

Chairman's Report to Alderley Edge Parish Council

May 2011

For one reason alone, this has been a great year for Alderley Edge. The By-Pass has opened!! How many of us really expected to ever see that dream become a reality? I joined the Parish Council 15 years ago, it has been a major issue all that time and the By-Pass had been talked about for decades before that. The Parish Council funded a Luncheon to celebrate the event; it was a great success and well received.

The opening of the by-pass will have a lasting effect on our village and in a way it sets the agenda for the next twelve months. We have had constructive meetings with CE officers regarding post by-pass traffic management, cut short by the retirement of the officer progressing the work. Our aim for this year should be to implement the changes to road signs and speed limits already agreed and we must try again to consult on and implement changes in priorities at road junctions, to alter the flow of traffic within the village to suit the residents, not those passing through. This is important because we need to recognise that the removal of the round-about on the Chelford Road, through the actions of a small, selfish group, detracts from the benefits bestowed on the village by the opening of the by-pass. There will now be more traffic using Ryley's Lane, passing all three schools; there is a safety issue there and we need to address it.

In the longer term, we should consider how to manage London Road; I favour a 'shared space' concept, as has been introduced in Poynton. We must consult on this and seek funding for what would be a major project.

Parking is an issue which has reached the top of our agenda. We have begun a campaign to see Public consultation take place so that any proposed solution does not simply transfer the problems from one street to another. Following agreement with the Police we will shortly approach the businesses within the village, in particular the restaurants and bars, to try with their help, to change attitudes amongst staff and customers. Cheshire East is responsible for enforcement, and they will have to play their part as well.

The other major project for the Parish Council is the management and redevelopment of the Festival Hall. It has been a great disappointment that we have not been able to progress this, despite the work of Paul and others. We will very shortly appoint a Hall Manager and we must achieve our goal of opening a Medical Centre in a new, improved Festival Hall. Our aim should be to get planning permission and sign a contract within the next twelve months.

The current phase of asset transfers through Devolution is well underway, with CE talking to a number of Town and Parish Councils and the actual transfers will occur by April 2012. AEPC had set the trend when we took back the Festival Hall two years ago. Some councillors, including myself have attended briefings on this matter. We will take part in the second phase, commencing later next year, and should consider taking back various assets, such as Alderley Park, Beech Park, the Allotments and Chorley Hall Playing Fields.

Cheshire East is currently consulting on the Local Development Framework, which will replace the old MBC Plan, a 'saved policy'. The initial proposals had three options, all of which saw development focussed away from Alderley Edge, concentrating as it does on places like Crewe. This process may

still identified a requirement for social housing in Alderley, but we will not be expected to build houses or industrial units to meet Council targets.

Cheshire East is supporting initiatives to sustain and develop local business, for example through Action For Market Towns, and has facilitated a Benchmarking survey of business here in the Village, the preliminary results of which were published last month. It is my intention to form a small group of councillors who will liaise with CE officers to progress this work. CE is also supporting Love Local Life.co.uk, a loyalty card scheme which promotes local business. I would like the PC to support the launch of this loyalty scheme in the Village.

The Parish Plan was finally published this year, and it is a testament to the hard work carried on by the many people who were involved in the different work groups. The next step is to draw up a Village Design statement and have that adopted by Cheshire East.

It is pleasing that after a gap of several years, we are holding a Civic Service this May. A portion of the collection from that Service will go towards the Civic Fund, and I would like to try and raise the profile of that Fund, so that the money may be put to good use.

No report would be complete without a mention of the colleagues who have left the council; Paul Tomlinson, Alan Jones and Yvonne Wrinch all decided not to seek re-election. To each I would like to extend my personal thanks, your support has been invaluable. Paul was Chairman, championed the Parish Plan, pushed through the Xmas Lights and put a lot of effort into the Medical Centre project. Alan has been a great Chairman of the Plans committee; in addition, his engagement of CE over roads, street markings and pavements demonstrated his tenacity and determination. Yvonne has worked tirelessly over the years organising the support network which has got us re-elected, this time unopposed. I want to thank Yvonne and all those others who have worked to ensure that we retain a Conservative Parish Council here in Alderley Edge. You will all be sadly missed.

We have three new councillors for this forth coming year and I would like to welcome Joseph, Sue and Melanie; I look forward to working with you, and hope you find it as interesting and rewarding as I have done over the years.

I would like to just say Congratulations to Frank Keegan who was re-elected to represent Alderley Ward on the Cheshire East Council. I am delighted that the result was so positive; it reflects the high regard which the residents of the Village have for you, Frank. It will be advantageous to us, as a Parish Council and to those we represent, to have you working on our behalf.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors for your support over the last twelve months, and to Kevin who has fulfilled his duties to his usual very high standard.

Councillor Mike Williamson