



St Peter the Great County
Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2016-17

Introduction

Welcome to the review of the last twelve months in the life of your parish council. It has been a year of change and progress which has built upon the successes of the past whilst adapting to meet the challenges ahead of us. This report summarises the principal activities of your council and the key developments in the parish during that time.

Council Membership

There were several changes in the membership of the council during the course of the year and details are listed in the attendance table attached to this report.

At the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, I was elected as Chairman in succession to Councillor Paul Thorlby and I re-iterate the grateful thanks of myself and my colleagues for his service as Chairman over the two previous years which included the co-option and induction of the majority of the council.

Councillor Greg Rowe resigned before the July 2016 meeting and Councillor Mike Johnson, a former Vice chairman of the Parish Council, was co-opted at the September 2016 meeting to fill the vacancy. Councillor Terry Widdows resigned before the October 2016 meeting and Councillor Brenda Wheeler resigned at the conclusion of that meeting. Councillor Danielle Degville and Councillor Roger Knight (the latter a former Chairman of the Parish Council) were co-opted at the November 2016 meeting to fill the two vacancies.

As a result of the above changes there was a reallocation of portfolio responsibilities during the year with the final revised allocation being established in January 2017 (as posted on our Website).

I would like to re-iterate my personal thanks and the thanks of this council to those departed councillors for their service and to the newly co-opted councillors for their willingness to serve.

Clerk

The council received the formal notice of resignation of Bob Jenkins as our Clerk in November 2016, effective from the Council's Annual Meeting in May 2017. Bob has served this council for the last 22 years as its one and only Clerk and I know I and all of my predecessors as Chairman have had cause to be thankful for his careful guidance and sage advice in the management of our business and the implementation of our decisions. He has been central to this council's affairs since our inception and he retires with our best wishes and grateful thanks.

As a result of Bob's retirement, the Council implemented our succession plan and elevated our Assistant Clerk to the role of Clerk to the Council with effect from the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Council. Having been Bob's understudy for the last two years, he has learnt at his master's feet. We are delighted that Bob has agreed to provide continuing mentoring and support to Alex over the next twelve months as he settles into his new role.

Honorary Freeman

Following receipt of Bob's intent to retire, the Council wished to publicly recognise Bob's immense contribution to the life and development of St Peter's over the last 22 years. Accordingly, the Council invoked a power only given to it in 2009 and resolved to confer on Bob the status of Honorary Freeman of the Parish. It is entirely fitting that our first Clerk is also our first Honorary Freeman and he has been presented with a specially printed scroll to record the award.

Parish Warden

During 2016/17 the Parish Council continued to enjoy the services of a Parish Warden and an enhanced service in terms of Clean and Green activities and Community Engagement under the terms of an agreement with Worcester City Council for which we make a significant financial contribution amounting to nearly 25% of our precept. We had a change of Warden in October 2016 when Tracy Sutton resigned from Worcester City Council to take up a new role in Dorset. Tracy made a great contribution to leading improvement activities in our open spaces and working with me to develop the Friends of St. Peter's Parks support group of volunteers. We are very grateful for her service to our community. Tracy was succeeded as Warden by Luke Capolongo who has continued to support our activities in the same vein.

I am also pleased to report that your council has renewed our agreement with the City Council for a further year with an increased contribution of £9,500. For the first time this agreement also explicitly recognises the City Council's role in undertaking Lengthsman duties in the parish on our behalf and with funding for that being paid directly by the County Council. Lengthsman's duties included, inter alia, maintaining our ditches and watercourses and the Parish Council will continue to keep a focus on our needs in this area.

Friends of St. Peter's Park

During the last twelve months the Friends of St. Peter's Parks have been very active on a myriad of projects across our parks. The Friends operate as an Advisory Group to the Council under my Chairmanship and with the support of the Clerk and the Warden and together we establish priorities for improvement works in our parks with funding provided by the Parish Council.

Activities undertaken in the last year include:

- Establishment of a new Orchard in Battenhall Park
- Sunflower planting in Grasshopper Park
- Opening up a woodland walk through a copse in Battenhall Park
- Snowdrop planting in Power Park (in memory of Donald Anderton, our former Chairman)
- Wetland tree planting in Battenhall Park
- Daffodil bulb planting in Battenhall Park
- Field in Trust plaque installation in Power Park

For a number of these activities we were supported by other local groups including the Police Cadets and pupils from the River School. We are grateful to everyone for their help. Fuller details of the Friends' activities can be found on their Facebook Page.

Litter Picks

The Parish Warden, in conjunction with the Friends of St. Peter's Parks has also overseen regular monthly litter picks within the parish which have been well-supported by local residents and the community team at St. Peter's Tesco under Jo Jenkins. Thank you to all who continue to help make St Peter's a clean and pleasant area.

Planning Consultations

Planning consultations in St Peters over the last twelve months have included many of the usual garage conversions and extensions. Of note has been the housing development at 51 Arden Road. Planning permission was approved provided the existing natural boundaries were retained, but were then ripped out by the developer much to the dismay of local residents and other interested parties. Following pressure from residents, parish councillors and city councillors, the city planning department instructed the developers to re-plant the boundaries at their own cost. However, it will be many years before the previous level of maturity is reached.

