

Antrobus Annual Parish Meeting Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018  
Chairman's Report

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Although this report is headed the Chairman's report it is of necessity provided by the Vice Chairman. The year was greatly affected by the death of our Chairman Roger Sutton. His passion and commitment to the village of Antrobus was clear for everyone to see. His belief was that the Parish Council could be an advocate for improving the well being of the village by ensuring it gave representation wherever possible in support of village aims. He was particularly enthusiastic to see younger people and organisations come together to promote events independently of the Parish Council and that outside agencies should be made aware of Antrobus' views across all issues that might affect the village. As his last report of 2017 noted this is a varied list of activities that has got no shorter this year. We have continued to operate to the same guiding principles and all Parish Councillors have diligently made their individual contributions.

There are certain topics that require comment in a report of this kind, because they have occupied a lot of time and resources of the Parish Council.

1. Town and Country Act planning applications are referred to the Parish Council as a statutory consultee. This means the legislation requires the Parish Council to be consulted. Some would like Parish Councils not to be consulted. Antrobus has always treated such rights to be very valuable to the village and so considers such consultations carefully. Where time limits allow engage in canvassing parishioners views, usually by calling a public meeting as an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council. This was done to consider the application for 15 houses in the Green Belt on Knutsford Road. Written representations were made to Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) as planning authority. In addition, at the request of the Parish Council, the application was decided by the planning committee of CW&C and not left to the officers of the planning department. We were greatly assisted by our ward councillors in facilitating this process and also for speaking at the planning committee meeting in Chester in support of the Parish Council's consultation response. Our Clerk and Councillor Phil Pugh attended and Phil delivered a summary of those points in the allotted 3 minutes given to persons present. His thespian training and roles in the village pantomime coming into play! The outcome of the planning application is now well known and whilst some members of the village may be disappointed the fact is the views of the council were heard on behalf of the best interests of the village. The statutory power to make the decision rests with CW&C and not the Parish Council. We should not be discouraged from making the village's views on future planning applications known and will respond to all consultation requests.
2. The playground, which is the responsibility of the Parish Council on land owned by the Village Hall, has had its ground lease renewed by the Village Hall. The new seating and tables have arrived thanks to the financial support from Tesco through the Village Hall that bid for the money. This is a good example of teamwork as the Parish Council, because it is a public body, could not bid under the Tesco scheme. We are stronger when working together. Another phrase of our past Chairman.
3. Broadband in rural communities remains a national issue that places rural communities at a significant disadvantage in the digital age. Again members of the

village have doggedly stuck at this issue and in 2019 we expect more properties to be able to be connected, as finally the Arley exchange is to be upgraded. Those connected to the Comberbach exchange can already access high capacity broadband services.

4. Flood protection is another national topic that locally is linked to the network of land drainage serving Antrobus. Riparian landowners are responsible for keeping these drains or watercourses clear. The Parish Council has started a mapping project in order to record routes and land ownerships. Prevention is the best form of protection and so when complete this will give a database of information to assist in keeping us as free as possible from flooding. We ask for everyone's co-operation in this project. Councillors Chris Wright and Helen Metcalf are your contacts.
5. Your Parish Council's finances are satisfactory to meet its foreseeable needs in the coming year with a small contingency of reserves. External auditors have audited the accounts. There was no need to increase the precept (tax) for 2018/19. This is only possible because of the commitment of Parish Councillors to take on tasks between meetings. The Parish Council meets monthly although it is not obliged to do so, but in practice we do not see how matters can be properly dealt with otherwise. No councillor receives any allowance. The Parish Council pays for attendance on training courses requiring a fee to be paid.
6. The 14 cast iron sign posts in the village are thought to be at least 70 years old and this year they were all sand blasted and repainted.
7. As reported last year a vacancy occurred and then unfortunately a second vacancy occurred. Both these vacancies have been filled and we do appreciate and thank the people who put their names forward for consideration to be co-opted. This enabled there to be a choice as to the gender balance and range of skills and experience on the Parish Council.

Finally thanks to our Parish Clerk Simon Palmer for his conduct of the administration. The digital revolution seems mainly to produce ever more documents to read and be considered, surveys to reply to and statistics to be collected.

On a personal note I never expected to be delivering this report and thank colleagues for their support in keeping good order during meetings and dealing constructively with the business in hand. 2018 /19 will present its challenges but the Parish Council is well placed to meet those.

Stephen Barker Vice Chairman