The Parish Council has had another successful year. Together we have worked to overcome the problems resulting from the Government’s ongoing austerity measures.

I thank my fellow Councillors for all the hard work they have done – particularly in the community – working together for the good of Braunton.

The Parish Council finances remain on a very sound basis in spite of increasing responsibilities. Yet again, the precept (Braunton Parish Council’s share of the Council Tax), has not been increased. Neither has there been any increase at all in our car parking charges. Probably we are unique in this throughout the Country!

The ongoing improvements at the Countryside Centre have been supported by our Council. The Parish gave a grant of £10,000 to the North Devon Environmental Trust towards the building improvements. We also successfully secured £4,937 TAP (Town & Parish Council Funding) towards creating a community shared space at the front of the Countryside Centre which can be used by local voluntary organisations and charities.

Yet again, during the financial year, we experienced flooding - particularly in Caen Street but also in Wrafton and other areas. This helped to trigger the funding for the gravity drainage/flood improvement scheme in Caen Street, of which the first stage has now been completed with the pumping station works due to start in September.

Braunton has an excellent Community Emergency Plan which was compiled by the Parish Council and community. Special thanks go to Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) who continues to work with the Council to improve the Plan. A particular thanks to Ben Byrom.

The purchase of the Police Station – thanks in part to the covenant – was a good deal and sealed with the promise of a local Police presence in the village for at least the next 15 years.

For the remainder of the building, the Parish Council has been successful in securing £19,382.50 from Devon County Council Work Hub Funding.

Braunton Parish Council worked in partnership with the 3 primary schools to run a competition for the children to design a sign encouraging people to clean up after their dogs. 61 signs were funded by the Parish Council and Christie Estates and have been put up all over the village.

The Parish Council have installed new dog waste bins at Moor Lea and Tarka Trail, Knowle.

The Braunton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was formed at a public meeting held in August 2016 and is making good progress.

The Council have carried out its own air quality monitoring since last August by placing diffusion tubes in Caen Street and on The Square – a particular thanks to Brad Bunyard.

The Parish Council have secured a 21 year opt-in lease from North Devon Council for the Mowstead Play Area securing it for the enjoyment of residents for the foreseeable future.

We have managed to secure some funding to upgrade play equipment and will be consulting with the public over the next couple of months.

The Council purchased the DCC Highway Depot at Stoney Bridge. This is proving to be invaluable as we have taken on the maintenance of the County Council’s urban grass verges – approximately 32,000 square metres throughout the Parish.

The depot was also used to help Knowle Community Group to clear the County Council vegetation that had encroached onto pedestrian pavements. The Parish Council helped to make the project successful by securing £1,800 funding towards the clearance cost and the Knowle Community Group will now fund a new “Welcome to Knowle” sign.

We have also worked with Knowle Community Group to install a defibrillator in the “adopted” Knowle telephone box and also improve safety for children at Knowle Play Park.

We have also resurfaced Chaloners Road Play Park.

Another excellent Christmas Market took place in the car park on Saturday 3rd December.

RMB Chivenor – at the invitation of our MP we met with Sir Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence. We have been working closely with other Councils.

We have played our part in fighting the NHS cuts and held a public meeting in November which was attended by Laura Nicholas, Director of Strategy for the Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group. The Council held a further public meeting in March with Dr Alison Diamond.

For safety reasons, the poplar trees by the river have been professionally reduced and will now be managed on an ongoing basis.

We have installed a new “heritage” street lamp in Caen Street Car Park.

The Council secured funding from the AONB, Tarka Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust Bat Project for a Greater Horseshoe Bat viewing platform and interpretation boards which is now installed and available for the public to use.

This financial year, the Council has awarded grants totalling £6,400 to several local organisations.

The Trustees and volunteers of the Braunton Museum & Information Centre have some excellent plans to improve the building and offer new exhibitions. The Council fully supports the Museum.

The Council is in the process of re-writing its 10 year Parish Plan. During the autumn it carried out a Community Needs Survey which had an excellent response – 338 (6%) of the community taking part.

This year has seen great improvement in communication using social media i.e. Facebook and Twitter and also using EX33 to publish the Braunton Express each month.

During the year, for personal reasons, two of our Councillors (Katy Beardshall and Wayne Withey) left us. We thank them for their support and we wish them well for the future. We welcome our new Councillor, Trish Parsons.

I thank our Clerk, Tracey Lovell and all the staff for their hard work and commitment through the year – they provide a truly invaluable service.

I thank my Vice Chair, Brad, for both his support and considerable enthusiasm and again, I thank my fellow Councillors.

Councillor Derrick Spear

Chair