



Annual Parish Meeting - Monday 17th April 2023

Chairmans's Report

My report each year tries to cover the most important issues within Woore Parish, apologies if I have not included the issues that are most important to you, however, Parish Councillors are always willing to talk to residents about issues of concern and Councillors do have specific areas of responsibility which you can find more details of on the WPC website.

The Parish Council currently has 7 appointed Councillors, many of which I am pleased have been able to join us this evening. Following resignations in recent months, there are now currently 3 Councillor seats remaining and I encourage anyone with an interest to contact myself or the Clerk for more information.

The last twelve months have been 'business as usual' for the Parish Council following the constraints caused by Covid restrictions in the previous two years.

I would like to thank my fellow members for their continued commitment and enthusiasm for the work of the parish council throughout the year. Thanks also go to Kyle Davies and Dot Beeston who resigned from the Parish Council earlier this year, each having made a valuable contribution during their term.

Achievements during the Year

In reviewing the activities of the last twelve months, I would also like to take the time to reflect on the achievements of the Parish Council. A milestone was achieved in the early part of 2023 following several years of discussions with Shropshire Council over the responsibility for streetlights within the Parish of Woore. After a great deal of effort and negotiation on both sides, Shropshire Council adopted all lights as of 1st April and importantly, will conduct all the necessary maintenance and upgrade on columns and lamps from this point forward, along with the provision of the electricity supply. This constitutes a significant long-term cost saving for the Parish Council and most pleasing is that some particularly old columns will hopefully be restored or replaced to the necessary safety standards.

Further, Woore Parish Council has been actively engaged with key representatives of Shropshire Council for over 12 months now, meeting remotely each month, to tackle the issues of particular concern to Councillors and residents. We're very aware that this is not a facility available to all Parish Councils and access to a forum for honest and progressive discussion has provided an opportunity to move forward on issues such as the condition of the highways, drainage, enforcement, planning and more recently, the significant increase in public rights of way and footpath related issues.

We're pleased Shropshire Council representatives are here this evening to answer questions from residents later in the agenda and we thank them for their support. Collaborative and transparent working with the local authority is the only way to



address these matters, during a difficult climate when costs are high and resources are limited.

The Queens Platinum Jubilee event of June last year was particularly successful and well attended, serving as an example of the wonderful community spirit within the Parish and something the Parish Council was proud to have enabled with the help of keen volunteers. Only a few months later, the Parish Council joined the rest of the nation in mourning the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September 2022. A book of condolence was available at St Leonards Church during the days leading up to the Funeral. Remembrance Day was also marked with Remembrance Service, attended by the Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner. The Church community of the Parish must also be acknowledged for the effort in delivering a Warm Hub to the most vulnerable members of the community during a difficult winter; there is no doubt that this has served as a valuable safe haven to those in need.

With memories of the wonderful Jubilee celebrations still front of mind, it gives me great delight that the Parish Council is in the final stages of finalising arrangements for the Kings Coronation celebrations on the weekend of 6th-8th May, with a Coronation BBQ free to attend at the Victory Hall on Sunday 7th May from 1pm. Cllr Goodman will be sharing more details of that later in the agenda and we do hope it will be supported by residents.

Community Speed watch has been active throughout the year and we thank Cllr Colin Hamilton for taking on the role to enthusiastically lead this important activity. There are now four active speed watch locations within the Parish, as well as 1 movable vehicle activated sign (MVAS) and 2 Shropshire Council owned fixed signs (VAS). Data obtained from the Speed watch and the VAS equipment is supporting us in lobbying for additional road safety mitigations and speed limits controls, including a 20mph zone outside of Woore Primary School. Speeding continues to be an absolute priority for the Parish Council and we are grateful to have the support of Inspector Claire Greenaway of West Mercia Police this evening, who is a keen advocate of the work the Parish Council and its volunteers are doing to improve the safety of road users and pedestrians on all Parish roads.

We can report that early in 2022 a feasibility study was requested by Shropshire Council and carried out by WSP, with a report issued in May stating that; 'This study concludes that the character of the roads and the existing speeds within the sections subject to 40mph and national speed limits would not justify a reduction to a 30mph restriction without the introduction of significant measures. This was echoed by West Mercia Police in their response.' We will continue to work on the reduction of speed throughout the Parish and advise on what the significant measures would entail.

We're delighted that only last month saw the formation of the Woore Parish Litter Picking Group, funded by the Parish Council and run entirely by volunteers. We'd like to thank resident Sue Lee and all volunteers for the fabulous work they have undertaken to clean up all areas of the Parish. They also welcome new members.

Cllr George Daville, with the support of myself, has continued with the task of tackling highways matters throughout the parish. Fix My Street is actively used for

reporting of issues to the local authority and progress is being made to address areas of particular concern.

A drainage survey was completed at the request of the Parish Council in the summer of 2022, which reviewed the capacity of the existing surface and foul water drainage infrastructure. The survey determined that there are multiple instances of disrepair and that the system lacks capacity. The works require significant capital investment, and the parish council is committed to ensuring this is addressed by the local authority as a priority.

Further to this, the Parish Council is campaigning for:

- Improvements to road surfacing on the A51 prior to HS2 construction traffic
- Blocked drains and gullies throughout the village to be cleared
- Improvements to most frequently used public rights of ways
- Improvements to the Churchyard footpaths
- Repair of significantly deteriorating manhole covers on A51/A525 highways
- Support to address repeat flooding issues experienced by numerous residents

Any issues in relation to highways matters; streetlights out, potholes, poor parking, overhanging trees, drainage, flooding, and much more, can be reported to Fix My Street (www.fixmystreet.com). Doing this brings Shropshire Council's attention to the problems quickly and enables photos and exact location detail to be provided.

