

Summing up the council's year is not an easy thing to do. Almost everything we do is in public, so, theoretically, at least, you all know it all already. Putting things on the internet, however, satisfies the government but does nothing for people here with broadband speeds measured in the hundreds rather than the tens of thousands. We have, however, been led to believe that things should improve this year, and I hope this will benefit the many small businesses in the villages and, indeed, all residents.

So, what *has* happened in the council? I am, firstly, very pleased to be able to report that our numbers have grown, and we are now just one short of a full complement of councillors. My thanks, and a big welcome, go to Jo Cocks, Chris Sadler, and Dean Forbes, who have joined us this year: I look forward to working with them for the benefit of the whole community.

This year, with quite remarkable speed for the lumbering giant that is local government, we have installed a defibrillator on the outside of the Village Hall. This was achieved thanks, in no small part, to donations by parishioners, and with the cooperation of the Village Hall Management Committee.

Government are forever changing the rules, and occasionally, things work in our favour. There used to be a mechanism, commonly called Section 106, under which developers could effectively bribe communities to accept development – this was how we got the Village Green. It has now been replaced by a more formal structured system of Community Infrastructure Levy payments, and it was such a payment related to the development at The Maltings that provided the money for the council to underwrite the costs, and be able to make up the shortfall.

When minutes can make the difference between living and dying, having a Public Access Defibrillator in the village can, quite literally, be a life saver. If any of you happen to be unlucky enough to suffer a heart attack, we hope it can help.

The defibrillator was officially unveiled during an interval between downpours on what may have been the wettest day of the year. The weather, however, did not spare parishioners later that same day as they gathered on The Green for the switching on of the new Christmas lights, which, unfortunately, did not happen due to an electrical fault. Everybody did, however, I hope, enjoy the mince pies and mulled wine inside the village hall.

It's always nice to get compliments and, after the problem was fixed, the next day, several parishioners commented that the tree was the best the village had had for some years.

Life is not, of course, all roses, and we do get problems reported to us. Unfortunately, perhaps, they never seem to change very much. We want you to live in a safe and pleasant environment, and to be able to take pride in your community. To this end we ask that you all show a little respect for your neighbours: drive slowly through the village, don't ride horses on rural footpaths, take your litter home, clean up after your dogs, little things that can make a big difference. If everybody does the right thing, everybody wins.

I, and the other councillors, are always available to parishioners, and our contact details should be in The Grapevine and on the web. Several of you have contacted me personally over the year and, although often about problems, I am very grateful for the many kind words I have received. Looking forward, I'm sure I will continue to make mistakes but hope that we can all continue to serve you to the best of our abilities.

*Tony Jollans. May 2016.*