

SHAWBURY PARISH COUNCIL

2008–2009

This has been a very busy year for the Parish Council and a more pro-active approach has been taken by Members in an effort to create a wider range of facilities and to provide parishioners with a pleasant, safe and clean environment in which to live. At last year's meeting I highlighted the fact that there were two vacancies on the Council and am pleased to report that the Council was able to fill these with co-opted Members. They are George Humphries and Dave Roberts. George took advantage of the change in rules related to the age of Councillors and at eighteen, became one of the youngest Councillors in the Country and Dave returned to the Council after several years' absence. Both have proven to be invaluable assets to the Council. Unfortunately George is off to University in the autumn so again we will be looking to co-opt a new Member.

Members recently decided to individually take responsibility for areas of Council work and these are detailed on a list which is available on request. Issues can be raised with the Councillor concerned but should be done via the Parish Clerk, who will make the necessary arrangements.

Many of you will know that there has been a new Council structure formed in the County and North Shropshire District Council no longer exists. This has resulted in the need to revise many of our policies and documents and develop working relationships with officers at the new authority now known as Shropshire Council.

During the year the Council has made two important decisions, the first of these was to work towards being recognised as a 'Quality Council'. This is a major step for the Council and involves having our work and policies assessed against a recognised National standard. We have made a good start and the process should be completed during the current financial year. The second is to gain the 'Power of Well Being' which requires both the Clerk and all members of the Council to undertake additional training. This is now under way. Gaining these awards will enable the Council to undertake activities and spend money on projects which at present are not within the standard powers granted to Parish Councils. The Council can also seek to raise additional funds from sources other than the council tax system.

Part of new Parish Council legislation introduced by the Government is the need for Councils to make information about Council activity more readily available to the public. We will endeavour to comply with this and have developed a Council website which can be accessed at www.shawbury-pc.gov.uk and are in discussion with the library service regarding the provision of a Parish Council information section.

What has been happening then?

Recreation Ground/Moat Area/Car Park

After protracted negotiations a new lease was finally agreed with the Diocese, which has enabled the Council to proceed with a range of projects. The new lights on the car park have proven to be successful and the old fence was removed and replaced with wooden bollards which give an attractive appearance to the site. It had been hoped to remove the hedge alongside Church Road but the Diocese would not support the Parish plan.

The small Youth Pod on the car park has been removed and replaced with a larger and purpose built Pod lower down on the Recreation Ground. This did not cost the Parish any money, as it was fully funded by a grant from North Shropshire District Council.

The old and unused tennis courts were removed and the area grassed, providing a more useful and attractive look to that part of the field. Volunteer helpers gave assistance with this project and also helped to tidy up the area of land adjacent to the Recreation Ground behind the

Glebelands. The Council has put in a planning application to have this area developed as a BMX Dirt Track for the youngsters. We have already received a £3,000 grant to help finance this.

Plans are now in hand to refurbish the car park, which will result in additional places and bays for disabled drivers and facilities for 'parking' cycles.

Burial Ground

As many of you will have noticed the overgrown hedge round the Burial Ground has been removed and replaced by a new metal fence. We hope that you will agree that this has vastly improved the appearance of the area. Consideration will be given to the planting of a suitable hedge along the length of the fence. Again the council was fortunate in gaining grant aid towards this project.

Children's Play Areas:

The Parish is fortunate to now have two excellent children's play areas. The extended area in Erdington Close has been transferred to Council ownership and offers very good facilities for younger children. The larger area has been provided by a dedicated team of volunteers who formed the Shawbury Youth Action Group and proceeded to raise in excess of £70,000. This play area provides a wide range of equipment including a kick wall which can be used for a variety of sporting activities. The Action Group has transferred ownership of the play area to the Parish Council who will take responsibility for its maintenance and insurance.

The Moat Area:

This is a valuable historical site which is managed by the Council on behalf of English Heritage. The area had become overgrown but under the leadership of Adrian Brown and the help of a team of volunteers the area is gradually becoming transformed and will be an asset to the community. Adrian is going to give a report later in the meeting.