Other important development activities to note in the last year include the formal approval of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) by the Government's Planning Inspectorate and the subsequent withdrawal of an appeal against planning refusal on the development of Middle Battenhall Farm.

With the adoption of the SWDP, the detailed planning work will now commence on what is known as the South Worcester Urban Extension to the south of St Peter's and the Parish Council will continue to take a keen interest in the emerging applications.

Police Liaison

During the last year, the Police Liaison portfolio was passed from Cllr Ross Walker to Cllr John Kemp. Primarily this involves attending the Police And Communities Together (PACT) meetings where the main issues discussed have included a recent peak in car crime (though still low in general), speeding\noisy cars, public lighting and anti-social behaviour.

All members of the public are invited to attend PACT meetings details of which are regularly advertised on the Parish Notice Board and Website and in the Newslink Magazine. We are grateful to West Mercia Police and our local Community Policing Team for their active support and involvement in our Parish.

Highways

Councillor Ross Walker holds the Highways portfolio on the Parish Council and he has been active this year in articulating concerns around the dualling of the A4440 including:

- Campaigning for a safety barrier between the Norton and Whittington roundabouts (still waiting for publication of the independent safety audit)
- Arranging the June 2016 Highways (SLR upgrade) public session
- Submitting a letter of support to Highways re dualling the A4440 between the Ketch and Powick roundabouts for incorporation within a Worcestershire County Council business case to central government
- Organising bi-monthly SLR upgrade updates from Highways for publication on the PC website, within Newslink, and more recently, via the St Peter's Group Facebook page
- Communicating the SLR upgrade night closures during November to December 2016 and again during February and March 2017 (same communication methods as outlined above).

In addition Ross agreed a combined County, City and Parish Council request for a reduction in speed limits between the Timberdine and Ketch roundabouts (from 40 mph to 30 mph) and between the Ketch and Norton roundabouts (from 60 mph to 40 mph). He also submitted various local requests as part of the Local transport Plan 4 consultation including (among other things) full dualling of the A4440 from Powick, specific requirements around the pedestrian bridge 'landing' in Power Park and the upgrade to the underpass under the Carrington Bridge. Finally, he was also successful in setting up Highways (SLR upgrade) public session at the Village Hall in April 2017.

St Peter's Festival

The Parish Council again held a very successful St Peter's Festival in July 2016 under the overall direction of Councillor Brenda Wheeler. Brenda repeated her 2015 success with another popular event which attracted good crowds and a lot of community support. The event was supported by a grant from the Parish Council and a contribution from County Councillor Marc Bayliss from his Divisional Fund. Following Brenda's resignation from the council, it was agreed that we would appoint a Festival Organiser to assist the Festival Working Party to plan and manage the 2017 Festival. Local resident Sian Archer has taken on the organiser role and preparations are well underway for what is hoped will be another successful event. There is a Festival Facebook page which details the latest developments.

Area 51

Area 51 is the only Play Area in St Peter's whose equipment is owned by the Parish Council. As such we are responsible for the safe upkeep of the equipment over. Following a receipt of an investigatory report commissioned by the Parish Council at the start of last year, remedial works were carried out by the Parish Warden to rectify issues of timber rotting and movement. This included the removal of some static items and the reduction in the height of the "pikes". The expectation is that with on-going small remedial works we can continue to keep the play equipment safely in use until the end of its planned lifespan in 2020.

Parish Office

During the latter half of 2016, Councillor Alan Tucker, Vice Chairman and Finance & Strategic Planning portfolio holder successfully negotiated an agreement with the St Peter's Village Hall Association to establish a Parish Council office within the Village Hall for use by the Clerk and councillors and for the storage of Parish council documentation. It is hoped that regular Parish Council "Surgeries" can be held for residents in the near future.

The agreement also covers the Parish Council's on-going use of the Village Hall for its regular public meetings. I am grateful to Cllr Tucker for his efforts to obtain this agreement and to establish a positive on-going relationship with the Village Hall Association.

Newslink

Six editions of the Newslink Magazine were published during the year under the leadership of our Editor Glenn Walker, ably supported by our Advertising Manager, Anna Donaldson. The magazine is largely self-funding thanks to the great support from local businesses taking advertising space. It continues to be a high quality information and communication resource for the parish.

Finance & Administration

The Parish Council voted to have no increase in its precept for 2017/18, recognising that it had sufficient income and reserves to meet its current objectives without recourse to asking our residents for additional monies at a time of economic austerity.

Important changes to the 2016/17 budget include the provision of monies for small donations to local groups and the funding for the new Parish Office. In addition, the Parish Council decided not to renew its subscription for membership of the County Association of Local Councils.

Conclusion

St Peter's continues to be an attractive and safe area of the City of Worcester. After a third of a century, our community is now reaching an important point of maturity in its development. There are challenges ahead in terms of the impact on our area from the South Worcester Urban extension but I remain confident that with the active leadership from your Parish Council and the on-going contribution from our residents, that our Parish will go from strength to strength in the future.

Alan Tidy

19th May 2017