

Malpas Parish Council - Report of PC Chair 2022/2023

Overview.

It has been another busy year, with new challenges and some frustrations.

A reminder, whilst the Parish Council is the first level of our democratic system but with few powers, it can and does play an important role in local governance. However, positive relationships and engagement with CWaC, as the Principal Authority remains crucial to much of our work.

All Parish councillors are volunteers, each giving as much or as little time as they are able. However attendance at the regular monthly PC meetings is an essential requirement. It is important that councillors recognise the importance of this **duty** and ensure that attendance is consistent.

As we move towards elections in May, the Parish Council has four vacancies and ten serving members, a number of whom will not seek re-election.

I had hoped that the elections on May 4th would allow the Parish Council to return to full strength; however, only 11 people stood for election and therefore have been returned uncontested. So there are 3 vacancies to be filled after May. I trust that all those serving for the next 4 years intend to play active roles.

Our links to CWaC are, as stated, critical. However, with the local authority budget being under tremendous pressure, their responsiveness can be slow and frustrating. Budget pressures have affected CWaC staffing levels; this has been noticeable over the past twelve months, with fewer officers, covering larger workloads.

I am grateful to our CWaC Ward Councillor, Rachel Williams, for her determined efforts, to promote constructive relationships between the PC and CWaC. Also for her dedication, support and exceptional work in improving life for our village residents.

Parish Council Members

We've seen a number of comings and goings in 2022/23. Most recently welcoming Roger Clifford as a co-opted member, whilst bidding farewell to Cllrs Roberts, Makuza, Hood and Charlton.

Thanks to all colleagues on the PC for their contribution and efforts to improve life in and around Malpas.

Our Clerk.

Ruth Shackleton has been our clerk for almost 19 years and again this year has worked hard to keep us on track.

Ruth also kept us in conformity with all financial requirements, submitting unqualified accounts.

Ruth is the only paid employee of the PC and her work is greatly appreciated.

Grants made.

In 2022 grants were awarded to;

Malpas Community Minibus.

Malpas Young Persons Centre.

Malpas High Street Church.

Malpas Victoria Jubilee Hall.

Malpas Community Links.

Malpas Library Project.

The Parish Council has also provided some financial support to the Malpas Community Kitchen. This initiative is a really impressive response to the cost of living crisis facing so many people. Morgan Granger and Rachel Williams, have been the driving forces behind the project. There has also been tremendous support from local businesses.

A grant has already been made towards the village celebrations for King Charles III which will take place over the weekend of 5th – 8th May.

Actions taken over the past 12 months.

Amenities and appearance.

Plans to expand the car park have continued to take a great deal of time, taking much longer than originally anticipated. I am grateful to Chris Whitehurst for his ongoing efforts and attention to this project.

Work should have started in February, but is delayed as we need to sort an additional legal clause.

Highways.

The key event was the collapse of the Church yard wall in January 2021, who would have thought it would take so long to be repaired!?

Liaison with and representation to CWaC eventually saw reasonable interim arrangements.

However the work has dragged on and been delayed several times. The majority of the work was finally finished by the end of March, with a couple of days in April being required to enable the gates to be reinstated.

Events

The PC again made a significant financial contribution to the Christmas Fair. This was greatly enjoyed by many villagers.

Thanks to the organisers, in particular Gillian Valentine and Rachel Williams.

The events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee organised by 'Malpas Community Links ' received significant financial support. The events and celebrations were enjoyed by many. Thanks to the Malpas Community Links team for all their hard work.

Planning applications.

Applications continue to be submitted on a very regular basis. The PC being a ' statutory consultee' however, it's important to remember that it's CWaC who makes the decisions.

Karen Meredith has continued to take a lead on this work and colleagues are grateful for her work on this.

Neighbourhood Plan.

The neighbourhood plan is being reviewed, with Mike Boxall leading the group. A grant of £5,000 has been received to undertake this work, which will be supported by an officer from Cheshire Community Action. A revised geographical area which covers the previous parishes of Newton by Malpas, Overton, Stockton, Wychough, and part of Bradley and Oldcastle, has already been approved for the revised Neighbourhood plan.

Mike Boxall, would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in joining the group.

Other activities.

The PC tries to work closely with Cheshire Police. This has however been adversely affected by the absence of our regular PCSO Jon Hurst.

The police and crime commissioner assured us that Malpas would have a replacement for Jon when he retired.

We've since heard that Jon is unlikely to return to work, so whilst wishing him the best, we're in touch with John Dwyer seeking confirmation of his promise,

Allotments.

The Mosslands allotments now have an association, which manages the day to day running of the allotments. Many thanks to Howard Enstone, for his work in leading the association.

It's planned to improve things at the allotments, with some new footpaths. This using some section 106 funds from CWaC.

A community orchard has recently been planted and 3 wildlife ponds will shortly be installed. As a consequence the area will greatly be improved and support wildlife. These initiatives will be at no cost to the Parish, thanks to CWaC for their support with these projects.

Defibrillator

We recently installed a defibrillator outside the Jubilee Hall, this being funded through a legacy. Thanks to Michael Williams for leading on this piece of work.

The legacy is from the estate of **Michael Maurice Schroeder**, who was evacuated to the village during World War Two. A plaque acknowledge this legacy is in place above the defibrillator

Taking Shelter.

Following the demolition of the bus shelter outside the Crown pub, a replacement bus shelter on Old Hall Street - opposite the Coop, is due to be installed shortly. This has taken much longer than was expected, indeed longer to replace than to repair the Churchyard wall!

As there will be parking restrictions around the new shelter, it's hoped that some of the parking problems already being experienced in that area will be reduced.

Developing Resilience.

Working with CWaC, police and others we have produced a plan to ensure the village is well prepared in the event of emergencies.

Such events as flooding, fires, large scale road crashes etc. Thanks to Richard Charlton and more recently Morgan Granger and Pauline Hood for their work on this project.

Section 106 Monies - from new developments in the village.

Significant section 106 monies - will be used to enhance facilities at Malpas Sports and Social Club.

It is hoped that section 106 monies obtained from Duchy Homes development, will contribute to the improvements at the Laurel Bank surgery.

The original proposals for the Chester Road site included a health hub. This was lost due to the Health Authorities lack of funding, this latest initiative provides some modest compensation. It's good to see that great progress is being made with Laurel Bank's extension.

Listening to villagers.

In February I dropped in to a Friday Friends session, hearing from 22 of the members. Lots of comments about things in the Village.

A suggestion was made that groups such as Friday Friends / Malpas Community Kitchen / Malpas OPAL / Malpas Young Persons Centre, would welcome regular visits from Ward and Parish Councillors. Something for the new Parish Council to consider.

The year ahead - to May 2024

In May **several** Cllrs, including me, will be standing down, 11 people are already elected and there are 3 vacancies. I'm hoping that some additional new, energetic and committed people will put themselves forward for the council and use their passion for Malpas to help to improve things for all.

John Webb

Chair Malpas Parish Council

April 2023

CWaC = Cheshire West and Chester Council

PC = Parish Council

Cllrs = Councillors

PCSO = Police Community Support officer