

This last year seems to have had its fair share of lighter moments in amongst the more serious aspects of work for Antrobus Parish Council. There have also been some , a former Chairman personnel changes and after 47 years of sterling service Coni Sutton on more than one occasion, decided to stand down, but into her shoes stepped her son Roger to carry on the family tradition now in its third generation. Mike Barker, another past Chairman and Karen Bolshaw also decided to leave for personal reasons and their seats have been taken by Kate O'Donnell and Phil Pugh who is married into a longstanding Antrobus farming dynasty. It is refreshing to note that for these 3 vacancies there were 4 applications and a ballot was held at the Parish Council meeting in August 2010 and the 3 chosen were duly co-opted onto the council.

However, we were due in the autumn of last year to submit our application for re-accreditation as a Quality Parish Council until it was realised that only 5 councillors had actually been elected and we needed 6 to meet the rules. All other criteria were met and we appealed to Cheshire Association of Local Councils (CHALC) who managed to persuade the National Association to allow an extension until after the forthcoming elections in May 2011. Preparations are in hand for the application itself and the elections and it is hoped that the majority of existing Councillors will stand and be duly elected.

Planning matters as usual created the controversy and challenges particularly in relation to Fairbank Farm and Hatton Farm, now normally referred to as Applejacks. The Stretton Autodrome project was rejected in 2010 and has not been re-submitted and Senna Green Farm must cease all rendering operations by the summer of 2011.

Most planning applications that come before the planning sub- committee are straightforward and non-controversial and typically involve small extensions or field shelters, but some have the capacity to cause controversy or potential harm. Applejacks has made several applications over the years and nearly always retrospective when eagle eyed Antrobus residents have noticed new buildings or excessive noise. Although the farm comes under Warrington its activities only really impact on the residents of this village. Warrington no doubt see it as an amenity, but one man's tourist attraction is another man's nuisance! The latest application that was passed involved music and other live events and permitted times and dates within which events could be held. The hearing was attended by representatives of this council who spoke to object on behalf of residents and the applicants significantly reduced their requirements to enable it to be passed.

Fairbank Farm has been rumbling on for many years because of a failure of the former Vale Royal planners to determine an original application. Since then there have been several unsatisfactory tests and temporary periods of use none have which have persuaded anyone that this is a safe proposal for the neighbouring householders. We have had 3 Aviation reports and test flights along with noise monitoring, but the Parish Council and residents were not informed of the times that these were occurring and the applicant did not even conduct the test flight as required or keep to the designated route. As a result the Planning Committee held in February 2011, at which this council attended and presented its objections, was ill informed and narrowly voted in favour of the application against all the evidence and the residents themselves.

Much mis-information was allegedly given by planning officers and very little communication with either this council or objectors and, as a result, a letter of objection has recently been sent to the head of the planning

department not against the decision, which cannot now be altered, but about the way the whole application has been dealt with. There has been an alarming lack of clarity and communication and there is little faith in the transparency of the whole process.

Similarly on enforcement matters several cases remain unresolved and are on the agenda month after month without satisfactory resolution often with the excuse that the case officer is off sick or on annual leave.

Potholes are regularly reported and the Highway Department's usual response is to loosely fill in the worst holes, but this has very limited success. The Parish Council was delighted therefore to be given short notice in February 2011 that as CWaC had found some £3million large areas of our more main roads were to be relaid, although they did miss an area of Knutsford Road that has since been repaired.

The litter pick 2010 was not as well attended as in previous years as it seemed to coincide with school holidays as well as a closure of the A559 between Wheatsheaf Lane and Pole Lane, although a large amount of rubbish was collected including from the main road which was eerily quiet. This is another example of what the Prime Minister calls the Big Society. It's been happening here and in many other villages for years.

Crime waves do not normally occur in Antrobus, but there have been a plethora of offences in the last 2 months mostly to do with metal and livestock thefts although barns and outbuildings have also been targeted. A network of reporters contact the Neighbourhood watch representative on this council particularly of suspicious vehicles or people and this can be widely and quickly circulated including to the police almost in real-time and hopefully this can result in fewer crimes and more arrests.

Due to diligent management of council resources Antrobus Parish Council have been able to hold our precept at the 2010 level and the hope is that we will not need to raise it next year although this may well be subject to the Principal Authority not wanting to devolve its responsibilities onto us and any effects that the Localism Bill may have once passed. One cost that will increase is the employment of the Clerk, not due to a huge salary increase you understand, but because of the requirement of the government that Clerks cannot be self-employed and must be subject to PAYE. So much for reducing red tape. The hope is that CHALK or CW&C will manage this for the smaller councils such as ours. It will be noted that our precept has actually increased by 0.5%, but this, apparently, is caused by the number of Band D houses reducing as a percentage. Interestingly the precept that we receive in financial terms remains the same.

This council is represented on various bodies and in several groupings including Quality Council, The Vale Royal Forum, CHALK and at more local groups such as the Village Hall committee, The Antrobus Charity, Parish Plan and Antrobus4youth. We also invite other individuals or bodies to address Council meetings, which are normally attended by 2 of our Principal Authority Councillors to whom specific issues can be addressed and if an answer cannot be given immediately they will notify the Clerk soon thereafter.

One of the more recently created sub-groups is the Communication Group which contains 2 of our more recent Councillors. The Quick Reference guide has been produced and distributed for the second year and they instigated the Cheshire FM broadcast in February 2011 by liaising with Mike Worthington the presenter who addressed a council meeting in 2010. They also contacted local village groups and helped choose and organise the 6 broadcasters after a series of meetings to ensure that as many aspects of village life were aired in the 2 hour broadcast.

Antrobus4youth is now fully formed and is operating well holding regular meetings and events with a good number of attendees. A grant of £1500 was obtained by virtue of our CWaC Councillors who also made a similar grant to St Mark's Church to contribute towards a feasibility study into the viability of creating an environmental resource centre within the church using the name and connections of perhaps our best known former resident Arnold Boyd. Whilst the steering group which contains 1 parish councillor are aware of the final content of this report it is to be presented to the village at a meeting in the church on April 9th.

The church is also the final destination of the Powell bench which caused issues in 2010. The other bench that the Council had responsibility for in the car-park of the village hall was found to be unsafe and in need of repair. Ownership and liability was transferred at their request to the Village Hall Committee, but there is still an impasse on the transfer of the telephone kiosk.

Although not strictly speaking a Council matter many councillors and the Clerk were involved in the incredibly successful and hugely enjoyable first Antrobus pantomime at the village hall and the Chairman's charity dinner which this year was called the Abba Ball raised over £2000 for our charities the principal one of which was Macmillan Cancer Support.

The council were represented at the Remembrance Day service and in the Fete Procession and in the last year have won awards in the Community Pride competition including the Best Kept Village in our population group and the little gem award as well as runners-up for the Village News. Donations have been made to local groups for specific projects and the playground equipment has as usual been maintained and is regularly checked for safety.

As always it has been a busy and varied year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the councillors and the clerk for their hard work and commitment in all that we do.

Nigel Pemberton 21/03/2011

Antrobus Parish Councillors

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