

Annual Parish Meeting 12/05/25 – PC Chairman's Report

Another year has passed and it is time to report on the work Dundry Parish Council has done on your behalf.

Apart from our regular tasks, such as looking after our assets (mainly the playground and the notice boards, both of which need ongoing investment), commenting on planning applications, answering residents' enquiries, pushing for road repairs (which thankfully are speeding up due to increased government funding, although the major subsidence on Dundry Lane will still need a couple of years and substantial ground works to fix), our parish is facing a number of external challenges that will have a considerable impact on our community. This is why I would like to focus my report on these issues:

Bristol Airport, which is expected to reach a throughput of 10mppa this year and then the already approved 12mppa by 2027/28, is now planning for further growth to 15 or even 20mppa by 2040. As we all know, this will have major implications on traffic, the environment, noise pollution and other areas. However, given the government's stance on growth, and on transport in particular, we are under no illusion that this is not going to happen. Our best option is to make sure any negative impacts are properly mitigated. DPC is following and commenting on all relevant consultations and planning applications and the main point we keep repeating is that before any further expansion plans can be approved, there must be substantial improvements to the supporting infrastructure, such as a mass transport system, for instance. We would like to see this pro-actively addressed rather than applying quick fixes for the fallout after such growth happens. To make ourselves heard, we are working closely with neighbouring parishes within the PCAA.

Another area where we will come under external pressure is the fact that the government has increased the number of new houses that NSC must provide within the next 10 years. The district is simply running out of space where to build these houses. This means that the area known as Ashton Vale has come under serious consideration yet again. For the past 15 years, we were successfully able to resist several development plans and to save this Green Belt land for future generations. However, this is now very unlikely to be possible again. A commercial site for a company called EPIC has already been approved near the ring road, close to Long Ashton, and there are now initial plans for the development of a new village on and around Woodspring Golf Course, part of which will be within the Dundry Parish boundaries, encroaching on our rural location. We are encouraged to hear that NSC regrets this necessity and will do what ever it can to manage the impact, for instance by keeping a clear separation between settlements through preserved green spaces.

These plans also made us realise that we need to find greater leverage to have our say in such developments. The means to do so is to have a neighbourhood plan which the government and local authorities must take into consideration in their planning decisions. We have not done a Neighbourhood Plan in the past because it is a substantial undertaking involving a lot of paperwork. There did not seem to be an urgent need to take this on, but now such a need has arisen and thankfully Cllr. Jane Fowles has taken the lead on this project. However she needs more help to form a committee and any volunteers from the community would be very welcome.

NSC is currently also under severe financial pressure. With 80% of its budget being tied up in statutory expenses (such as social care) over which the authority has no control, they find it increasingly hard to meet all other expenses and to fulfil service obligations. This is why there are plans to hand over some essential services to town and parish councils. They could include street cleaning, maintaining footpaths, playground inspections etc. In order to be prepared for the future, DPC has decided to increase its precept this year by 40% percent. Within your overall council tax

bill, it still represents only a very small proportion of just £50 annually for an average property and it does not mean that we will suddenly go on a spending spree. Any expenditure is fully justified, approved by this council and properly documented. As we have done for some time, our monthly budget report is published in the document section of our Web site for everyone to scrutinise. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our clerk.

Over the past few years, Dundry Village Hall has made several great investments and improvements to the facility and it is hoped that the village will make good use of it. However, the Hall Committee alerted us to the fact that it was running short of trustees needed to run it as a charity. Without more people coming forward, this hall would have been in danger of closing down. DPC has made the decision to step in and become a corporate trustee. It means that the hall committee can carry on doing their great work, but DPC will ultimately be responsible for strategic decisions and oversight. While it involves more work for our councillors, keeping this community hub alive is something very close to our hearts.

For many years, Dundry has had its own Web site, but it was starting to show its age and had become increasingly difficult to manage. Over the past few weeks, we have made the effort to relaunch it in a new design and managed to do so in a cost-efficient way. This is still work in progress and if you feel something should be added, please get in touch. We hope you will enjoy this renewed information resource.

All this work would not be possible without the knowledge and dedication of our councillors and our parish clerk and I would like to thank all of them for being such a good team. We recently welcomed Jake Hewins as a new councillor but we still have two vacancies to reach our full number. I would encourage anyone interested to come forward and help us. Being a councillor is not a full-time job and it is not being paid, but it certainly is a rewarding experience.

I would also like to thank our district councillor Annemieke Waite for being so helpful in many ways and being vocal within NSC on behalf of Dundry.

Our village has many further organisations and volunteers who are doing their best to make it such a pleasant place to live. I would like to finish by saying that whatever you do, it is much appreciated and it does make a difference to our community. Thank you all very much!

I hope we will keep working together and I look forward to another successful year for Dundry.

Holger Laux
Chair
Dundry Parish Council