

Chairman's Report 2020-21

As Chairman of the Church Eaton Parish Council I am pleased to present my first Chairman's annual report, covering the period May 2020 to April 2021. I succeeded Councillor Harriman in the role of Chairman on 12th June and Councillor Dodd was re-confirmed in the role of Vice Chair. Councillor Harriman kindly supported me in an extended period of transition and he stepped down after the March 2021 Meeting. I thank ex-Councillor Harriman for his service on the Parish Council, which covered 10 years with half of this in the role of Chairman.

The Parish Council met ten times in the year and of these, nine (eight Parish Council Meetings and a Finance Meeting) were conducted remotely, with just one meeting in the Institute, combining the Annual Parish Meeting and the September Parish Council meeting. With COVID-19 lockdown in place, Parish Council meetings between May and July were cancelled. We adopted the Zoom software for the remote meetings and although not ideal, it did facilitate the discussion of agenda items and allow the Parish Council to function.

Regretfully, the village Play Park remained closed throughout the year because of COVID-19 restrictions. The Parish Council consulted with our insurers and were told that we must follow the Government's COVID-19 Guidance for owner/operators of playgrounds. The guidance requires operators to have a regime in place to clean high traffic touch points frequently. The Parish Council is unable to comply with this requirement and the play park has remained closed, a position that is reviewed at every Parish Council meeting.

The subject of potholes was a regular topic throughout the year. In May, County Highways undertook extensive road repairs along the Wheaton Aston to Marston road. This was finished with surface dressing to the entire section. In February, the Chairman was alerted to vehicles being damaged by a pothole on Cowley Lane between the village and Gnosall. With assistance from County Councillor Winnington, this was escalated to County Highways and emergency repairs were undertaken. I urge anyone seeing a pothole to use the County Council's online reporting service, which can be accessed from a link on the churcheaton.org web site's Parish Council FAQ page.

Flooding has continued to be another recurring subject. In Marston, the Parish Council and a number of parishioners have worked together over many months, clearing ditches, replacing damaged underground pipes, emptying inspection chambers and clearing debris from blocked bridges, in an attempt to ensure that the storm-water drainage was free-flowing. A burst water main in April demonstrated that the work had been successful.

County Highways have undertaken works to resolve the long-standing flooding issues on the road outside Little Onn Hall.

Flooding to some village properties along and around the High Street remains an issue. The Parish Council has assisted affected residents to engage with the County Council's Highways and Flood Teams as well as with Severn-Trent Water. The Parish Council has also approached the Environment Agency and the Canals and Rivers Trust, for assistance. This matter is still ongoing.

The village troughs had reached the end of serviceable life and we are grateful to Mr. Nigel Bickley for constructing the very smart troughs now in place around the village. A team of Councillors and parishioners transferred the bulbs and plants from the old troughs into the new, in the Autumn.

Mr Jon Gibbs continues to manage the Parish Council section of the churcheaton.org web site. He works closely with the Parish Council to provide a valuable source of information for parishioners. There is a FAQ page, designed to guide parishioners to the correct place for progressing various local issues. A recent addition is the mobile phone reception survey, where the public can record the

level of coverage they experience. The Parish Council hopes to use this information to gain traction with mobile service providers when pushing for better signal coverage in the village area.

In September, a group of parishioners and councillors re-painted the Marston telephone kiosk. In March we received notice that BT intend to remove the kiosk, so the Parish Council will apply to preserve this asset under the Adopt a Kiosk scheme.

The Parish Council arranged for the local finger post arms to be repainted in November, and for the long-neglected Slab Lane arm to be replaced. We are grateful for the generous support from Bradford Estates which covered the cost of painting the arms and the purchase of paint to be used on the posts, once the weather improves.

The Parish Council received some criticism for not objecting to the original planning application, submitted in 2018, for an area at Little Onn Airfield. Investigation conducted by the Parish Council and local residents found that the ongoing operations at this site seemed to be far beyond what had been specified in the application and granted. The Parish Council organised a site meeting with residents and representatives from the operating company who agreed to terminate this operation and remove the stock of chippings.

In the year, the Parish Council has supported various initiatives, including the village Christmas tree, resurfacing of the Glebelands car park, servicing of the Church clock, reprinting the Church Eaton village map and replacing expired pads on the defibrillators.

Costs incurred by the Parish Council include, hire of the Institute, grass cutting, playground repairs, plants for the village troughs, council insurance, Staffordshire Parish Council Association membership and the clerk's fees, as well as a range of other minor expenses. My thanks go to the clerk to the council, Mrs Diane Key for her diligence and guidance through this challenging year and for providing detailed information at all times.

Looking forward to the next 12-months, I anticipate that the Parish Council will be engaged in: re-opening the play park, progressing the village flooding issues, repainting the finger-post posts, adopting the Marston phone kiosk, the challenges around High Street traffic, enhancements to the web site, and the co-option of a new councillor to the current vacancy.

That completes my report for the year 2020/21.

Simon Moore,
Chairman, Church Eaton Parish Council.