UPTON BY CHESTER AND DISTRICT



PARISH COUNCIL

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**REPORT GIVEN TO**

**The Annual Assembly Meeting**

**On 23th April 2018**

**By the Chairman of the Parish Council –**

**Cllr Adrian Walmsley**

UPTON-BY-CHESTER & DISRICT PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

I am very pleased to present to you this evening my Annual Report covering the activities and achievements of the Parish Council for the year 2017/18.

The year saw no changes in membership of the Parish Council and all 16 Councillors remained the same for the entire 12 months.

I wish to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the year and for all their efforts that has brought about a most successful and productive year for the Parish Council. Thanks for the amount of time that Councillors give up in attending not just meetings of the full Parish Council but of its various committees also and to many "off-site" activities as well.

Special thanks are due to those of my Councillor colleagues who volunteer to chair any one of our committees and sub-committees that exist to deal with much of the work approved by the full Council.

Sincere thanks must also be extended to the staff of the Parish Council. To Suzi Pollard, our Parish Clerk for all her hard work and for the very helpful and professional guidance and advice she frequently offers the members serving on the Council. Much of the success of theworkings of the Parish Council during the year must be attributed to the services and dedication offered by Suzi.

Thanks to those who staff our wonderful Pavilion located on Wealstone Lane. To Darren Flaherty and to Peter Griffiths in particular – Darren is our Pavilion Supervisor ably assisted by Peter and they both provide a super service maintaining not just the pavilion itself but the surrounding grounds housing a multitude of sporting and recreational facilities.

A big thank you to Suzi, Darren and Peter and the team of casual support staff who look after the WealstoneLane facilities,(and it numerous visitors) during weekends and holiday periods.

It is most pleasing to report that once again due to skilful and careful management of our finances, it has been possible for the third year running to offer the residents of Upton a reduction of their Parish Council precept shown on annual Council Tax bills. The reduction this year being 4 % – no mean achievement and how many other Borough, Town and Parish Councils throughout the land can claim such a good track record when it comes to reductions in Council Tax precepts – not many I would suggest.

Copies of the full Parish Council Accounts for the year 2017/18 are available this evening and will shortly be published (along with my Report) on the Parish Council website. Our finances are indeed in a sound and healthy state.

Special Projects undertaken by the Parish Council this year include a new pathway and drainage of the Chemistry Pits Field located adjacent to Marina Drive in Upton, the refurbishment of our Bowling Green (formally opened by the Lord Mayor of Chester last July), the much needed replacement of some of the children's playground equipment and a deep-clean and re-sanding of our Tennis Courts.

The Parish Council has set up a new sub-committee with a remit to examine all aspects of our recreational and sports facilities at the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields and to come up with a 5 year plan to see what additional facilities could be introduced for the benefit of Upton residents both young and not so young.

The Parish Council has been successful in gaining a grant of £6,000 to help with the upkeep of our War Memorial.

We are once again entering Cheshire's Annual Best Kept Village Competition a reminder that we must keep our locality tidy, free of litter and clean as possible at all times.

In September we had our Annual Pavilion Fun Day which attracted a huge attendance helped no doubt by the fine and warm weather on the day. For the very first time last December we had an open air Carol Concert which despite the dreadful wet weather was most successful helped by the participation of the Buckley Brass Band and some wonderful singing not just from the choirs in attendance but by all those residents that came along. Due to its success, the event will certainly be repeated in December 2018.

Looking ahead on Bank Holiday Sunday in late May, at the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, we are hosting the Upton Fest, which promises to be one of the largest open air events of its kind seen in this part of Chester for many years.

In December we plan to organise an outdoor Christmas Market on Weston Grove. We are hoping that this event will offer some support to the Weston Grove shops.

Upton Pavilion is now 4 years old, the pavilion not only provides a base for the Parish Council itself but it hosts numerous activities and local organisations throughout the week. During last year, we converted a storage room at the pavilion into a meeting room and this is proving to be a great asset and can be used for meetings when the main Function Room is in use. Room hire and sales of refreshments at the pavilion continue to be successful.

The Pavilion and the Police – the Parish Council and local officers from the Cheshire Constabulary continue to have a very satisfactory arrangement whereby the local Police will on occasions use the Pavilion as a base. It is possible that in future a more formal arrangement will be put in place and police surgeries may also be held at the pavilion.

As far as Planning is concerned, the Parish Council receives notification of each and every planning application for Upton that has been submitted to Cheshire West & Chester Planning Authority. Where it is considered that a particular application deserves special consideration (i.e. likely to be of particular interest or concern to Upton residents), once statutory notice has been given, the Parish Council's Planning Committee will convene.

Some examples of applications receiving special consideration during the past 12 months include: the proposed Aldi supermarket on Countess Way, proposed housing developments both on Heath Road and at White Gables near to the Beeches and the proposed changes to access/egress at the Morrison's Store in Bache.

Councillor and Staff Training which has taken place throughout the year includes: Data Protection, VAT & Accounting, Bid Writing, Use of Social Media, Safeguarding, Auditing and many more.

Our Employment Committee meets regularly to discuss staffing issues and terms and condition of employment for our employees.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Upton – "Your Upton 2030" - in my Report 12 months ago, I did say that work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan had reached a new emphasis with the Steering Group consisting of Parish Councillors and some very enthusiastic resident representatives at long last making real headway in gaining evidence that could be used to justify a plan for Upton. I am very pleased to report that the past 12 months has seen the momentum on the plan continuing with emphasis being made on interviewing local business and employers to gain their input and also a lot of work being carried out to ascertain the housing requirements for the Upton area over the next 15/20 years or so.

A very ambitious aim indeed but the target date now set for sending the plan to CW&C for approval being early 2019 and for the referendum whereby Upton residents will either approve or reject the plan being around the date of the local Council elections in May 2019. Members of the NDP Steering Group are here this evening and are quite happy to answer any questions later on in the proceedings.

Communications between the Parish Council and members of the public continues to improve with more and more information now being posted on the Parish Council website. The Parish Council Newsletter (issued twice a year) continues to be posted through every letter box in Upton and the latest version is being sent out any day now – copies are available for you to take home this evening.

Finally let me say that from what you have heard from my Annual Report, I hope you will agree that Upton Parish Council is a good Council and is working extremely hard for the benefit of the Upton community at large.

It is encouraging to note that when we submit our application for the Local Council Award Scheme run by the National Association of Local Councils, we are aiming to achieve the highest possible standard of the Quality Gold level. I see no reason why that very high qualification cannot be achieved for Upton.

That concludes my Annual Report, thank you.

Cllr Adrian Walmsley, Chairman.