

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

(Covering period of May 2019 until April 2020)

### **Council Elections 2019**

15 local residents put themselves forward to become Parish Councillors for the next 4 year period, as there are only 12 places available an election was called.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> May the successful candidates were named as **Alan Bailey, Kath Evans, Dennis Holman; Howard Jennings; Mike Johnson; Brian Kerr; Rachel Lowe; Lynda Rutter; Jeanne Storrar; Andrew Warrington; Jenny Young** and **Peter Young**.

We thank the candidates who were not successful on this occasion but their participation in this important selection event is much appreciated.

Particular mention should be made of **Brian Kerr** who has completed his 40<sup>th</sup> year of service to the Parish Council and **Andrew Warrington** who is close on his heels at 38 years.

A particular welcome to our three new members **Kath Evans, Rachel Lowe** and **Lynda Rutter** and to our new Cheshire West & Chester Borough Council (CWaC) member **Simon Eardley**

Finally our thanks go to our retiring members **Anna Manning, Dean Taylor-Pogue, Jan Knox** and **Councillor Brian Crowe** (CWaC) who stood down at the election, we thank them for their contribution and wish them well for their future

### **Rewilding of Saughall.**

In July we were invited to a discussion with Mr and Mrs Greensill of The Old Vicarage, Church Road, Saughall who wanted to purchase 550 acres of farm land from CWaC, part of Shotwick Park Estate in order to pursue a project relating to the re-wilding of Saughall.

The Council are supportive of this project and have facilitated public consultation meetings in December 2019 with Lex Greensill, Mike Challinor, the Estate Manager and Saughall residents. The meetings were oversubscribed, such was the interest, it was noted that the meetings had been well attended and there was enthusiasm for the proposal for Shotwick Park in the village.

The Council wrote to the Chief Executive of CWaC to inform him that the Parish Council were supportive of the project and looks forward to working in partnership with the Principal Authority with the important aim of protecting the green belt for the benefit of local people now and in future years.

Discussion are ongoing between Lex and CWaC regarding the purchase of the land at Shotwick Park.

### **Planning**

One of the Council's aims is to encourage the planning authority, CWaC, to support sensible development while maintaining the openness of the green belt. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications within the parish. We have, this year, considered over 30 applications, up from 20 last year. We have expressed concerns over 6 of these but have offered no objections to the majority.

### **Policing**

We receive reports of crime and anti-social behaviour at our monthly meetings, sometimes in person by Constable **Rob Brown** or PCSO **Wendy Leason** and are grateful for their support

and guidance our especial good wishes for the future go to the Rob who retires from the Police Service after 29 years of service in April 2020.

### **Golden Jubilee Park**

We report year on year the improvement that we are making to this important facility and this report is no exception, it was with great pleasure that in May 2020 the Lord Mayor of Chester officially opened the new BMX Track. Projects to replace the surface of the car park and install a footpath/ cycle path around the perimeter are on the agenda for the next financial year.

### **School Buses**

It was with great concern when the Council heard of CWAC removal of the dedicated school bus services to both Upton High and Bishops school after the Easter break in 2019, our Borough Councillor Simon Eardley and Councillors from the Parish Council along with some parents from Saughall made strong representation to CWAC for the re-instatement of these vital services for the community. It is understood that they were withdrawn as the services were no longer viable, this was brought about partly because children from Blacon were using the normal service buses which were cheaper and more convenient. This is not the case for children from Saughall who only have limited bus services to use. Many meetings and discussions were held with CWAC and the bus companies during the year with little progress towards a re-instatement, but alterations were affected to bus times and capacity that may ease the situation slightly. We will keep up the pressure on this important issue.

### **Grass Cutting**

The Council became concerned during the summer months that CWAC were not cutting the grassed areas of the village every three weeks as stated in their policy, we calculated that only 5 of the scheduled 13 cuts actually took place. CWAC blamed weather conditions but maintained that they completed 8 cuts during the season. The Council looked at the possibility of taking this responsibility away from CWAC and arranging our own contractors, unfortunately although CWAC would allow the Council to do this they would not release any finance to pay for the service. We took the views that this would not be viable so instead we will keep up pressure on CWAC to do the job properly in 2020.

### **Traffic Management**

We continue to be concerned about the speed and manner of driving through the village and our working groups have been engaging with the Highways department of CWAC as to the purchase and siting of the speed detection equipment in the area, this has all now been agreed and we await delivery of the equipment as soon as possible. This is not the full answer to the perceived bad driving of some drivers and further measures are being considered for the future including altering speed limits and the installation of additional crossing points near to the Golden Jubilee Park

### **Housing Survey**

Last year we reported that we would be working with CWAC to obtain funding to build some affordable housing on a site near Thomas Wedge Close. For this to happen we had to demonstrate the need for such housing with a housing survey being delivered to every house in the village. This exercise was completed with 1,280 copies delivered, collection points in the villages were organised plus an on-line facility was also available. It was with great disappointment when we only received 168 completed surveys, (13%) We can only

conclude that there is no housing needs in Saughall, but at the time of this report we are awaiting the official report from CWAC

### **Flooding Issues**

2019 was one of the wettest years on record and the existing flooding issues that were affecting properties in Willow Hey and Fairholme Close were even worse than in any other year so far. Simon Eardley has arranged various meetings, chaired by Chester MP Christian Matheson, with all parties concerned and although no permanent solution is in sight, a temporary fix was put in place in December 2019 whereby the flood waters from the fields were diverted into a drain adjacent to Rakeway and Willow Hey and this appears to have solved the problem, but we await a permanent solution for CWAC, Morris Homes and Welsh Water.

### **Finance**

At the budget meeting in January the Council agreed a budget for the year 2020/21 of £95,688. This means that the Council will require from CWaC, a precept of £63,379.

The resulting precept on each Band D equivalent property was £58.05 per annum (£1.11 per week, per household).

The full budget can be accessed via the Council website at [www.saughall.gov.uk](http://www.saughall.gov.uk)

### **Covid-19**

The effects of this pandemic have been felt in all walks of life, the Parish Council like all local authority bodies went into lock-down on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and therefore all meetings were cancelled. It is hoped that in the near future some service will resume with the possibility of Parish Council meetings being held via the internet, please watch our web site for further information.

### **Conclusion**

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their input, hard work and advice to ensure the Council does the best it can for Parishioners. We have successfully completed and discharged all our duties while remaining financially sound. As you can see from the Report the Council has had a busy year.

Members do this on a purely voluntary basis. Thank you to **Simon Eardley** our CWaC ward Councillor for all his hard work, keeping us up to date with what is happening at Borough level.

Thanks to **Helen Cakebread** for her work as our Tree and Environmental Warden, also our internal auditor **David Glavin**. Last but not least thank you to our Parish Clerk, **Shirley Hudspeth** and our Responsible Financial Office **Graham Hudspeth** for their work and support during the year.

**Parish Councillors: (Chairman, Alan Bailey, Vice Chairman**

## **Peter Young)**

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