

ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair's Annual Report for the year ending March 31st 2017

As a council, we aim to continue to provide our residents with a quality service that enables our village to function effectively on a daily basis. We are working towards recognition by the Local Council Award Scheme (Foundation) Status, which will set us a benchmark for the future.

The current financial climate has meant that we always have to be extremely careful over the management of our affairs. We continuously monitor our expenditure, and examine very closely how and where we spend our money.

Every project has to be considered and evaluated in terms of cost, effectiveness, and benefit to the community at large. We have agreed a budget for the forthcoming financial year, but what the future holds for Parish and Town Councils is still somewhat unclear. We, therefore, have to proceed with caution.

We are extremely grateful to our office staff; our Clerk, Mr. Michael Ward, and his assistant, Mrs Sally Meikle. Our thanks are due to them for the professional way in which the office is managed, and members of the public greeted. They also provide help and support to elected Councillors. The Parish Office is well used by local residents and is now firmly established in the front of our Library.

I am particularly grateful for the help and support that is given to me as Chair by colleagues and officers, and this ensures that we work together as a team. The demands placed on councillors can be quite excessive at times and I have attempted to include more councillors in the routine business of council work. However due to personal commitments and ill-health, attendance at our regular business meetings has not been what it could be.

The membership of our Council has remained fairly stable over the past year, although we were all saddened by the death of Cllr. Sue Pate in September 2016. Sue had served as a Parish councillor over two decades and her knowledge and commitment were outstanding.

I am personally indebted to her for the guidance and advice she offered and to have worked with her as a councillor. Cllr. Linda Howat was co-opted to fill the vacancy.

We have good contact with our local police officers, and the recent initiative 'Team Shifnal Albrighton' has enabled that to be on regular planned occasions. One of our elected members, Cllr. Malcom Pate, is also Leader of Shropshire County Council and this establishes a good working relationship with our County colleagues.

We are just completing our first year as the corporate managers of Albrighton Library, its services and premises. This has increased the workload of our office staff and councillors, but has ensured the short term viability of the library. We continue to monitor the usage of the Library and attempt to be creative in developing its resources.

The interests and skills of individual councillors are often paramount in determining and driving particular projects. We are about to embark on replacing the Flyer, our community transport scheme vehicle, and Cllr Peter Iles has applied himself very generously to the task of gathering information, to ensure we make the best decision. We hope that our new vehicle will mark the next stage in our developing community transport network.

Cllr Sylvia Pledger has maintained her interest in the aesthetic aspects of our village life. Due to her commitment, our village should be looking even more glamorous during 2017. We have purchased some new planters, to supplement those already in place through the hard work of the Civic Society, and these should become apparent at various locations, particularly at or near our village entrances.

A significant amount of work is sustained by councillors outside of the statutory responsibilities of the Parish Council. Councillors are involved in discussions about the future of the Station ramp access (initiated by Civic Society) and the outdoor swimming pool (Albrighton Swimming Club/Albrighton Primary School), and we have representation on many local committees; ranging from Albrighton Traders to the Melville Club.

Partnerships are clearly important to the work of the Council, and may well be even more so in the future, particularly in regard to financial revenue and budgeting. We are grateful for the support and interest of our colleagues on Donnington with Boscobel Parish Council; without their financial donations some of our larger projects would be far more costly to Albrighton residents.

All the information we need to make public is accessible easily; through our website, on the Parish Council notice board in the centre of the village and at the Council Office. Clearly people do engage with these but it would be good to see more members of the public at our monthly meetings in the Committee room in the library. We are the third tier of government and have statutory responsibilities that could impact quite significantly in the public domain.

The Council's accounts for the financial year ending 31st March 2017 will be available at the Annual parish Meeting on April 27th 2017. Our budget for 2017-18 resulted in a 5.4% increase in the precept required from Albrighton residents. This works out at an additional 7p per week for Band D properties.

It has been a privilege to serve Albrighton Council as its Chair over the past year, and to work alongside Cllr Sandra Kirkland as Vice Chair. We move towards the local elections which are to be held on May 4th 2017 and it may well be a very different council next year. If you are interested in standing for election then contact Shropshire Democratic Services through their website or in person.

Cllr. Phil Harrison
Chair, Albrighton Parish Council