

Malpas Parish Council Chairman's Report

Well, what a year (and a bit) it has been, the world has changed, maybe forever. I have been on a tight deadline to compose this, so apologies if I missed anything or anyone. If allowed then I will write a final Report at the end of my tenure. Being Chair has been an honour and I've learnt a lot too.

If the time in role was based on reading a book then thought I was about to enjoy the Fellowship of the Ring and I'm now halfway through The Two Towers! Anyway here's my take on our progress:

The New Parish Council

After the uncontested election last year, we had six new Parish Councillors and it was agreed that an induction programme was needed to help bring the incoming councillors up to speed. Following the resignations of Cllr Mifsud and Cllr Darlington four candidates applied for two positions in December to be co-opted onto the Council. After a vote taken by the sitting council, we were pleased to welcome two new councillors, Cllrs Clegg and Tulloch.

Induction Programme

The induction programme was held twice for our new Parish Councillors after Cllr Whitehurst created an impressive presentation for all presenters to use. Thanks to all Councillors & the Clerk who inputted into this important programme.

Open Forums

The Open Forum and Saturday Surgery are good opportunities to engage with our Parishioners rather than informally in the street or otherwise. There was a sizable representation of parishioners in the June 2019, Open Forum commenting on the planning proposal at The Sycamores repeated again in the July meeting. In September, we heard from a member of Malpas Garrison Explorer Scouts about fundraising to support his attendance of the Eurojam 2020 Jamboree in Poland. He left a tremendous impression by the delivery of his presentation in front of a near full council!

In October, the Parish Clerk for Cuddington Parish Meeting spoke to us regarding a request for Cuddington Parish to merge with Malpas Parish Council, a process still in progress. In December, Cllr Jan Birch, No Mans Heath and District Parish Council, spoke to the meeting to regarding support to reduce the current speed limit on Tilston Road. Residents of Springfields also spoke at that meeting regarding concerns of parked cars on the grassed area and we have involved Cheshire West & Chester Borough Council in finding solutions. Members of the public have spoken to us regularly regarding involving the younger generation in the Parish and also Highways concerns including illegal

parking. The Saturday Surgeries have had to go on hold in the last few months and perhaps there is a need to review how these could serve Parishioners better.

Priorities

Our informal meeting in August shaped priorities for the next four years, and we agreed to work on the following priorities during the current council's term in office:

1. Car Parking
2. Improving the Appearance of Malpas
3. Road Safety
4. Climate Emergency
5. Village Integration
6. Updating the Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plan

The existing Neighbourhood Plan for Malpas & Overton is due for review. We set up a steering group consisting of Cllrs Whitehurst, Meredith, Boxall, Sabia Picton Hughes and Barnett taking on the work required to create a new one. Good luck everyone!

Climate Emergency

Having experienced all the extremes of the English weather in mid-2019, we agreed to declare a Climate Emergency and to support the Borough Council in moving towards a carbon neutral future. In September, we approved a report created by our working group, which is the start of shaping local plans for helping to address climate change. The report included recommendations regarding recycling, tree planting (now ongoing at the Mosslands and elsewhere), renewable energy and partnership with other bodies. As one of our priorities, we will be developing objectives to ensure we deliver positive change in the Parish.

Coronavirus

Malpas Parish Council acknowledges the real threat to individuals that the Coronavirus brings. We encouraged volunteers to contact local care providers already in existence like Community Links, Age UK Cheshire and our local Churches. After new legislation was passed Malpas Parish Council were able to hold a virtual web based public meeting on Monday 20th April. This historic moment for the Parish Council ran smoothly without any I.T. issues with new guidelines for this format adopted.

The Parish Council agreed to set up a specific fund for requests for support from the community group Malpas Community Links during the coronavirus crisis. Letters were sent in May to local MP Mr Edward Timpson and Leader of the Borough Council, Cllr Louise Gittins (Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council – CW&C) regarding economic recovery, food security and rural

poverty as the Parish Council were concerned that the rural communities will be neglected in post coronavirus plans.

