The local Parish Council Election 2015 resulted in 6 new members. Together we have met the challenges facing all local government authorities due to the Government’s ongoing austerity measures. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for the hard work they have done – not only in the Council Chamber but in the community itself – working together with volunteer groups for the good of Braunton.

The Parish Council finances remain on a very sound basis in spite of increasing demands. 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 County. Again, there was free car parking on the two Saturdays leading up to Christmas. In addition we provided lights on the village green tree and on the Parish Hall.

Parish Grants – during the year we awarded £5,600 to local organisations. In addition to this, following Devon County Council’s decision to cut their youth services, the Council gave a grant of £3,500 to the Braunton Youth Club.

With the flooding events of 2012 very much ever in our minds, we have continued to work closely with the Environment Agency, the County Council and local volunteers – monitoring and managing the River Caen and carrying out improvements to reduce flood risk. It is a monthly item on our Parish Council Agenda. Only very recently, the Parish met with our new MP together with the Environment Agency.

June 2015 saw the annual review of our Community Emergency Plan. It was updated and the revised Plan published on the Council’s website.

Devon County Council Flood Risk Team has been working with Jacobs with a view to installing a static high volume pump in Caen Street, investigating work is still ongoing.

The Senior Lecturer at the University of Salford carried out a study “SME (Small Medium Enterprises) Engagement” to investigate resilience against flooding: The Braunton Study was presented to the Parish Council and the local business community.

The Environment Agency provided a sandbagging demonstration in Caen Street Overflow Car Park in October 2015.

In November, we received a presentation from Andy Bell of the North Devon Biosphere Reserve who confirmed that at last the Shoreline Management Plan has been signed off. We are currently arranging a follow up meeting.

The negotiations with the Police & Crime Commissioner for the purchase of the Police Station, with arrangements for a continued Police presence in Braunton, are nearing completion. This should be a win-win situation. This success is against a backcloth of Police Stations closing in other areas.

We very much welcome the community initiatives in Clean for the Queen campaign involving both Councillors and residents in cleaning and clearing up hotspots in the village.

We are currently tackling the much vexed issue of dog fouling. Currently we provide 8 dog bins including a new one installed in Knowle last month. We are working with local schools to design signs to encourage people to pick up after their dogs and dispose of it responsibly. Rotary have offered to judge the entries from the schools.

The Council is constantly improving how it engages with the local community and this year it has set up social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook.

Improvements and enhancements to Velator Quay are now complete including the installation of picnic benches, litter bins and information boards.

Devon County Council grass verges consist of more than 32,136 sq m in the village. After protracted negotiations we have secured funding to provide six full cuts this year. It has radically changed the appearance of the village.

Following a further decrease in Devon County Council services, we have also managed to obtain a grant from the Town & Parish Fund - to purchase equipment to enable us to carry out annual weed clearance in the village.

Air Quality Management – of much concern to our Council. The District Council is responsible for an Air Quality Management Plan and of course it falls to the County Council to implement it. In spite of repeated representations, we still have no clear understanding of when and what actions are going to be taken. This must be a priority for this Council in the coming year.

The first North Devon & Braunton Christmas Market was held in Caen Street Car Park on Friday 4th December 2015. This was judged to be a great success, raising money for various charities. Lessons have been learnt and the agreed date for this year’s market is Saturday 3rd December.

Ongoing maintenance to Parish buildings includes the painting of the exterior of the Parish Hall and improvements to the internal lighting.

I thank my Vice Chairman, Brad Bunyard, for his support both to me and the Council - and again I thank my fellow Councillors.

Councillor Derrick Spear

Chairman