

Brocton Parish Council – Chairman’s Annual Report 2018

Presented to the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday, 25 April 2018

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

2017/18 has been my 3rd year of acting in the capacity as Chairman to the Parish Council and unfortunately the issues of reductions in funding that I reported on last year have continued. 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. As always we continue to rely heavily upon the support of volunteers, for which we remain ever grateful.

New Councillor

I am delighted to confirm the co-option of the latest member of the Parish Council – Mrs Beth Smith. Beth joined us in October 2017 and is a very welcome addition. Due to personal circumstances, (she had an addition of her own in January), she has not been able to attend many meetings, but I am sure that will change as we progress through 2018.

Brook Lane and Chase Road

I reported on Brook Lane last year and unfortunately this continues to be a challenge to the Parish Council, diminishing resources of both the County and Borough affect what can be achieved and the matter of historical classification still remains outstanding

At a recent meeting with the rights of way officers, they stated that as far as they were concerned, Brook Lane was a bridleway, and would be maintained to bridleway standards, that is, suitable for horses and walkers. Not necessarily suitable for motor vehicles. With regards to having the route upgraded to a BOAT, they said that as Highways were short of money, they are very unlikely to take over something that is going to cost them additional money.

While at the meeting we raised the state of Chase Road. Again, this is classed as a Bridle Way, so as long as it is maintained to a standard fit for a horse, that is all the council are required to do. They blame the damage on excessive use by motor vehicles and say that one possible solution would be to close it to through traffic.

The Parish Council will continue to lobby the County and the Borough regarding these matters.

Cannock Chase

In the summer of 2017 the hot topic was most certainly the launch of the consultation by Staffordshire County Council, which generated significant concern within the village. The Parish Council was caught a bit on the back foot by this matter, through no fault of their own, however, I am pleased to report that we were able to react quickly to arrange meetings, with Officers from the County Council in attendance, which were well supported by the residents. These meetings allowed the opportunity for residents to convey the strength of feeling in relation to the matters being consulted on and I believe were very valuable to the intelligence being gathered by the County Council. I am also of the opinion that the strength of feeling took the County very much by surprise and has certainly caused proposals to be re-considered. I am also very grateful to the hard work of a number of residents who worked tirelessly on this matter, by gathering evidence, which resulted in the Parish Council being able to present a robust challenge to the proposals being considered to the County Council. It just shows what can be achieved when we all work together.

Brocton Community Speedwatch

I can report that the Community Speedwatch Group has been re-established in the village. During the Summer of 2017 a number of residents raised concerns about the speed of the traffic coming through the village. The Speedwatch Group held its first day of 'speed watching' in September 2017 and out of 67 cars who travelled through the village, 20 were speeding. As the weather has not been very conducive for a number of months, there has been little activity, however, as the weather improves so will the speed watch activity. I wish to thank the volunteers who willing give up their time.

Picnic in the Park 2017

This event was held on Wednesday, 2 August 2017. The weather was kind to us on the day, with the rain holding off until the evening. The event was supported by Brocton Football Club and Brocton Brownies, alongside the ever-popular bouncy castle and face painting. Music was provided by Derek Sharpe and both John and Karen Sulway supported with access to the play park and car parking matters. Unfortunately, the turnout on the day was very low and the Parish Council have decided to not hold the event in 2018, however, are keen to hear from residents if they would wish to see a community event in 2019 and what type of event would interest them. Please send any suggestions to the Clerk for consideration.

I wish to thank all of those who supported the event in 2017 and look forward to arranging another community event in 2019.

Community Approach/Rights of Way

In October 2017 communication was received from Staffordshire County Council, by all Parish Councils, advising all that it would be reducing the amount it spent on environmental and amenity maintenance. Ultimately, this means that more work will be coming the way of Parish Councils and SCC launched a website to offer advice and put the accent on 'self-help'. We don't fully understand exactly what the impact of this will be for the Parish, as yet, however, what we do know is that this will affect the maintenance of the many local rights of way around the village and therefore, the support of local landowners, whose responsibility it is to maintain stiles/gates on their land, is vital. The Parish Council will continue to do what it can and calls upon residents to be 'our eyes and ears' on the ground, if you see overgrown rights of way/broken stiles, etc let us know.

Please see the May Paperchase for the latest information about how you can support the Parish Council and County Council.

SCC will continue to meet its statutory obligations, covering routine and reactive maintenance of highways, major resurfacing work, pothole repairs, grass cutting for visibility, gritting, gully emptying and drainage improvements.

Phone kiosks

You will be aware that both of the kiosks in the village were purchased by the Parish Council from BT towards the end of 2017 for the sum of £2.00. The Parish Council now wish to put these to use to the benefit of the village. The Parish Council wishes to install a defibrillator in the kiosk located on the junction of the A34 and Sawpit Lane and has been working with the charity AEDdonate, since February 2018 to raise the funds needed. This campaign needs your support and will benefit the village. So far the donations on line have reached £460.00 which is a great start.

Thank you to the local businesses that have supported us by having a collecting bucket on their premises.

STOP PRESS. Our County Councillor, Councillor John Francis has agreed to use money from his Community Fund to match what we have already collected, so we should have enough money to go ahead with the installation.

It is hoped the other kiosk on Pool Lane can be used as some form of community resource and the Clerk is looking for volunteers from the village to get involved.

Details of the campaign and interest in the Pool Lane kiosk were included with the February Paperchase.

Website

You may have noticed the updated Parish Council website and if you haven't I encourage you to visit it - all feedback welcome. We were able to update the website via a successful grant application. You may recall I spoke last year about improving communication between the Parish Council and the residents of the village and the updated website is the start of this process. I also touched on the merits of setting up a Facebook page which the Clerk will continue to pursue during 2018.

Broadband update

At last I can report that the Broadband upgrade in the village has now been completed.

I hope that you are enjoying the superfast speed and are maximising opportunities available to you, including shopping around for the best service/price.

Village Hall

The Village Hall was set up in the 1950's for the benefit of the residents of Brocton and at that time there were 9 Trustees, of which the Parish Council was one. However, since that date that number has reduced to 3, the WI, Brocton Play group and the Parish Council. The Parish Council wishes to fully understand its legal obligations as the main trustee of the Village Hall and, as such, is currently investigating these with the Charity Commission. We are also looking into how other Parish Council's support their Village Halls, so that, in discussion with the Village Hall Committee an appropriate support package can be agreed and offered, if required.

Litter

Sadly, litter continues to be an issue for the village. Our latest litter busting events took place on Wednesday, 28 February, which covered the Cannock Road end of the village and on Saturday, 24 March, which saw us tackling the issue at the Milford end of the village and then back to Cannock Road because after just a month there was a considerable amount of litter again. Please continue to provide your support to any litter campaigns arranged by the Parish Council and refer to the Paperchase and Parish Council Notice Boards for dates of future events.

Finally, it is important that I acknowledge much of the work undertaken by the Parish Council would not be possible without the support of many people who willingly 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 also 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 John Francis. Not forgetting John Sulway, who has regularly inspected the children's play park for a number of years. However, it is with regret that I inform you of John's decision to step down. Last but not least Alan Siddons, our internal auditor, for whose services we are ever grateful.