

Chairman's Annual Report

21st May 2012

In the last year planning has again been the issue that has dominated council time. More specifically an application submitted on Meg Lane to create a Wholesale Plant Nursery for Crosbys of Timperley united the village in opposition.

The first most of us knew of this was when flyers put through residents' doors last August inviting all to an open display in the village hall where we could meet the applicant and their planning consultants. The growing look of shock on their faces when virtually everybody raised objections told me that they had expected no opposition.

The timescale for the application slipped and in the meantime the Keep Antrobus Special Campaign was formed so that when the planning application was sneakily submitted just before Christmas 2011 opposition was already in full swing.

Antrobus Parish Council held an open afternoon on 25rd January displaying the plans and requesting feedback from residents and then we hosted a Public Meeting at St Mark's School in early February where all parties could explain and debate their positions to allow the Council to determine our response. 127 people attended and all who voted were against the proposal.

Cheshire West and Cheshire Planners were inundated with objections by post, email and phone from Antrobus Parish Council, residents, County Councillors and various bodies connected with the application until it was finally rejected. At the time of writing no amended application has yet been submitted.

A knock on effect was to the playground. In Autumn 2011 Antrobus Parish Council received notice, initially verbally, that the owner of the strip of land adjacent to the playground (from which there is no access at present to the field beyond) wanted us to remove two small parts of the playground that encroached on his land.

It is understood that when the playground was constructed over 10 years ago the left hand boundary was zigzagged to the agreement of all, but unfortunately nothing was put in writing. As a result two local farmers have rationalised the boundary but we are left with a hefty bill to resurface the affected areas and the number of children's ground games has had to be reduced from three to one.

Many other planning matters have come before the Council, the majority of which are non-contentious and straight forward. In most cases we raise no objections; some are actually supported whilst others are objected to on the grounds of non-compliance with existing planning guidelines or policies.

After the May 2011 elections Antrobus Parish Council were able to resubmit our application to be a Quality Parish Council. This was led by Ann Barlow and Paul Harrison and we were duly reaccredited in the summer of 2011.

Also at about that time Greener Antrobus was formed as an offshoot of Antrobus Parish Council headed by Kate O'Donnell. The general idea is for energy conservation and all Antrobus residents are invited to attend the monthly meetings in the Antrobus Arms.

One idea that came out of the meetings was to create a community allotment and this came into being on a plot of land at Paynes Farm, Reed Lane in March 2012 kindly licensed to Antrobus Parish Council by Mrs Bolshaw.

Antrobus Parish Council has maintained the precept again at 2010 levels and through careful management it was decided to award grants in excess of normal levels in 2012. To commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee we asked all local groups to apply for specific project grants and four were received which almost exactly totalled the £3,000 that we had agreed to allocate.

These have now been verified by external sources and the cheques will be presented at the May 2012 Parish Council meeting to the Village Hall, Antrobus Pantomime, Greener Antrobus and Antrobus Fete. A further grant of £300 has been made to the Village Hall to help pay for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in early June.

As usual the litter pick was very successful and most routes were taken and cleared. The Council hosted a very enjoyable charity evening on 2nd March which raised over £1800 for St Luke's Hospice Winsford, The Church and Chapel.

Councillors have been represented at the Remembrance Day service and the fete procession and various awards have been won in the Community Pride and Best Kept Village competitions in our population group.

As usual it has been a very busy year and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the councillors and clerk for their hard work and commitment in all that we do. I am sorry to say, however, that the Clerk completes her employment at the end of May 2012 although we welcome Simon Palmer as her replacement from 1st June.

Nigel Pemberton