

Chairman's Report 2011-12

At the May meeting last year we discussed Rope Garden Nursery which was already an ongoing issue. We heard that The Monitoring and Enforcement officer (Mineral and Waste) had visited the site and was dissatisfied with it. In June a planning application was submitted by the Nursery for the import, storage and export of topsoil. Since then the site has been discussed at every Council meeting. Concerns have been raised that the area affected by the import of soil is within 8 metres of the brook and there is a possibility that the brook could become blocked or contaminated. The Environment Agency has objected to the application. However due to some administrative problems the planning application has still not been decided and no enforcement action can be taken until a decision is made.

Inconsiderate parking around the Berkeley Primary School at the beginning and end of the school day has continued to be a problem. A scheme to put double yellow lines around the junctions of Rope Bank Avenue and Lochleven Road with Laidon Avenue was prepared, consulted upon and approved. The lines should be painted very soon and hopefully will help to ease the problems.

The Parish Council has continued to part fund our 2 PCSOs in conjunction with Shavington Parish Council. This has been very successful particularly in reducing youth nuisance to minimal levels. It has also prevented the parking problem around the school from becoming much worse. Apart from the parking issue the biggest ongoing issue is speeding which they continue to work on.

Another ongoing problem is dog fouling. Our PCSOs have the power to issue penalty notices but as they have to wear high visibility jackets rarely catch any offenders. The dog wardens offer an additional visual deterrent and can also operate in plain clothes so it is useful if they patrol the parish in addition to the PCSOs. We have been in discussions with the dog wardens about a scheme which will hopefully result in them spending more time in Rope.

Cheshire East is continuing work on the Local Development Framework (LDF) which includes the strategic plan for the provision of housing in the area. Currently the rural part of Rope is protected from new developments by a Green Gap policy put in place by the former Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council. This protection has been extended by an Interim policy by Cheshire East but the protection may be reduced or removed altogether when the LDF comes into force. One of the documents being used to prepare the framework shows potential sites for new housing. This document (the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) shows that potentially 700 or more new houses could be built in Rope. More immediately there is another threat to the Green Gap policy. A planning application was recently refused because it was in the Green Gap. The developers are appealing the decision and if they are successful this could trigger further applications and undermine the interim policy.

For two years the Parish Council sponsored free interactive sports for youngsters at the leisure centre. Initially this was well attended and some known troublemakers attended and had something constructive to do. Attendances dropped over time and fewer teenagers were taking part. When the precept for 2012/13 was being set the Council had to choose between either discontinuing the sponsorship or significantly increasing the precept. It was decided that given the current economic

situation that the precept should be frozen, so the sessions will probably end unless another sponsor can be found.

A group of three Councillors, Simon Bowkett, Chris Flaherty and I have been working on a Community Resilience Plan. This has taken longer than we had expected but I hope it will be completed in time for the July meeting.

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their help not just as councillors but also for the extra jobs they have taken on. Thanks also to our Clerk Sue Togay for her work on our behalf. Finally thanks to Borough Councillor Brian Silvester for his help and support throughout the year.

Bob Squirrell