As always at our Annual Parish Meetings, I would like to report on the work this Parish Council has been doing on your behalf over the past twelve months. If you read the minutes of our meetings – and I know many parishioners do – you will know that we are dealing with a variety of local issues, some of which gain wider publicity while others are just dealt with as a matter of routine. It is however important to remember that we are all volunteers trying to achieve the best for our community and that we therefore rely on your support.

One large area of responsibility in which we have very little direct power but need to work closely with North Somerset Council is the management of our Streets and Open Spaces, which includes issues such as road repairs, traffic management, fly-tipping, litter removal, drains clearing and verge cutting.

The number of problem reports and complaints we receive from parishioners shows us how much they care about these aspects of our environment and I would like to reassure them that we are often just as frustrated as they are with lack of progress. Sometimes, there is no easy solution, such as dealing with fly-tipping but with other problems, such as the prolonged roadworks in Broadoak Hill, it is really a matter of continuously reminding NSC of the importance of such repairs.

While these are two particularly disappointing examples, we have generally established a good working relationship with our area officer and have been promised steady improvement despite the county's tight financial budget. However, we would like to encourage members of the public to continue reporting problems directly to North Somerset Council. This is most efficiently done via their Web site and area map so that their officers have a traceable record.

In other requests made to North Somerset, we managed to secure a sufficient number of grit bins in the area, we will have two extra litter bins installed in prominent locations and have been promised that our traditional finger posts are going to be refurbished.

With regards to traffic management, we have some major through roads in our parish which can be dangerous due to high traffic volumes and speeding. We are currently monitoring traffic speeds in Wells Road and Dundry Lane in order to gather evidence and to discuss permanent calming measures. The junction at the bottom of Dundry Lane is particularly dangerous and the situation is bound to get worse once the SBL will be open. We are campaigning for a speed reduction on our stretch of the A38. Currently, a limit of 50mph is considered, but we strongly believe this needs to be reduced further to 40mph.

Despite our relatively small precept (a financial statement will follow this report), Dundry Parish Council employs a village orderly who has been given a list of tasks to carry out around the parish. Following repeated complaints about the cleanliness of our roads, we have made additional funding available for him to do general clearing up where central services have fallen short. We also deposited litter pickers and high-visibility vests at several households in the area for everyone to use. In the spirit of previous Dundry Day events, we are even thinking of organising a village clean-up day this summer. A date has not been set yet, but watch this space!

A large part of our monthly meetings is taken up by planning matters. These include the usual private planning applications but also commenting on large projects such as the new Bristol Water Reservoir which had caused lots of discussion and controversy last year, as well as providing input into new legislation such as the North Somerset Core Strategy and taking part in centrally organised workshops.

In cases where planning regulations have been breached, we work with North Somerset Planning Enforcement Officers for appropriate action to be taken and acceptable solutions to be found.
In addition to these to major areas of activity, Dundry Parish Council is involved in various further projects for the benefit of our community of which I just want to briefly mention a few:

Despite being so close to the City of Bristol, there is very little prospect of Dundry being connected to appropriate Internet speeds in this digital age. This is why Dundry Parish Council has taken the lead and formed an action group with other interested parishioners to look for alternative solutions. Later today, we will hear their assessment of the situation and suggestions to discuss.

After taking ownership of our community Web site in 2013, we continue to develop this facility as a central communication tool. In my second capacity as the Dundry Webmaster, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you to sign up to our free weekly e-mail newsletter, which is the easiest way to keep up-to-date with what is going on locally.

Last year, there was much discussion among our residents whether it would be a good idea to install and maintain a defibrillator in the village. We have come to the conclusion that this was probably not the most efficient way to save lives in our location and, in a different approach, organised a “Heartstart” first aid course to get as many people as possible trained up in the necessary skills. This proved to be so popular that we decided to organise a repeat event this year.

Following the closure of many youth centres throughout North Somerset - due to budget cuts - some of the funding has been re-allocated to local initiatives. Our clerk Judith Hoskin, together with local councillor Hugh Gregor, has been a driving force behind a project called “Forward Activities”, organising regular, exiting events for young people in Dundry, Winford, Regil and Felton.

We work closely with various local organisations within our parish to support them in their voluntary work. This year, I would especially like to mention the Village Hall Committee, the Sports and Social Club, Dundry Pre-School and St. Michael’s Church.

In the wider North Somerset area, we are involved in the Parish Councils Airport Association, the Chew Medical Practice - Patient Reference Group, the Chew Valley Patient Transport Scheme and the Tree Warden Scheme, just to name a few.

We would not be able to do our work without outside help and support. Most notably, we would like to thank our police officers, whose report we have just heard and our local Councillor Hugh Gregor who was always at hand to give us helpful advice and raise issues on our behalf at North Somerset Council.

We are currently in the run-up to local and national elections. As a result of last year’s re-organisation of electoral wards, the parishes of Flax Bourton and Barrow Gurney have joined our ward (which by the way, was always our preferred option but took long and hard discussions to achieve). We expect to develop closer ties with our neighbours in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors and our clerk for their continued good work and especially for the spirit in which we work together: constructive, sometimes controversial – but always as a team aiming for the best. I feel honoured that I will be able to represent our parish at the Royal Garden Party in two weeks time and, of course, I am looking forward to all the challenges and achievements that lie ahead of us in the coming year.

Holger Laux
Chairman
Dundry Parish Council