Subsequently Malpas Parish Council held a virtual web based public meeting on Monday 8th June where Mr Timpson, Cllr Gittins, Pam Bradley (Rural Localities CW&C) and Malpas Ward Cllr Rachel Williams joined the meeting. Mr Timpson and Cllr Gittins both responded in the Open Forum to our letter regarding post-coronavirus policy development and rural communities. They also answered questions from the Parish Council on their responses. Afterwards specific points were distributed for the Parish Council to reflect upon with a view to developing future strategy in the immediate months ahead. The Parish Council also agreed to hold a meeting in August given the need to form a strategy for recovery. I subsequently received a hand written letter from the House of Commons from Mr Timpson thanking us for inviting him to our virtual meeting. It's good to see ink and paper are not completely forgotten!

Bus Shelter

Back in September 2019 we agreed to submit a request to contractors to site a bus shelter on Old Hall Street to replace the one once attached to The Crown. However in October were unable to agree the payment for this due to new proposals made by councillors including a request for a solar panel on the bus shelter and a request made for a domed roof rather than a straight one. The November & December meetings considered this and details of the proposed relocation and design of a wooden bus shelter further along Old Hall Street towards Whitchurch from the Crown location were forwarded to CW&C for consideration and costing. Since then CW&C have sent contradictory messages regarding our plan for the shelter plus other shelters and stops on Springfields and Chester Road. I hope that the Clerk is able to unravel the confusing statements coming out of our Borough Council so we can deliver bus shelters to the village.

Planning Matters

One of the more important roles for the Parish Council is that we are consulted by CW&C when they receive planning applications within the Parish. Many planning applications have been reviewed over the months and I would like to thank Cllr Meredith for the lead role she undertakes and the time it takes her to review and report on each application. Also thanks to Cllr Whitehurst for attending the meeting of the Borough Council Planning Committee to speak on behalf of the Parish Council regarding the planning application for The Sycamores.

We are still waiting for news about progress with the Chester Road Housing Development and The Community Health Hub. We met with Bovis Homes Limited managers in mid-May 2019 where concerns on works traffic and drainage were allayed. In addition, the potential for the village pump to be sited within the open space near the wildlife pond was discussed. Dust and noise

control were flagged and site managers were made aware of the ongoing concerns of local residents.

The Council agreed in principle not to support any new residential developments that A) rely on fossil fuel fired heating, or B) fail to include facilities for charging electric vehicles, or C) fail to provide any means of generating renewable electricity.

We also had representation at No Man's Heath & District Parish Council's extraordinary meeting regarding a proposed residential application where some of our questions concerning the plans were raised.

I hope that our updated Neighbourhood Plan gives us more weight in decisions made by CW&C in the future.

Police Reports

The Parish Council were dismayed to hear the rise again of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in the village in July 2019. Our PCSO, Jon Hurst, has held regular interactive Youth Events in Malpas as well as patrols dealing with the anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in the village. More anti-social behaviour again reported in September, including anti-social behaviour from youths entering burial grounds, congregating at the Youth club and rear of Craddock Court, and motorbikes riding around a field and on a bridal path in Overton. Further actions were taken to deal with this behaviour by youths in the village.

Police are also addressing the recent problems of parking on Old Hall Street. Jon also noted in late 2019 that suspicious vehicles reported in Cuddington and Chorlton turned out to be a taxi and the milkman! We do fully support Police action when dealing with illegal parking in the village, including running car engines while parked as well as speeding

There have been relatively low levels of anti-social behaviour in 2020, but one incident involved the smashing of a window with an egg. Malpas Sports Club bowling club was also broken into in January for an apparent gathering.

In Spring 2020 we welcomed PCSO Jack Mackin to policing in and around Malpas as part of the Cheshire Rural & Wildlife Crime Team targeting wildlife, rural and heritage crime. Land Rovers/Defenders are being regularly stolen in rural areas and there is a 'Pull me over' sticker initiative ongoing. Tackling poaching is also a priority. Good luck Jack!

