

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

(Covering period of May 2020 until April 2021)

The global Coronavirus Pandemic meant that the normal monthly meetings of the Parish Council were suspended until a one-off virtual meeting in June 2020 and then regular monthly virtual meetings from September; this online format continued until the end of the period covered by this report. All external events including Remembrance Sunday and the Annual Christmas Lights Switch-on were also cancelled.

The past 12 months have shown all of us that nothing will be the same again. Our whole lives have been turned upside down by the global pandemic and the old 'normal' has been left far behind.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NHS Staff, Key Workers, everyone in the community who has given their time to help out in any way, be that by delivering food and provisions, speaking to people on the phone, organising Covid safe village events, picking up other people's litter. You have all made Saughall a village to be proud of, thank you!

In Memoriam.

Brian Crowe

Honorary Alderman Brian Crowe passed away in January 2021 following an accident at his home address. Brian had given considerable service to the local community in his capacity as the local elected representative on Cheshire West & Chester Borough Council and Chester City Council.

He had been a former Lord Mayor of Chester and his service had been recognised on his retirement in 2019 when the title of Honorary Alderman of the Borough had been conferred on him. He will be sadly missed.

Jean Johnson and Colin Moss.

Jean Johnson, member of the Parish Council for 12 years between 2003 – 14 and Colin Moss for 6 years between 2002 – 07. Both worked tirelessly for the Council and will be sadly missed by all who had known them.

Shotwick Park Project.

In February 2021 Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWaC) agreed to the sale of 550 acres of farm land in Shotwick Park to Mr and Mrs Greensill of The Old Vicarage, Church Road, Saughall. At the time of publication this project is ongoing with a completion date of late Summer 2021.

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 18 applications, down from 30 last year. We have expressed concerns over two of these but have offered no objections to the majority.

Policing

During this year we have said goodbye to Constable **Rob Brown** who retired from the Police service and who was replaced by Constable **Hannah Forrest**. Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) **Wendy Leason** has been 'shielding' throughout the pandemic and her role

on the Saughall beat was filled by PCSO **Tony Icke**; we are grateful for their support and guidance during the year.

Golden Jubilee Park

Projects to examine the current drainage to improve its efficiency, to replace the surface of the car park and to install a footpath / cycle path around the perimeter are all on the agenda for the next financial year. We will also examine the possibility of installing outdoor gym equipment.

Dog Walking in the Park.

Traditionally there have been 'No Dogs' notices on display in the park area, however the legality of this ban has been challenged and has now been fully investigated by the Council.

The current legislation is the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) formed part of the provisions of the Act.

The result was that 'No Dogs' Orders had been placed on fully enclosed Children's play areas and Multi-Use Games Areas only. Therefore in the rest of Golden Jubilee Park, which was deemed as a public space, there is no way that the Parish Council could prevent people from walking their dogs, on or off the lead but recommends, for the health and safety of the young children using the facility, that dog owners find alternative walks, possibly using the twelve miles of public footpaths around the village.

CCTV Cameras

These were installed for Crime prevention and public safety purposes mounted onto the outside of the Uniformed Groups Headquarters with the ability to record from three separate cameras covering the Young Children Playground, the majority of the Multi-Use Games Area and the rear of the HQ building. A full CCTV Policy has been agreed and is reviewed on an annual basis.

VE / VJ commemoration

It was decided to plant 5 semi mature oak trees on the park as a permanent memorial to celebrate both Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan, there will also be a commemorative plaque erected on the planting site.

Lighting of the exterior of the Vernon Institute and Clock Tower.

As part of the Annual Remembrance Day celebrations, that had to be cancelled this year, the Council decided to illuminate the exterior with a series of colour-changing lights.

Normally it will remain as white but during November it was lit in red. This project cost £4,300

Traffic Management

We continue to be concerned about the speed and manner of driving through the village.

The Council has been in discussion with the Highways department of CWAC during the year and agreement has been reached to purchase and site three Speed Indicator Devices on the main road into the village in Sea Hill Road, Church Road and Hermitage Road. We await delivery of the equipment.

The total cost of these three devices is £17,888 which has been equally funded by the Parish Council and CWaC. Our portion of £8,944 has been reduced by contributions from the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This is from a fund, developed using money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and redistributed to Road Safety

projects throughout the County. Simon Eardley has also committed £1,500 from his 'Member Budget' which brings down the Parish Council's contribution to £6,444

These Speed Indicator devices are not the full answer to the bad behaviour of some drivers and further measures are being considered for the future including the installation of an additional pedestrian crossing point near to the Golden Jubilee Park.

Flooding Issues

For many years we have reported floods affecting properties in Willow Hey and Fairholme Close. A temporary fix was installed in December 2019 whereby the flood waters from the fields at the rear of the properties were diverted via a new pipe into a drain adjacent to Rakeway and Willow Hey.

Even with the heavy rains this last year this appears to have eased the problems.

Storm Christoph.

Between the 18-20th January 2021 North Wales and the NW of England was hit with an exceptional storm with up to 100mm (4 inches) of rain throughout the region; this was the wettest three-day period on Met Office records.

In the parish we had our own problems, with all access roads flooded and impassable for a few hours, roads, gardens and some houses affected by flood water and I would like to put it on record our appreciation of the many residents who rallied around, attempting to unblock grids and drains, assisting householders and sandbagging some properties, a sterling effort by all.

CWaC did attend after many online reports but were severely stretched and it was the residents who were the saviours in many cases. The Council will be taking an active role to contact all land owners to ensure that their ditches and culverts are properly maintained in the future.

Council Membership

Rachel Lowe had served on the Council since 2019 and has now moved home to Upton in October 2020 and we thank her for all the work she has done for the village, both on the Parish Council and for the Vernon Institute.

It is Council's policy to invite the unsuccessful candidate with the most votes at the last Parish Council Election to be co-opted onto the Council to fill any casual vacancy that arises. Therefore **Marc Hallows** was invited to fill the vacancy, he accepted and he took his place 'Virtually' in December 2020.

Finance

At the budget meeting in January the Council agreed a budget for the year 2021/22 of £74,088. This means that the Council will require from CWaC, a precept of £65,436.

The resulting precept on each Band D equivalent property was £58.29 per annum, (£1.11 per week, per household) an increase of 0.4%

The full budget can be accessed via the Council website at www.saughall.gov.uk

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. Members do this on a purely voluntary basis.

As you can see from the report, despite the pandemic, the Council has had a busy year.

Thank you to **Simon Eardley** our ward Councillor, elected in 2019 on the retirement of Brian Crowe, to represent Saughall & Mollington ward on Cheshire West & Chester Council, for all his hard work, he works tirelessly to support the Council and all of our residents, keeping us up to date and canvassing officers of CWaC on our behalf.

Many thanks go to **Helen Cakebread** for her work as our Tree and Environmental Warden, to **Amy Dutton, Brian Huxley** and **Sue Harris** members of the Golden Jubilee Park Working Group, **Richard Nicholas** member of the Highways Group, to **Anna Manning** for editing our quarterly newsletter, to our internal auditor **David Glavin**, who after 6 years of service has decided to hang up his quill and retire from this role and last but not least, to our Parish Clerk, **Shirley Hudspeth** and our Responsible Financial Office **Graham Hudspeth** for their work and support during the year.