

Chairman's Report 2017-18

This year the most significant decision taken by the Parish Council was to discontinue the part funding of PCSOs. This was a difficult decision brought about because of a huge increase in cost from this April and at the same time a lack of evidence that we were getting good value for money even before the increase. Had we decided to continue then the precept would have increased significantly. As we decided not to continue, we were able to reduce it by 50%.

One of the biggest policing issues that we had which was the parking problems around the Berkeley Academy has been considerably reduced by the opening of the drop off car park for parents as well as a new staff car park. Some cars are still parked near the school but the pressure for space has been relieved and there is no excuse now for dangerous or inconsiderate parking. We hope the zig-zag lines at the front of the school will be extended soon. This was a difficult project to get through and I would like to thank our Borough Councillor Sarah Pochin for all the effort she put into this.

I am happy to report that the Cheshire East Local Plan has been approved and that there is now a 5 year supply of housing land. This should reduce the chances of speculative developments on green field sites in the parish. Our neighbours in Willaston and Wistaston have also got neighbourhood plans in place. I see little benefit for us to develop our own plan but if the situation changes we will react to it. One thing is certain, if the developers can find a way to get a new scheme through, they will try to do it.

The project to improve the war memorial which we share with Wistaston Parish Council at St Mary's Church is making slow progress. This is due to delays with the architect but hopefully there will be developments soon.

Although we were pleased that we have had some bad potholes filled we have been frustrated by a lack of progress on other highways matters. The worst of these is the persistent flood on Gresty Lane, outside the nursery. We have been trying to get it investigated and repaired for over a year with no progress.

During the year we have been looking into providing a public access defibrillator for the Parish. This has proved challenging as there is really nowhere suitable to put it within the Parish. I am now very optimistic that we will soon have one close to the Parish, outside the Spar store.

Rope has no facilities for local groups to meet and so as in the past we have supported Wistaston based groups as they serve our Parish as well. This year we are pleased to have supported the Wistaston Bowling Club and the Wistaston Memorial Hall.

Recently we revived a project from 2008 to see if we can get tree preservation orders for all the significant trees in the parish. The value of this was shown when we found that two trees which were listed in 2008 have since been cut down. Unfortunately it is difficult to get TPOs for a lot of trees at the same time. The process is quite labour intensive and so the officers want to limit the process to trees that are under threat. Unfortunately the first indication that a tree is under threat is often the sound of a chain saw when it is too late. Hopefully we will be able to get protection for at least some of our trees.

We are currently planning another Ward Walk. Parish Councillors together with our Borough Councillor, police officers and a community warden will walk around the parish looking out for any problems and meeting the public. This enables people to raise any issues and sends out a message that dog fouling and littering are unacceptable.

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their help and support not just as councillors but also for the extra jobs they have taken on. Thanks also to Robert Dodd who has continued as a Trustee of the Parish Council charity and as our representative on the Wistaston Memorial Hall committee. Thanks also to Cheshire East Councillor Sarah Pochin for all her hard work (in addition to the school car park) throughout the year. Finally thanks also to our Clerk Sue Togay for her work on our behalf.

Bob Squirrell