

Parish Council Chairman's Report for April 2022

The beginning of the Council's business year coincided with emergency Covid related legislation allowing remote (Zoom) meetings ceasing.

The subsequent decision of the Parish Council (PC) to move its meeting place from Antrobus Village Hall to St Marks Church was not taken lightly but has subsequently proved successful. We are equally grateful to the Village Hall and our current hosts for allowing us to use their facilities.

Your Parish Council continues to comply with all expected financial regulations & is very conscious of its responsibility regarding use of public funds.

Savings have recently been achieved by altering the inspection routine for the playground area whilst continuing to comply with all insurance requirements.

"Small projects" funded by the PC include the acquisition of the Tommy figure in the centre of the village, improved planting around the flagpole, the CPR (resuscitation) training event held in St Marks church in January 2022 and provision of the "Flood Hub" shed now installed in the Village Hall car park. This is for storage of "fast reaction" material including sandbags & traffic cones for use in times of heavy rain or flooding.

An ongoing project is the provision of Antrobus specific signage / planting for location at either end of Knutsford Road.

In support of the suffering population in Ukraine, a donation of £500 was made to the Red Cross for specific use in that country.

Despite these expenditures, your PC was able to agree to leave the parish precept unchanged for the forthcoming year, effectively a reduction and in recognition of challenging times for many residents of the parish.

The Village Tidy Up event early in the year organised by the PC was well supported as was the subsequent social event hosted by the Village Hall. A welcome relief for many villagers & a step back in to the new normal!

An award was presented by the PC to Clive & Karen Peploe (on behalf of the Village's Covid community action team) in recognition of their efforts over the preceding months of the pandemic.

In response to CWACs proposal and request for parish councils to create a Community Resilience Plan, (with flooding considered as a priority for Antrobus), the PC has worked hard to create our plan; particular thanks to Councillor Carol Bailey for her work on this, whose efforts were rewarded by the knowledge that Antrobus has become the first parish in the borough to publish its plan – another first!

Unfortunately, CWACs own progress in reporting has not matched ours, and the report from the Flood Consultancy (Atkins) engaged by CWAC is still awaited.

Other CWAC related business has included the acceptance by the PC of support for an initiative to develop wildflower areas on a few limited grass verges around the village. Specifically, this involved CWAC contractors preparing the ground of the sites, followed by volunteers sowing seed purchased by the PC.

All residents are also now in possession of a range of new recycling bins as part of CWACs latest revised plans. These include the introduction of an additional annual fee for collection of green garden waste. Antrobus's designation as a Local Service Centre (which has implications for significant development proposals within greenbelt) remains despite the loss of original shop & post office in recent years. Reassessment by CWAC due in May 2021 remains outstanding.

A recent proposal by many local authorities to introduce fees for domestic diy waste deposits at "the tip" has been overtaken by central government policy so is unlikely to proceed in the short term.

Much of the PCs business continues to be related to planning & highways matters.

Multiple “routine” domestic applications have been received & commented on throughout the year. For the vast majority, the PC offers no objection but if there are feelings of a proposal being inappropriate in relation to size, location, setting a “green belt” related precedent or the like, an objection would be raised. Occasionally the PC has found it appropriate to request an opinion from the CWAC Enforcement officer.

Following the initial statement of intent by a developer to apply for planning permission for building on the site behind Manley Close and their own housing needs survey, the PC made regular contact with the agent regarding progress of the scheme; members of the development group attended a parish council meeting, followed by a public consultation in the Village Hall at the end of September.

There was no subsequent contact from either the developer or their agent & it was learnt in the new year that the developer had entered administration. Although the Parish Council had declined to make any comments prior to a formal application being submitted, this can be viewed as a lucky escape for the village on this occasion as several other building sites in progress around the north-west have been left unfinished.

Another event which raised a considerable amount of local interest was Arley Hall Estate’s hosting of the Harry Potter event.

Major concerns about traffic impact were raised & in the event, the impact on Antrobus residents appeared to be minimal.

Dialogue with Arley continues and it is understood at this stage that they intend to host the event again at the end of this year.

The designation of Neighbourhood Area status on the land owned by Antrobus Village Hall, (facilitated by the PC) is in place. Potentially this can streamline the process for the development of a permanent site for the community shop (through a Community Right to Build Order); discussion between the Village Hall & the shop association continues.

Since the designation of the former Shearings Depot in the Swineyard Lane / Barleycastle estate area, with improved road signage on approaching motorway routes, incidents of “lost” HGVs do appear to be reduced. However, dialogue has continued between the PC and CWAC. Unfortunately, CWACs response has not been as positive as we would have liked & pressure continues to be applied as much as is possible.

Recent months have seen inconvenience to local commuters caused by the prolonged closure of Soot Hill due to major landslip, made more complicated by the simultaneous closure of New Warrington Road during installation of services for a major housing development.

The ongoing problem for several residents in the centre of Antrobus has been prolonged / repeated failure of their broadband. Communication with Openreach remains notoriously difficult & the PC has communicated with the office of our MP Esther McVey to try to expedite a permanent solution to the problem.

In conclusion I would like to thank our clerk Simon Palmer for his continued excellent support & knowledge of procedure. Also, to my Vice Chair Carol Bailey and all fellow councillors whose efforts behind the scenes are something that all parishioners should be grateful for.

Simon Batey
Chairman