather conditions allow, work on bringing the vast quantity of rock presently being stored at Falmouth, will commence and the sea defences along the coastline around Beer and Seaton will start.

Councillor Caroline Thompson (who has headed the re-formation of B.E.R.T. [Beer emergency response team] reported that the grant funding to purchase emergency equipment has been received and a meeting in November to organise all outstanding necessary preparation work, will follow. With the seemingly ever changing climatic conditions, Beer needs to be able to cope with emergency situations, such as flooding. Measures to protect both properties and ensure the use of all facilities in the village is necessary.

Councillor Simon Whitelock has agreed to head a proposed new survey of all the drains and gullies throughout the village, where the precise location and present condition of each will be recorded. There are numerous examples of these being blocked and unfit for purpose. During periods of heavy rainfall this situation will potentially cause flooding in many parts of the village. A closer working relationship with DCC will hopefully follow when the survey has been concluded.

Councillor Karen Stevens (together with Martin Richards) were praised by the rest of the Councillors for their extensive work in organising numerous visits to Beer by the offenders under the Community Pay-back Scheme. During 2025 groups of men have (under supervision) carried out ground clearing/grass cutting work in several parts of the village. This includes working on the Jubilee area and in the cemetery garden in Clapps Lane. Both Councillors have themselves given up a lot of their time and effort in arranging these visits. Further visits are being planned by them; so that Beer gets all the benefit and help it can from this government scheme. All their efforts are greatly appreciated by the Parish Councillors in keeping the village looking in a much tidier condition.

Work continues at a pace regarding the possible devastating consequences of any further loss of soil/rock at Common Lane. The present Councillors (following in the footsteps of previous Councillors) appreciate the dramatic impact that even the smallest amount of cliff fall at the narrowest part of Common Lane would have on the economic sustainability of the village as a whole. At its narrowest point there is only two metres of land remaining between the edge of the cliff and the roadway. Even the smallest further cliff fall will necessitate the immediate closure of Common Lane between its junctions at The Meadows and with Southdown Road, near the Coastguard station. The consequences of this would be to force a new detour route of almost a mile for all traffic and pedestrians wishing to get from the Beer head car park or Caravan Site down into the village! Discussions about what action could/should be taken to try to avoid further cliff erosion have been talked about for many years. These include prohibiting all vehicles using this stretch of Common Lane, or at the very least enforcing both a width and weight limit over the road. In essence, we are trying to be proactive to avoid another “Seaton Hole road closure” situation occurring here in Beer. Talks with Devon County Highways dept. and with our local MP member over this very serious concern, are scheduled. Further details of any progress will be reported later.

Councillor Simon Whitelock (who heads the negotiations on behalf of the Parish Council) with St Michael’s church and the Exeter Diocese of the Church of England regarding the Chapel of Rest in Clapps Lane) reported that work on the repairs to the roof are in hand and should commence soon. The Parish Council is only getting involved to try to preserve the existence of the building. It is not sponsoring the repairs and this remains the responsibility of the Church, who owns the building.

In other news concerning the beach; talks with EDDC, Beer Sailing Club and the beach café owners have commenced regarding the renewal of the present wooden walkway at the western side of the beach. It is proposed that this is removed and replaced with the same type of reconstituted plastic walkway which has already been laid on the eastern side of the beach. The life-span of the new material is thought to be much longer than the old wooden one, which is in a poor state. It has been noted that the amount of water flowing down Beer Brook onto the beach has increased even in the so-called dryer season. The fishermen in particular are worried about the stability of their boat winches caused by the increase in water flowing down and over the beach. A detailed inspection and survey to ascertain the cause and possible solutions, is underway.

The next Parish Council meeting is on Wednesday 8th October 2025 at 7.00 pm in the Mariners’ Hall. All residents of Beer are welcome to attend.

Cllr Martin Shobbrook