

THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2013

Projects:

During the last 12 months the Parish Council has carried out three major projects funded from the UK Coal Community Fund to the value of over £66,000. These projects have been the new entry signage into our communities and information boards, the bus shelter at New Works and the installation of BT Openreach Superfast Broadband to Little Wenlock. The Parish Council is grateful to Veolia for leasing the land on which the bus shelter is situated.

Highways:

Highway issues have featured at every meeting and the Parish Council has been working closely with T&W Highway Department to make improvements within the parish. Church Hill at New Works has been resurfaced and pot holes promptly filled in when reported. Improvements are planned at the Forest Glen which includes new parking restrictions and a redesigned junction all of which should make the area safer for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists. There is still work to be done and the Parish council is vigorously pursuing the introduction of a much safer speed limit both at the Forest Glen and on all its rural roads. New pedestrian and sharp bend warning signs have been placed where appropriate. Road drainage with all the rain has presented some problems. A drain was discovered at the bottom of Malthouse Bank following flooding and the culvert was cleared; drainage works has also been done on Coalbrookdale Road by The Moors. A further drain was found at Willowmoor and a broken drain repaired. T&W Officers responsible for drainage have worked very promptly to resolve these drainage problems.

Again the Parish Council has paid for snow clearing and gritting on the minor roads when the weather has been severe and has paid for an additional grit bin at Coalmoor and two new litter bins.

The Parish Council is keeping a very careful watch regarding the closing of Buildwas Lane by Shropshire County Council and has made a number of constructive recommendations so that the route will be accessible to walkers and horse riders.

Planning

A large number of planning applications have been before the Parish Council. In two cases the Parish Council supported local residents who had concerns about developments close to them and the applicants subsequently amended their plans. The Parish Council objected to the proposed development of a car park at the Forest Glen and had made suggestions for alternative parking sites which were ignored. It also objected to the building of a log cabin on agricultural land. Though not a planning issue the Parish Council objected to the proposed car park included in the UK Coal restoration plan as it was pointed out that it would attract nefarious activities which the residents of New Works did not want; the Parish Council had suggested that the lay-bye on New Works Lane be extended instead, regrettably this suggestion was rejected.

Street Lights:

In September 2012 E.On informed the Parish Council that 7 lights in New Works and 8 in Little Wenlock were condemned, some of them being described as dangerous. Cllr. Alan Lees put together a bid to be presented to the UK Coal Fund for all the lights in the parish to be replaced. This was subsequently amended just to replace all the lights in New Works. Regrettably the actions of a T&W District Councillor resulted in the fact that the Parish Councillors were not allowed to vote on the application and it was turned down. Subsequently a survey about the lights in New Works was carried out and 85.2% of the residents were in favour of requesting a grant. New Works residents have formed their own working party and will submit a request for funding in April. If they are successful the Parish Council will manage the project on their behalf.

The lights in Little Wenlock will be replaced on a rolling programme. The Precept has been increased to cover the cost of doing this.

The Environment:

More daffodil planting has taken place, especially down Buildwas Lane. The Parish Council paid for part of The Shropshire Way within the parish to be cleared of overgrown undergrowth. The boardwalk at Swan Farm is in a serious state of disrepair; a bid was made by the Parish Council to

the Cooperative Ward Fund for £666 which was successful and then added another £334 so that £1000 could be given to T&W towards the replacement of the boardwalk in early summer this year.

Our Young People:

The Parish Council continues to support the younger members of the community. This year two of them have helped with repairs to footpaths and daffodil planting as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award and another was given the Council Shadowing Award. The Parish Council is always willing to listen to proposals as to how it can help and support our young people with projects and awards.

Neighbourhood Watch:

The Smartwater project was very successful and many of you subscribed to it and obtained Smartwater security kits. The Parish Council also purchased large signs that have been put up in the parish warning anyone with ill intent that many of the properties are protected by Smartwater. The Parish Council will run the scheme again if a minimum of 10 people are willing to apply for the kits.

The intranet scheme where the Parish Clerk warns those whose email addresses he has of any concerns or suspicious occurrences is working well. Anyone can join this service free of charge by sending their email address to the Clerk.

Communications:

The Community Newsletter is issued every two months if there is enough information needing circulation. The Parish Councillors personally deliver the copies to most householders. If you do not get a copy one can be obtained from The Huntsman, St. Lawrence Church (open on a Saturday) and the Village Hall or directly from the Clerk. A copy is also available on the Parish web site.

An annual Parish Information Sheet is also distributed to all parishioners.

There will be two notice boards in the New Works bus shelter which means that more information can be displayed and at a larger print size.

The web site contains a considerable amount of information about the parish.

Councillors:

Last year Cllr. Ed Roberts resigned from the Parish Council and we thank him for his years of service and valuable contribution and support to the Parish Council. Jayne Davidson was co-opted onto the Parish Council and has already made a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the council.

Parish Councillors and the Clerk have attended various courses during the last 12 months to remain up to date with new legislation

Affordable Housing:

The long awaited report was published in the autumn. The key finding was that the report identified only one household within the parish in clear need of affordable housing for which an additional property would be required.

The Jubilee:

In spite of a rather damp day we saw how our parish pulls together to make a very memorable event. Thank you to everyone who helped and supported the event. The Parish Council distributed Jubilee mugs to the young people of the parish.

Policies:

During the last 12 months the Parish Council has adopted a new Code of Conduct to which all Parish Councillors have signed. A new Media Guide and a Risk Management document have been adopted.

Finance:

As you will all be aware the Parish Council has very reluctantly raised the Parish Precept for the next financial year. This is largely to meet the cost of an on-going commitment by the Parish Council to replace the street lights in Little Wenlock. It is hoped that a bid by New Works residents to obtain a grant from UK Coal to replace all their lights will be successful, but if not they will have to be met from the Precept.

The Parish Council is only too aware that we live in a time of austerity and cut-backs. It looked for as many savings as possible in its budget and has also decided not to initiate any new projects which would be met from the Precept.

Annual Audit;

This year the Parish Council appointed a new Internal Auditor, SDH Accounting and Audit Services. The Parish Council was one of 5% who had an extended audit which was successfully carried out by Mazars LLP.

The Future:

Parish Councillors are members of the UK Coal Liaison Committee and the Candles Liaison Committee and will do all that they can to represent the views and concerns of the parishioners. Councillors will always place and consider the views of the majority of parishioners to the forefront when making decisions and seeking improvements within the parish. All councillors and the Clerk can be contacted by parishioners either with concerns or ideas for future consideration.

Councillor Sheila Hutchison.
Chairman, Little Wenlock Parish Council.
7th March 2013.