

Parish Council report 21-22

Last year's APM took place just after the Parish Council Elections, and saw us short of two councillors, so I'd just like to start by welcoming Julian and Chris to the Council, and thanking them for offering themselves for co-option.

Covid has remained a feature of the last 12 months, but from June onwards we have been having or meetings here in the Parish Hall, with the exception of December when due to a spike in infections locally, and there being no particularly urgent business on the agenda, it was decided to cancel.

As with every APM (and every monthly Parish Council meeting!), the state of our roads is one of the most discussed topics. This year we have included an item on the agenda specifically to cover this, and Cllr Tomkinson will be giving a report on that subject shortly.

The Broadband here at the Hall seems to be working well, and is certainly a valuable asset for those of us who have moved into the digital age. I am still trying to achieve that myself, though not always succeeding! The whole project stemmed from the need to comply with the Transparency Code, as well as reducing the amount of paper used at meetings. We are still hoping to shortly be installing a large smart screen here in the hall that will allow us to do this. It will also allow, for example, people to attend our meetings remotely thus removing the need for someone to travel all the way from Shrewsbury to spend just half an hour with us. We also hope it will be an added attraction for hirers of the Parish Hall, for business presentations, or illustrated talks.

At the July meeting, we had a visit from two Police Community Support Officers. although they informed us that we are lucky enough to be living in a low crime area, it doesn't always feel like it. The Crime Watch Whatsapp group is however still working well when it is needed, and thanks must go mainly to Cllr Sales for that.

July also saw a work party at Pike common, where we cleared brambles, nettles, docks and willow herb 6 feet tall. Subsequently it was mowed a couple of times and now seems to be under a bit more control. Earlier this year there were snowdrops and daffodils growing - they had probably been there all along but you just couldn't see them. We remain concerned about the state of the bank on the other side of the river, but despite our best efforts, it seems we can't get much done about it.

Improvements to the Ford area are still awaiting progress, and we are assured that something will be done, but we are frustrated that our local knowledge of the problems, and the best solutions, are being ignored in favour of those of the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and Shropshire Council Highways.

At the February meeting we had a visit from Pete Blackburn who is the chair of the Steering Group for the Cleobury Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan. He was invited because we had become aware that Cleobury had possibly been looking at some areas of Neen Savage for housing developments. He was able to reassure us that an area of land by the cemetery to the west of Cleobury was now the most likely option for the next 15 to 20 years.

For the last six months a working group comprising Mike Hurley, and Cllrs Tomkinson, Cleford and Hardy have been reviewing the Community Led Plan for the parish which was produced in 2014. Chris will be covering that in item 10 on the agenda tonight.

Bringing you right up to date, to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Parish Council have installed a bench and a tree on the Green Lane, close to where there was a bench in the past. The bench is solid steel and the tree is a Horse Chestnut, both of which should be there for many years. The bench is well bolted down, but as we have seen when one of the picnic benches was stolen from Six Ashes recently, a cordless angle grinder can make pretty short work of any bolt!

I am sure he will be mentioned in Clare's report later, but I would just like to remember Andy Vanderhook who very sadly died in March. Andy had served on the Parish Council for 16 years, only stepping down 12 months ago. His drive, his understanding of all matters planning and otherwise and his considered opinions will be greatly missed.

I would just like to finish by thanking Dorothy for all her hard work as Clerk, and also to thank all my fellow councillors, who seem to me to have gelled into an efficient team who are all prepared to contribute to the benefit of the parish.