

Antrobus Parish Council **Chairman's Report 2002/2003**

The Parish Council year started with Ernie Wright still as Chairman.

In April the Planning sub committee had two evening tours of the village and items of concern were referred to Vale Royal Borough Council. We also had a very successful 'spring clean' of the village, which was attended by some 30 people who were rewarded for their efforts with a bacon buttie.

The April meeting was attended by Trevor Collins who explained to the Council the reasons for the temporary closure of the Post Office.

The Council was informed that the Playground project was now fully funded.

The Council also Voted 6 to 3 to adopt the controversial Code of Conduct.

The May meeting saw myself elected as Chairman and Ann Barlow as Vice Chairman. A vote of thanks was given to Ernie Wright for two years of invaluable work as Chairman.

The new Audit Regime requires an internal auditor and JHC were appointed.

A donation to the Village Hall committee of £500 was approved for the forthcoming Jubilee celebrations.

Approval for a new footpath from School Lane to the bus stop in Knutsford Road was received from C. C. C.

June saw the highly successful Jubilee celebrations in the village and a letter was sent thanking the VHC on behalf of the village.

New boundary signs were erected on the roads and lanes bordering the village.

The June and July meetings included two motions transferring parcels of land from the PC to the VHC. The reasons for this came about when drawing up the lease for the Playground and are well documented. The transfer of one parcel is straightforward while the other is very complicated and is ongoing.

Unfortunately the debate on these two motions became entwined with the new Code of Conduct. Although conflicting advice was received at the time and much discussion took place, I do think that we came out of the experience with a better understanding of the Code and Prejudicial Interests in particular.

At the July meeting the Clerk read out a letter of resignation from John Corlett.

Thanks were given to Mr. Corlett for the contribution he had made to the PC over the years.

The meeting was also advised that Trevor Collins had given notice of his resignation to the Post Office and would be finishing in September.

August saw the start of the search to find a successor to Trevor Collins at the Post Office. Post Office Ltd advised the PC that they are committed to providing a service in Antrobus but a Postmaster had to be found. The PC said that they would help wherever possible. The VH became involved as an alternative to the existing site. The position was advertised and a few people were interested but no one actually applied for the position. Steve Howard the Comberbach Sub Postmaster agreed with Post Office Ltd to become the interim incumbent until a permanent appointee could

be found. Things went quiet until the New Year when the PC thought that one final effort should be made and it was decided to call a public meeting. The meeting was held on the 13th January and some 60 people attended. The matter was fully aired, but nobody came forward to run either the Post Office or possibly the shop.

In discussions after the meeting it was thought by some that a community shop would probably attract reasonable support. A month later a further meeting was held and a steering committee of eight was elected to take forward a community shop project. The Antrobus Community Shop Association was now in place and Steve Howard agreed to continue in the interim as Sub Postmaster. The position of Sub Postmaster for Antrobus is still vacant and the Community Shop Association has received good support but is still in negotiations with Trevor Collins with regard to premises.

No election was necessary to replace John Corlett as a Councillor. Notice was given that the Council was looking to co-opt a member of the Parish on to the committee and two very good applications were received from Gill Collins and Deborah Hodd. The committee was unanimous in their vote in favour of Deborah Hodd.

Tenders came back for the Playground in August and were over budget but it was thought that savings could quite easily be made.

From August through to December we seemed to be bombarded with planning applications many of which were controversial and time consuming. May I say at this point how grateful I am to Deborah Hodd for her contribution in this area. We have been able to put very well argued and reasoned points to the Vale Royal Planning Department which they have obviously taken note of when making their decisions. Planning applications have gone quiet through the winter but I expect this is the lull before the storm.

September saw building work commence on the Playground. Representatives from Riverside Housing Association and The Weaver Vale Housing Trust attended the September meeting and explained that the original criteria for lettings of the affordable housing were still in place.

The autumn saw School Lane being excavated on several occasions in an attempt to eliminate the flooding of the village field. Pieces of pipe have been replaced since when we have gone through a dry period. Time will tell if the action taken has solved the problem.

The Jubilee Playground was finally opened on the 12th December. This is probably the biggest project the PC has undertaken since the affordable housing. It is a pleasure to see the Playground being used so much for the time of year.

Unfortunately in December Carol Kinsey our Clerk for 8 years tendered her resignation and the search started for a replacement. There was little initial interest in the position but we were able to interview two first class applicants and are very pleased that Inge Cosgrove accepted the post. Inge has worked alongside Carol and took over the position on 1st March.

Much of the early part of this year has been taken up in preparing the 2003/2004 budget, risk assessment and fixed asset register, all of which have to be prepared under the new Audit Regime.

As a result of the budget it was decided to increase the precept for the first time for many years. I would like to thank Ann, Ray and Carol for all their help in preparing the budget.

The February meeting received a letter from the Antrobus Community Shop Association asking for financial support. It was decided to donate £500 in two stages £300 immediately and £200 at a later date if required.

The Chairman's Charity Dinner Dance was held on 28th February. Due to the help of council members, wives, husbands and friends who gave of their time and donated raffle prizes the evening was a great success. I thank everyone for their help. £1,312 was raised, £150 went to each of the two village churches and £1,012 went to Macmillan Cancer Relief.

I have been proud to represent the Parish Council and the village at three civic events, The Mayor of Vale Royal's Golden Jubilee church service. The Queen's Golden Jubilee visit to Cheshire at King's School, Macclesfield. Cheshire County Civic Service held at Chester Cathedral.

The Parish Council has dealt with many other matters over the past 12 months that are not mentioned in this report.

It has been a very busy and progressive year for the Council and all councillors and the Clerk have worked very diligently on behalf of the Parishioners. I don't expect the workload for the next 12 months to be any less.

I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and for the help and support they have given me as Chairman. In particular I would like to thank Ann who has always been there for me to contact for help and advice.