

Christleton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2023

Introduction

From the Chairman's perspective, at least, 2022-2023 started normally and moved to a situation where there are what might be described as existential challenges to the future of our community.

Membership

Councillor Damian Murphy resigned due to pressure of work. There was no time to replace him before the May 2023 elections. The remaining nine councillors all stood for election and were unopposed. Seeking to co-opt someone to fill the vacancy is going to be an early priority.

Council in 2022-2023

Post-Covid recovery was effectively completed when we were able to hold an Open Morning in October 2022. Although in the autumn rather than the spring, it was well attended and provided a useful opportunity to showcase the work of the Parish Council and various community groups.

Achievements

There have been three major strands to the Parish Council's work in the past year.

The perennial problems of traffic never go away, though the focus this year shifted a little away from the village centre. There was an accident in August 2022 at the Plough Lane and Rake Lane junction in which a cyclist lost his life. Working in conjunction with Waverton Parish Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, discussions were held for improvements to the safety of that junction, and a number of plans are in place. The Parish Council has agreed to fund the installation of Vehicle Activated Warning Signs, which should be done shortly.

The focus on speeding has mainly been on the A41. The problems with Heavy Goods Vehicles using the A41 as a shortcut between the Midlands and the A55 to Holyhead and thence Ireland (instead of routing on the motorways) stubbornly persist. Although the Police seem to be using speed camera vans less frequently, following pressure from the Parish Council and A41 residents, proposals are in place to put average speed cameras along appropriate stretches of the road. Unfortunately, this initiative alone will do nothing for

slow moving and stationary traffic at peak times which are the cause of traffic cutting through the centre of Christleton. Congestion on the A41 at the Hamburger roundabout has been joined by further congestion at Littleton following the road-widening works further along the A51. The A51-A55 roundabout was scheduled for improvements but the new management at CWAC have no current plans to make the necessary improvements required to prevent traffic backing up on to the A55, along the A51 in Littleton and traffic cutting through Christleton. We and Littleton Parish Council continue to press for the necessary improvements.

The issue that has come most sharply into focus, though, is air pollution, particularly along the A41 and A 51, and particularly with the ultrafine particles known as PM2.5. As medical research is revealing an ever-increasing list of health issues caused by these particles, air quality monitoring by and on behalf of the Parish Council has shown that the levels around these two roads are far in excess of the current safety standards, let alone those that are being proposed to replace them. This is something that the Parish Council is working hard on, and is likely to be doing so for a long time to come.

As noted last year, the redevelopment of the University of Law site was given planning permission. The Parish Council has worked with the developer to minimise the impact of the construction process on the community.

The proposal to build a retirement village on the Beechmoor Nursery site, which had received planning permission some time ago, was the subject of an application for its revision. The Parish Council unsuccessfully raised objections on the grounds that the proposed development had become too large and the developments was isolated from any reasonable, walking, cycling and vehicular access. Building has started and the Parish Council is working with the developer on improvements to access for the site.

The Parish Council has also had discussions regarding the proposed further development of affordable housing in front of the Cheshire Cat. This led to the developer and the Parish Council jointly commissioning a Housing Needs survey, which provides a useful evidence base for the consideration of further applications for housing development.

The Parish Council understands that proposals are being drawn up for further housing development at the rear of the Cheshire Cat

The main planning issue that has arisen is that, in late August, the Parish Council was made aware of a large project to develop Manor Farm (lying to the south-west of the A41) by re-siting the High School and building hundreds of houses adjacent to it together with a large number of houses on the land vacated by the High School in the village centre. The Parish Council is seeking to reflect the wishes of the community on this proposal while simultaneously entering into discussions with the developer to try to make sure that if the development should go ahead, it does so in a way which provides the maximum benefit and the least harm to the existing village.

Personally, since I came onto the Parish Council 14 years ago, I have always fought to ensure that Christleton retains its village character and is protected from the overdevelopment that

has turned communities inside the A41, such as Upton and Great Boughton, into Villages in Name Only.

I expect that these matters will take a lot of the Parish Council's time, effort and money over the next few years.

The Boughton Heath allotments continue to run entirely satisfactorily.

The project to update the Public Rights of Way in the village, for which the Parish Council prepared evidence and submitted it to Cheshire West and Chester, and which had been stuck in the pending tray, is now progressing and we hope that there will be a successful outcome later this year.

Repairs and replacements were undertaken to the Play Area at King George's Field. Users will note the new swings that are now in place. The plans for replacing and extending the Play Area have been drawn up and the Parish Council is now embarking on the lengthy process of raising the necessary funding for the work to be done.

Ongoing Matters

Website

Mr Malcolm Pratt has again continued to be kind enough to continue maintaining the Parish Council's website on a voluntary basis, for which we are very grateful.

The Pit

The Pit Group continue to amaze by their sheer dedication and excellence.

In Memoriam

Sadly, Eric Kenyon, who was a Parish Councillor for many years and chaired the Pit Group for many more, and whose other contributions to the village are too numerous to record here, died at the end of November 2022.

Thanks, and Acknowledgments

I would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions of:

My fellow Councillors, for always rising to the challenges. It isn't said nearly enough that they all work strenuously on an entirely voluntary basis.

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Stuart Parker for supporting us in our endeavours big and small and, as usual, making generous grants from his Member's Budget; and above all the Parish Clerk, Susan Thwaite, without whom all would be chaos.

Luke Henley
Chairman

15th May 2023