

Report of the Chair of Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council 2017-2018

The past year has seen much to enjoy and quite a bit to trouble our minds. Much of the early part of the Council's year was spent objecting to the planning application for Northgate field and this was eventually refused in November.

We also set off down the route of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Steering Group has achieved much in a very short time including garnering the views of young and old on what they liked and disliked about our community. Added to that they commissioned an independent housing needs study as well as habitat diversity study – now the hard work begins.

We've had not one but two sink holes causing havoc on our roads and Heaths Lane was finally resurfaced.

So what are the key features of the past twelve months?

Make up of the Parish Council:

The Council currently comprises 9 Councillors and a Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

On the clerical front the year saw, like the Swiss Weather cottage, one very good Parish Clerk depart and another, Anita Langford, join us – we wish her very well in the future.

A long serving Councillor – Trudy Boyle left us to focus on her other work and as well as us being one down already this left us with seven Councillors. During the early part of our year we recruited two new members, so the Council now includes:

Francis Tunney – Chair
Graham Stewart – Deputy Chair
Andrew Needham
Roger Barnes
Ian Priestner
Tony Burford
Nick Parker
Anna Harvey
Jason Hughes

Development and Planning:

The 'threat' of development on land between Northgate and John Street has come and gone and, in November 2017 this was refused by CWaC on landscape and environmental grounds.

Numerous small development applications have come to the fore across the parish – mainly redevelopment or infill and, in the main these are well within the various Household Surveys that we have conducted.

Highways and Byways:

Our roads have suffered – as many rural across the region have – and fallen foul of weather, increased traffic and reduced budgets for our local authority. Potholes have proliferated; verges have deteriorated to an extent where some roads are becoming single lane.

We continue to focus on the amount and speed of traffic through our villages and are in discussion with CWaC about this issue.

Infrastructure developments

Over the year we have tried to ensure that our Parish is maintained as a good place to live and are, generally, in support of the work of CWaC in its work to produce a 'Local Plan'. However, as part of the second iteration of the Plan – Utkinton was proposed to be designated as a 'Local Service Centre' – this we have argued against and, in January this year we submitted a paper to CWaC asking for this designation to be overturned as we did not have access to public transport – although CWaC deemed the community transport shuttles as adequate.

Late in March 2018, we got wind of some substantial changes in the structure and delivery of this community transport and have garnered the support of our MP, Ward Councillor and the three other Parishes in Tarporley Ward. We have asked for these changes to be included in the forthcoming Local Plan 2 inspection and await the outcome.

The finger posts at Hall Lane and Wood Lane were refurbished by a local resident (Dave Williams) and were gifted to the PC by our borough.

The Parish Council began investigated the options to refurbish the Utkinton War Memorial and looked at a number of stone-masons with a view to preserving the existing stonework in preparation for the commemoration of the end of World War One.

Website and Communications

Our online communications continue to flourish with the website having achieved around 28,000 views since its instigation in February 2016 representing an average of 35 a day. Our Facebook pages also provide a link to what we are doing.

In January 2017 we published the first issue of our quarterly newsletter, the '*Courier*' and recently the 6th issue hit the doormats of all our resident households – we are venturing into the realms of online versions of this.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Murray', is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

Francis Tunney

Chair – Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council

Tuesday 10th May 2016