

Church Eaton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2023-24

As Chairman of the Church Eaton Parish Council, I am pleased to present my Chairman's annual report for the period May 2023 to April 2024.

At the Parish Council meeting in May 2023, I was re-confirmed as Chairman and Councillor Alex Lloyd was elected to the role of Vice Chair.

The Parish Council met ten times in the period, all meetings were held in the Village Institute. The Annual Parish Meeting was combined with the May 2023 Parish Council meeting. There was no meeting in August and the January meeting was cancelled due to flooding of the roads caused by storm Henk. Meeting minutes are available online at www.churcheaton.org.uk.

The Parish Council is funded by an annual precept, raised as part of the Council Tax. For 2023-24, the precept was approximately £6600.

As well as its statutory duties, the Parish Council has responsibility for the four defibrillators and their housing cabinets, located in our Parish. The cabinets are illuminated and heated and we thank those at the neighbouring properties for providing the power supplies, namely Manor Farm, The Gables at Little Onn, The Royal Oak and The Institute. The defibrillators are professionally checked every month by Gnosall First Aiders, and we thank them for this service. All four defibrillator units are registered on The Circuit so that the emergency services know their location and status. The Parish Council long-term financial strategy covers replacement of the consumable items such as pads and batteries and also the defibrillator units and cabinets when they reach the end of their operational service.

The village Play Park is managed by the Parish Council and Vice-Chair Councillor Lloyd continues to perform the weekly inspections. The SportSafe annual inspection highlighted the need for some maintenance work. Missing handles for exercise equipment have been replaced and there are plans for a Councillor working party to address the other issues.

We are pleased to see members of the public at our meetings, and hope that we are able to guide and assist when matters are raised in the Open Forum slot. To assist with smooth running of this, we have drawn up and published guidance for public participation at Parish Council meetings.

Roads in the parish are an ongoing concern with an abundance of potholes and flooding. I encourage the Parish Council and parishioners to use the County Council online reporting tool, to alert Highways about potholes and drainage problems. There will be a lead-time before action is taken but the defects will be logged and tracked in the County Council system.

We are pleased to see County Council Highways making permanent repairs to certain sections of roads in the parish, such as the route from Joan Eaton's Cross to High Onn. The Parish Council continues to build and use its working relationship with County Highways to highlight and escalate the most significant defects. We acknowledge that this winter has seen a prolonged period of wet weather that has caused more road damage than normal.

There have been more issues with flooding in and around the village. During some of the winter storms, surface water caused many of the roads to become impassable. The Parish Council has written to County Highways and the County Flood Team, requesting that at least one route into the village is prioritised to be kept open, during periods of flooding.

It is disappointing to hear that some properties in and around the village have suffered from storm water flooding. Having evolved over many years, the surface water drainage system in the village is

complex. Despite some pipework repairs undertaken by Severn Trent Water, the problems remain. The Parish Council have engaged County Council Flood Team to look into this.

The Parish Council is a standard Consultee for Borough Council Planning applications in our Parish. The Parish Councillors continue to review and make planning-relevant comments on all applications. Parishioners submitting a planning application or with concerns about applications that have been made, are welcome to make representation to the Parish Council in the Open Forum Agenda item of the monthly meetings.

The Small Authority Exemption Certificate was obtained in advance of the annual audit. The 2022/23 Internal Audit Report, Governance and Accounting Statements were prepared. We thank Mrs. Bellamy for completing the internal audit, in June. We also thank Les Beattie for his work, running the Parish Council payroll, for payment of the Clerk's fees.

The Parish Council funded two, Saturday morning Civic Amenity refuse collections. We thank The Royal Oak for allowing the use of their car park in May and October.

In the year, the Parish Council has supported various initiatives, including the village Christmas tree, the Hanging Baskets and Tubs competition, and the Community Speedwatch group for whom we have ordered a set of Speedwatch Area signs. Councillor Gibbs secured a donation of Camp Bestival tickets from the organisers and with assistance from Councillor Lloyd, these were donated to the village school for fund raising. The Parish Council received a donation from the school, to put towards improvements in the village Play Park. The Chairman has represented the Parish at the annual Mayor Making Ceremony and at the Remembrance Service.

Costs incurred by the Parish Council include: hire of the Village Institute for Parish Meetings; grass cutting; playground safety inspection; materials for 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.

The churcheaton.org.uk web site provides a public source for Parish Council information and guidance, in conjunction with the village noticeboard. I encourage parishioners to download the myStaffs smartphone app and use it to interact with Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County Council.

My thanks go to our Clerk to the Council, Mrs Diane Key whose organisation, guidance and diligence remains invaluable to the Parish Council, as well as the detailed and accurate information she supplied, throughout this year. I would like to express my thanks to the current team of Parish Councillors, for their contributions and work over the last 12 months. I thank PCSO Patrick Wright for his years of service in our community and wish him well for his retirement.

Looking forward to the next twelve months, the Parish Council hopes to be able to replace some of the decommissioned Play Park equipment. We encourage the parishioners to make suggestions for the type of equipment they would like to see installed.

The Parish Council Standing Orders (the rules under which we operate) are being revised and updated, after a substantial time without change.

The 2024 Civic Amenity visits have been organised for May and October.

We anticipate that the telecommunications mast installed at Woolaston Lane will soon come into service.

That completes my report for the year 2023-24.

Simon Moore,
Chairman, Church Eaton Parish Council.