

Bagnall Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2022

The principal purpose of any parish council is to protect and enhance the lives and environment for the benefit of its parishioners. This is our mission.

Over the past 12-months a number of initiatives and representations have been undertaken in order to support and improve the service and deliverables that we provide to our Parish. The Parish Council has continued to work through the COVID pandemic using online meetings via ZOOM for some of the year, and only recently returned to holding full public meetings.

ENHANCEMENTS

A new and updated website has been developed and implemented. This was introduced partly to meet government directives regarding accessibility, but also to create the ability to expand the means to communicate and inform residents of important and useful information.

Ongoing initiatives have now been documented into a Strategic Plan which is visible to all via the new website. It is envisaged that a request will be made to parishioners for suggestions to add to this plan to ensure that as wide a viewpoint as possible is gleaned on is important to our community, rather than councillors having to determine priorities on their behalf.

Included in this plan going forward is the expansion of playground facilities on the village field. It is envisaged that the planned events for the Queen's Jubilee will be used to raise funds to contribute to this endeavour.

Following the acquisition of the redundant telephone box outside the Rose and Crown public house belated plans are now underway for its refurbishment and re-purposing to accommodate a defibrillator that will cover another area of the parish complementing the defibrillator located at the village hall.

PROTECTIONS

Parish Councils have limited input into the planning decisions that affect their community, however, Parish Councils are statutory consultees on planning applications within their parish and provide feedback and comments to the planning department.

Most planning applications, when agreed, come with several conditions placed upon them by the planners, sometimes suggested by the Parish Council. Quite often it is these conditions that are important to the community in minimising development impacts and blending in. Unfortunately, the planning department does not have the staff levels to ensure that these are adhered to.

To assist with this process, during the last year the Parish Council has introduced a register of agreed planning applications detailing their individual specific conditions. It is planned that the monitoring of these important conditions to provide an early warning where these are not being followed is to become a specific Parish Councillor role.

It has been the goal of the Parish Council over the last year to raise our profile by consulting and informing parishioners of issues that may affect them and attempting to minimise the impact of said issues.

To this end a consultation took place via leaflet drop to gauge the community views on the real possibility of large Solar Panel and Battery Storage facilities being created within the Parish. This is a controversial subject, and it would have been presumptuous of the Parish Council to have taken a stance without ascertaining the majority view.

The Parish Council has also engaged throughout the year with Staffordshire County Council, the local county councillor, and contractors in order to reduce the disruption caused by the laying of new cables connecting the substations at Cellar Head with Chatterley Whitfield. The Parish Council had limited success in making changes to these plans despite concerted efforts but has received a commitment that any damage caused to road surfaces and verges will be rectified once work is completed.

A presentation and Q and A session proposed by councillors was held at the village hall where parishioners (and others from outside of the parish) were able to question both councillors and contractors about their concerns regarding these works.

Further S.53 applications to re-designate footpaths to bridleways within the parish have been received during the year. These have all been submitted by an external bridleway organisation encouraged by a national campaign group aiming to create bridleway networks. In line with previous S.53 applications received the Parish Council has strongly objected to these moves, supporting the concerns of the majority of residents. We have argued that any change to footpath status should take into account all users of the footpaths and be determined only by the Parish within which these footpaths lie and affect. These applications are with the Staffordshire County Council's Legal Department who rule on these determinations.

For almost 50 years the village hall has been managed by teams of volunteers in accordance with charity law. However, one outstanding issue has been the determination of a custodian of the charity. It was envisaged that this custodian would be the Parish Council but following advice to the contrary by the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) the village hall committee are now to follow the

suggested route of registering with the Custodian of Charities and operate as a separate organisation.

Further information on any of these topics, together with other issues and developments too numerous to mention in this short appraisal are contained in the meeting minutes and reports which can be accessed in their entirety on the Parish Council's website.

Les Knowles
Chair, Bagnall Parish Council
17th May 2022