The Parish Council has for some time supported access to defibrillators at the Woore County Store and Chetwode Arms in Pipe Gate and was therefore delighted to provide an additional defibrillator and cabinet to Woore Victory Hall in the early part of 2023, enabling 24/7 access to the life saving equipment. Thanks goes to the Victory Hall for their agreement to helping with the monthly maintenance of this.

Our Clerk has maintained a good working relationship with lengthsman and grounds maintenance contractors to ensure the effective upkeep and maintenance of the parish, including grass cutting, hedge cutting, weed spraying, playground maintenance, seasonal planting and much more.

Last but not least, the Council's major project to provide a purpose for the land on Newcastle Road will progress in the later part of this year with resident consultation high up the list of priorities to establish support for numerous ideas and to generate potential funding streams. Projects of this size are only possible with the support of residents and we encourage anyone with ideas or experience in delivering projects of this nature to approach the working party.

HS2

Later in the agenda, Victoria Roberts from the HS2 Engagement Team will provide an update on activities in the Parish which are under review. My thanks to the HS2 Working Party, Cllr. Daville and the Clerk who have supported myself at numerous HS2 engagement meetings and presentations over the last 12 months, putting forward the local knowledge of the Parish and ensuring the Health, Safety & Wellbeing of the residents. I could extend this meeting for several hours to cover all

the details, but instead and to ensure we remain transparent on all important HS2 matters, there is a dedicated tab on the Parish Council website that provides valuable information.

The latest update is that in February/March this year, there was a Schedule 17 Planning Application for lorry movements advised by Staffordshire County Council, who are the controlling authority with permission to grant lorry movements on the A51 and the A525 through Woore Parish. This authority is because Shropshire Council, now, like ourselves, only a Consultee on this issue, abdicated responsibility. Cllr Marshall may wish to expand on this in the presentation that he will be giving later. We suggest that due to Woore Parish Council and Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council, who we work closely with on HS2 matters, both submitting extensive comments, the decision on permission is now on an agreed extension date until the 19th of May 2023.

We will continue to ensure that the circa 30no Mitigations/Interventions, most of which were agreed by HS2 Ltd, along with the Assurances secured at the Select Committee of the House of Commons and Lords at Petitioning are carried out fully.

Planning & Woore Neighbourhood Plan

The Council continues to undertake its duty to comment on planning applications and, as part of this duty, it has challenged proposals that are not in-keeping with the Woore Neighbourhood Plan which was supported by referendum in 2019 and provides a strategy for development in the local community as a way of helping to influence planning in areas where Parishioners live and/or work. The plan envisages around 30 additional dwellings from 2016-2036, incorporating small scale residential developments of up to ten dwellings per development. There have been 16 developments to date, representing 2.29 dwellings per year; a rate which would see 46 additional dwellings by 2036.

The plan is due for review in late 2023 and the Parish Council welcomes residents with an interest in the process to join the working party.

Currently in process is the Local Government Boundary Review with the next period of consultation commencing on 25 April when the LGBCE will publish their initial draft division pattern. It is very likely that it will look significantly different to the proposal submitted by Shropshire Council. The Consultation ends on 3rd July 2023 and Woore Parish Council will take part in the Consultation if deemed necessary.

Finance

In addition to the regular Council activity covered above, there are several strategic projects highlighted on the current Woore Place Plan (available on the Parish website) which is designed to document potential infrastructure improvements to be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is money paid to the Parish in accordance with the number of new houses that have been built within the last 12 months. We are pleased to report that Woore will receive £17,393.60 in CIL Neighbourhood Fund payments for the year ahead. The Parish Council is committed



to working with Shropshire Council to highlight opportunities for enhancing current infrastructure, in line with the inevitable growth of the Parish. As always, residents and community organisations are encouraged to inform the Parish Council of any suggestions they may have, large or small, and the Parish Council welcomes their contributions.

This leads me to the Parish Council precept (the council tax rate set by the Parish Council), which has been set at £31,537 for the coming financial year. The Parish Council made the difficult decision for the fourth consecutive year, not to increase precept during the current economic climate and therefore accepts that it must work harder than ever to service and enhance the Parish within the constraints of the budget.

Woore Parish Council subscribes to audits by Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) which requires interim internal audits of financial and administrative processes and methods, with a final external audit at the end of the financial year. We're naturally delighted and proud that the most recent external audit in July of 2022 and internal audit since have raised no specific issues or recommendations.

Sadly, Helen Jackson who has been Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to the Council for the last three years, has decided to relinquish this post and the Council therefore seeks a replacement. Helen has held this position for nearly three years and has transformed the operation of Woore Parish Council in terms of compliance, governance, communications and improved standards. We wish Helen the very best in her new role and thank her for hard work to date, she will be missed.

The Council continues to represent the community on the numerous local and county wide groups, of which we're grateful to have for some of here this evening. Our thanks to their members for the valuable work they do.

In closing this report, I should like to offer my thanks to all Parish Councillors and contractors for their support and efforts throughout the year to make Woore Parish a wonderful place to live and importantly, to the increasing number of volunteers who support the numerous schemes and initiatives we undertake – it wouldn't be possible without you all.

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