

Brocton Parish Council – Chairman’s Annual Report 2017

Presented to the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday, 26 April 2017

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Parish Council’s work during the past year.

I have been acting in the capacity of Chairman to Brocton Parish Council for almost 2 years and have seen many changes during that time; sadly, I have to say mainly due to reductions in funding. However, as a Parish Council we remain committed to providing the best possible service we can to you, the residents of Brocton and the surrounding areas. We continue to rely heavily upon the support of volunteers, for which we remain ever grateful.

Litter remains a constant challenge for the village, with the most recent event having taken place on Friday, 3 March 2017. Please continue to provide your support to any litter campaigns arranged by the Parish Council and refer to the Paperchase for dates of future events.

You may recall I reported on broadband provision in April 2016, where it continued to cause frustration. Well, I am happy to be able to report that In November 2016 the agreement for the latest phase of broadband provision improvements across Staffordshire was approved and within this phase Brocton was identified for upgrading. Whilst this is very welcome news we are still awaiting for the work to be completed, which is unfortunate. Hopefully, when I produce my annual report in 2018 I will be able to provide a more up to date account of progress.

Resignation of Cllr – Mrs Carole Green resigned from the Parish Council with effect from 7 July 2016 having being co-opted onto the Council in July 2014. She has been a respected and informed team member. The Parish Council thanked Carole for all her involvement and extended its very best wishes to Carole and her family.

New Cllr – Larry Goff, a local resident of Brocton for 3 years was co-opted to the Council in October 2016.

We have experienced some upheaval since the resignation of our experienced Clerk, Mrs Christine Hammond, whom I know that many of you will have got to know very well over her period of employment as Clerk to the Parish Council. We appointed Mrs Virginia Tennant in August 2016 but unfortunately Virginia decided, in January 2017, that she wished to pursue

an alternative career and finished in the role in February 2017. We have been fortunate to secure the services of Mrs Jill Davies, who took over the role on 6 February 2017. Whilst Jill joins us as an inexperienced Clerk; she has worked within a local authority setting for over 30 years and is settling into the role and I am sure she will grow in knowledge and be an asset to the Parish Council. I am sure you will join me in supporting Jill in her new role and welcome her to the village.

Picnic in the Park 2016. Our annual Picnic in the Park event was held on Wednesday, 3 August 2016 and I am happy to report, that despite, strong winds and torrential rain, there were some pleasant periods of sunshine. There were approximately 50 children in attendance, accompanied by family and friends. Activities were provided by Brocton Football Club junior coaches and Brocton Brownies, alongside Punch and Judy; a bouncy castle and face painting. Music was provided by Derek Sharpe and John and Karen Sulway organised the car parking arrangements. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all of those involved for making the day such a success.

State of the footpaths and roads within the village. Some of the footpaths within the village are in terrible condition, in particular the footpath on Sawpit Lane outside the Children's play Park and we are currently in ongoing discussions with Staffordshire County Council to see if this can be repaired. Unfortunately, you will be aware that the public finances at both the Borough and County level are under significant strain, however, myself and my fellow Councillors continue to lobby the Borough and County on behalf of Brocton residents. In addition, we are also in discussions about the appalling state of Brook Lane with the Borough Council. Brook Lane remains a significant challenge and Councillor Middleton is personally investigating the classification of this. At the moment it is a bridleway, however, it would appear that the way Brook Lane is currently being used may suggest that this historic classification needs to be reviewed. Despite these challenges, I am happy to be able to report that there has been a success and that Brick Kiln Lane has recently been resurfaced.

Civic Amenity visits. Unfortunately the numbers of visits have had to be reduced from 9 to 6 for 2017/18; however, we have used some of our reserves to maintain the best level of service possible for the residents. This reduction is as a direct result of the financial strain being experienced at Borough level thus leaving Parish Councils with little option but to support the provision or consider withdrawing it altogether.

We are constantly striving to seek innovative ways to improve communication between the Parish Council and the residents of Brocton and are currently exploring the merits of setting up a Facebook page. This project is being managed by the Clerk and your views on this would be most welcome. We will continue to produce the quarterly Paperchase and will always consider any ideas from residents for inclusion within this, obviously any such ideas will need to be both relevant and appropriate to the village. Attendance at the monthly meetings of the Parish Council are encouraged and the Public Session at the beginning of each meeting allows you the opportunity to raise any items or share your concerns. Finally, there is also the Parish Council website, which is also an important part of our communication with you.

Much of the work undertaken by the Parish Council would not be possible without the support of many people who willing give up their time. The voluntary work that a number of you regularly provide is hugely beneficial to the village of Brocton and to the Parish Council and is of significant financial benefit. I would like to take this time to say 'thank you' to all of you. This includes my fellow Parish Councillors, our Borough and County Councillors – Frank Finlay and Len Bloomer. Not forgetting John Sulway, whom regularly inspects the children's play park and Alan Siddons, our internal auditor.