



Tarvin Parish Council

Annual Report of the Chairman for the year ended 31 March 2021

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that throughout the year the Parish Council (PC) has been unable to meet physically. All meetings have been held via Zoom (except for June 2020 when the PC did not meet). As Chairman I have found Zoom to be very challenging, not least because for much of the time I can see only four Councillors at a time. I also feel that Zoom has reduced accountability, as evidenced by the low number of non-Councillors who have joined the meetings, even when controversial issues were being discussed. However, despite the difficulties the PC has fulfilled its statutory duties and continues to do its best to improve the lives of residents. In the following paragraphs I have tried to pick out the most important matters which have come before the PC.

2. Unofficial Traveller Site, A51 Tarpoley Road

In the autumn it became clear that land at Tarpoley Road was being used as an unofficial site for traveller caravans, and that a permanent building had been brought onto the site. The PC immediately drew the situation to the attention of the planning authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). As a consequence of CWaC following this up with the owner of the site, a retrospective planning application was submitted in October 2020. The PC was consulted on the application and submitted a comprehensive and technically sound objection running to 18 pages. The objections can be summarised under the following headings:

- failure to comply with national planning guidelines
- does not accord with the CWaC Development Plan
- breaches the local Tarvin Neighbourhood Development Plan
- dangerous because of its proximity to a nearby public layby
- unfair because the majority of applicants adhere to their planning permissions even if their plans have been modified by the planning process

As at the end of March 2021 the planning application has not been determined by CWaC, although the PC has regularly requested updates.

3. Investment in the Community

The PC has continued to invest in the community, not only by giving grants to village organisations such as the Community Woodland, the Community Centre and the Scouts and Guides, but also with regard to infrastructure. In 2020/21 the PC's planned special project was to formalise the gap in the hedge between the Ridgeway and the pavement

along the A54. Sadly, because of Covid-19, CWaC did not authorise the project until the very end of the financial year, so the project will be carried out in the current year (2021/22). Having budgeted for this project in 2020/21, the PC agreed to use the money, together with money taken from reserves, to upgrade the 22 PC-owned street lights in the parish to LEDs. This investment will not only improve the standard of lighting but will also reduce the ongoing energy and maintenance costs.

4. Other Issues

- 4.1 Blocked drains and ditches caused flooding on Platts Lane west of the Sheaf which caused problems for walkers and cyclists. However, action taken by the owner of Hockenhull Hall has now resolved the problem.
- 4.2 The Clerk and I had a very successful site meeting with Dr and Mr Harding, owners of William's Wood (formerly Broomheath Plantation). They outlined their plans which included new allotments. These should become available to Tarvin residents in 2021/22.
- 4.3 The PC has had some frustrating dealings with CWaC over the year. The pandemic has, understandably, slowed the response when problems are reported, but even so the PC has felt forgotten. However, the PC is grateful for the support it gets from our two Borough Councillors, Harry Tonge and John Leather, who are always very helpful.
- 4.4 Two of our younger Councillors, Sarah Dutton and James Norrie, together with Councillor Ben Dean have got the PC's Facebook presence up and running, and it is already benefiting both the PC and the public.
- 4.5 This year the PC said farewell and thanks to our Police Community Support Officer, Sue Keers, who is now managing the custody suite in Blacon, and welcomed her replacement, Jack Makin.

5. Conclusion

I started this report with Covid-19, and I will end with it. A recent poll commissioned by the Red Cross found that a third of Britons feel less connected to their community than they did before the pandemic, and just under 40% do not think their feelings of loneliness will go away once restrictions are lifted. I do not know if these percentages apply to our parish – I hope not – but I do know that the PC will be striving, post restrictions, to do all it can to help residents overcome this most disorientating, debilitating crisis we have known.

Ted Lush
Chairman, Tarvin Parish Council
April 2021