Parish Plan:

Over the past two years a committee under the leadership of Richard Bailey has been busily involved in developing a Parish Plan. This has been a time consuming task and has needed dedicated work by many people. The result is a framework which will enable the Council to take steps to meet the expressed needs of the community. Richard is giving a report later in the meeting.

From issues raised in the parish Plan the following being addressed.

Security and Policing:

Highlighted in the responses to completed questionnaires was concern over levels of crime, policing and lack of security. The Council has and is continuing to work closely with the local police and community support officers to alleviate the fear and reduce criminal activity. In real terms the level of serious crime is low but in line with all sections of the community there are still unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour and vandalism, now referred to as criminal damage and frequently fuelled by the misuse of alcohol. Fortunately this has been reduced in the past year but the levels are not acceptable and it is the responsibility of all of us to identify and isolate the minority that spoil it for everyone.

To help combat the problem the Council has applied for and been granted powers to introduce dedicated alcohol free areas. Within these areas the police have certain powers relating to the misuse of alcohol. These areas will come into operation within the next few weeks. We are also working with the police and Shropshire Council regarding the placement of CCTV cameras in certain locations.

Public Toilets

Residents will be aware that because of continued vandalism, N.S.D.C demolished the toilet block a few years ago. Financing a new block is outside the budget of the Council at present but based on projects developed in other parts of the Country, the Council has come to an agreement with the licensee of the Elephant and Castle Public House, who is prepared to

allow public access to the toilets in the public house for an annual fee. The toilet facilities will be advertised in the village and we hope this will prove successful

Floral Gateways:

Shropshire Council has given permission for the Council to erect floral gateways on the sides of the A53 at the entrance to the village. Richard Bailey will be erecting these in the near future and we are hoping that local businesses or organisations will be prepared to sponsor these.

Fun Day

It was decided to hold a 'Fun Day' on May Day as a way of publicising and celebrating the developments that have taken place in the past year. Jill Manley offered to lead this project which, despite poor weather, was very successful. She was given excellent assistance by members of the Youth Action group and Jill will give more details later in the meeting.

Fishing Club

This is not a Council activity, but has been set up by some dedicated parishioners with the main object of providing additional activities for young people. Access to two pools has been given by Mr. Pinches and the Council has made a grant of £500, to allow the pools to be stocked with fish

Other Issues:

A number of other projects have been suggested and these will be considered by the Council over the next few months and are dependent on sufficient finance being available.

Other Council Activity:

Streetlights:

The new lighting system on Wem Road has finally been completed. A number of issues outside the Council's control considerably delayed the project but we are pleased with the final result.

The Council and Shropshire Council have contracts in place to keep street lights maintained and problems should be reported to one of the Councillors or to the Clerk when appropriate action will be arranged.

Village Hall:

The Council is appreciative of the work carried out by the Village Hall Committee and was pleased to give a grant of £2,000 this year to help with increased costs.

RAF Shawbury:

The Parish Council continues to enjoy a good working relationship with the RAF and a representative from the base attends Council meetings when information can be shared and any issues addressed. The current representative is Sqdn. Ldr. David Lewis.

Planning Applications

All applications for property development in the parish are sent to the Council and considered at the monthly meetings. Members of the public can raise concerns with Councillors prior to the meeting or attend and address members in the public session before the start of the official business.

Grants

We have a policy of making small financial grants to deserving causes and this year grants have been made to:

Macmillan Nursing

West Shropshire Talking Newspaper

Severn Hospice

Hope House Hospice

Shawbury Scouts and Guides.

Parish Council Meetings:

Council Meetings are open to the public and normally take place in the Village Hall at 7.00pm on the second Tuesday in the month, with the exception of August when there is no meeting. Agendas and Minutes are always available in the local Library on the Council Notice Board and on the website

Members of the public are reminded that there is a ten-minute slot before the start of the official meeting, which allows issues of concern or comments on items on the agenda to be raised.

Members welcome the attendance of the public to meetings.