Malpas Community Safety Action Group

The Parish Council agreed that to make Malpas a safer place to live that a co-ordinated group of stakeholders including the Police should be formed and we resolved to create a Community Safety Action Group. The intention of the group being to ensure issues in the community and potential actions are shared in a forum that helps to accelerate changes in behaviour and reduces crime. The first meeting of the group took place in October 2019.

Speed Gun

While the Police continue their efforts to reduce speeding in the village, the Parish Council held further training for volunteers in February to use the shared speed gun. Thanks to Cllr Whitehurst for arranging the training and co-ordinating speed gun sessions at various approved locations in Malpas

Traffic Congestion

Our traffic congestion problems continue to impact on our whole community. The council wrote to Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) to stress the need for their support and leadership in resolving our car parking capacity and traffic management issues. I hope to see some progress in the near future. Thanks to Cllrs Webb & Whitehurst for their ongoing efforts.

Allotments

An important meeting was held in September with members of the Parish Council and allotment holders. We agreed a better way of working between both parties and an uplift in the acceptable level of cultivation that a plot should be tended to. The Parish Council looks forward to working with the Allotment Association and hope they like the new wider safer entrance, which was recently completed.

Bradley Bridge

We wrote to Cheshire West & Chester Borough Council last year to complain about the length of time it was taking to rebuild the bridge and the inconvenience caused to the community. We hope the new bridge now completed lasts a very long time!

Floral displays in the Village

Three more planters have been ordered for the village, which will be located at the following sites: Chester Road, Wrexham Road and Old Hall Street. We replaced the floral displays in the four existing planters in March. The Parish Council agreed to fund in the current challenging circumstances the floral hanging basket displays for businesses in the village centre for summer this year. We hope that as things begin to go back to normal that this adds some colour as Parishioners visit the heart of the village again.

Dog Fouling

Inconsiderate dog owners continue to blight the village and are allowing their dogs to foul pavements and grass. The Parish Council are looking to install bag dispensers around the village soon. Community Wardens and Dog Wardens have been notified of high incident sites and we support any enforcement resulting.

Christmas!

Michael Williams agreed to take over the role of Mr Martin Shackleton for Christmas 2019. The Parish Council is very grateful for Martin's contribution to the Christmas celebrations in the village in recent years.

Christmas events in 2019 included stalls, a bauble competition, children's lantern workshop, a light parade, Church service as well as Santa and presents of course. There were no light banners across the High Street. Instead there was a focal point Christmas Tree outside The Crown with new tree lights and an official 'switch on'! Thanks to Gary Sherlock at The Crown for offering to provide and install the tree. Thanks also to the Christmas Fair Committee for their efforts in 2019 and planning for 2020. The event and the new approach to the lighting for the village's Christmas feel was much appreciated.

The National Lottery marked its 25th birthday with a new fund for communities with the chance to receive a grant to fund ideas during the birthday year. We were delighted that our application was successful and we now have £1,000 to go towards the 2020 celebrations. Thanks to Ruth Shackleton, our Clerk, for completing the necessary paperwork in a very tight window of opportunity.

Summer Fair

The Parish Council wish to support the Summer Fair as much as possible and several councillors volunteered to help with the set up and dismantling of the event on the 13th of July 2019. Sadly coronavirus meant no Fair for 2020 or other planned events.

Grant Process

The Parish Council has had to defer approving grants to local organisations due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Council have allocated funds towards grant payments from the 2020-21 financial year. Local groups and organisations submitted grant applications before 31st March 2020.

Minutes Silence

At the beginning of the December meeting there was a minute silence held to mark past contribution to the village by the late Laurie Crump. Cllr Crump, amongst other things he did as councillor, was instrumental in arranging the planting of many of the daffodils we see about the village

The Clerk

I'd like to thank Ruth, our Clerk, for all the hard work she has put in to keep the Parish Council ticking over in the background, and the insight she brings in supporting the Chairman and the rest of the Parish Council .

Here's to a better end to 2020 and the new world ahead of us....

John Webb

Chairman Malpas Parish Council