

Chairman's Report 2021/22

It is my pleasure as Chairman of Chapel-en-le-Frith Parish Council to introduce this annual report. This is my first period as Chairman and indeed as a member of the council; as such I represent a change from the past.

Following mass resignations, the council had been down to just five members until I was elected in May 2021, along with new Councillors, Michael Barton, Alistair Beswick and Nick Hill. More recently we have been joined by three more new Councillors, Tim Saxby, Ian Depee and James Shephard.

The first matter I needed to deal with as Chairman was a legal matter concerning noise and antisocial behaviour around the towns memorial park. The case culminated in early November with a three day court hearing which took place before a District Judge in Manchester Magistrates' Court. The outcome was that the council successfully defended its position against the plaintiffs actions. An appeal by the plaintiffs has been lodged and the matter is still ongoing.

On a more positive note, the council spent the summer surveying the community, including children, parents and neighbours of the parks and play areas about the improvements they would like to see. The outcome of this work has been publicised in an independent report. As a result of this work, the amenities committee of this council have now started on a programme of improvements in the parks and play areas.

In terms of accountability and service delivery, the council have had a long overdue review of systems and structures. We introduced a transparent monitoring and tracking system, reporting to each full council meeting on the progress of decisions made. Residents of the Parish have a right to expect the council to be accountable and transparent for the decisions made and the way the budget is spent.

In a break from the past, we decided to welcome individuals with experience, expertise and skills to work with us on committees to enhance our knowledge and decisions making. We would very much like to hear from you, if you believe that you have something to offer this council that will benefit the community we are all a part of.

The Council are actively supporting the development of a range of partnership working with local groups and organisations for the platinum jubilee in the early summer of 2022. We are planning to have a week long Parish festival in the summer of 2023, involving a wide range of community groups, local facilities and businesses.

The council have been active in their support for local groups and charities, including Little Cherubs, a Chapel-based charity that started life as a baby and children's clothing bank supporting families in the High Peak. The charity drew national attention supporting refugees from Afghanistan in 2021. That work demonstrated a superb commitment from the residents of Chapel and surrounding areas with the donation and distribution of clothes and other essential items. In addition, work is now actively underway to support the fast moving and distressing consequences of the situation in Ukraine.

The charity seeks to expand in its local role and function by taking referrals from statutory agencies. Meetings have taken place with charities founder, Sally Depee and her business manager along with local MP Robert Langan, County & Parish Councillor Nigel Gourlay and myself. As a result, meetings have now been setup with the County Council's Adult &

Children's Services Directorate to consolidate, develop and expand partnership working focussed around Little Cherubs.

In addition to Little Cherubs, the council also supported Chapel Mobile Physiotherapy Service, Friends of Chapel station, Townend Community Garden, "Tea and Chat" and others. We also provided grants to local churches in Chapel and Dove Holes with help towards maintaining burial grounds. The council will endeavour to fully engage with and support others who work for the benefit of our community.

The council now has a quarter of its monthly meetings at Dove Holes to encourage residents of Dove Holes to actively participate in the process and inform the council of the needs and issues relevant to Dove Holes.

Councillors Nick Hill & Jason Adshead are leading a group to explore the possibility of the development of a local Community Hub for the town and parish. This development is embryonic at this time and one which will hopefully develop during 2022/3. There is a clear commitment by the council to look for potential funding opportunities to further develop the facilities in the parish, including attracting tourism to the immediate area for the benefit of the local economy.

Councillor Michael Barton looked closely at how best to engage and value the council's employees. A review of terms and conditions of service to make the council a more attractive place to work has already commenced. Already employees have been transferred to pensions offered to their counterparts at Derbyshire and High Peak Borough Councils.

Councillor Chris Sizeland has worked behind the scenes making improvements to public footpaths and rights of way. Most of his time in the last year being occupied with the improvements to footpaths around Combs Reservoir. These are long-term commitments and work takes time, negotiation, funding and volunteers. Councillor Alistair Beswick has worked to ensure allotments are not lost but enhanced and become better used and valued.

Councillor Nigel Gourlay has produced a book to encourage adults to help children to read. Nigel is by profession a textbook author. He has gifted every household in the Parish and the area he also represents in the Hope Valley as a County Councillor, a free copy at no cost to council tax payers. The funding of this initiative was from sponsorship.

In addressing the question of crime and anti-social behaviour in the parish, Councillors Michael Barton & Stewart Young obtained a grant from Derbyshire's Police and Crime Commissioner for CCTV to address anti-social behaviour. Michael then came up with the inspired suggestion that the local police have a presence by way of a work base in the town hall. I am delighted to say that this is happening and gives not only a more localised police presence in the community, but also an enhanced working relationship with the council. The Police and Crime Commissioner met with key local representatives to discuss local concerns and issues on a visit to the town in March.

Also in March, it was my privilege as Chairman to meet and present Community Recognition Awards to members of this parish and also meet the individuals who nominated them. This event was a huge success and it is the intention of the council to make this an annual event.

We wish to formally say a big thank you and a long and happy retirement to Shirley Trickett, who has worked for the parish council for over 40 years. She will be greatly missed by her colleagues in the town hall. Councillors also bid farewell to former Councillor, Stella Walters,

who left the council in January 2022 to retire by the coast. Stella made a great contribution to the council and local charities who she supported with both her time and fundraising efforts.

My closing message is that this council has changed very significantly in its attitude, approach and commitment to deliver a range of outcomes in a timely and transparent way for the benefit of your local community.

Mike Chantler
Chairman
Chapel en le Frith Parish Council