

Annual Parish Meeting: Chairmans Report 2023

The chairman's report is an opportunity to summarise the achievements and activities of the Parish Council for the year May 2022 – April 2023.

Firstly, I would like to formally thank the previous Chair, Mrs Sarah Richards for her many years of devoted service, her knowledge of the parish and the level of detail and preparation she was able to process for the benefit of all residents of the parish. She was indeed a hard act to follow.

Secondly, another massive thank you to another stalwart of the Council, our Clerk Mrs Anne Howells who despite nearly retiring at the start of this year, agreed to stay on and keep us all in check ensuring we follow all the local authority rules and procedures, and again relying on her vast knowledge of the parish and all that goes on within it. Thank you, Anne.

The Baschurch Parish Council is allowed 12 councillors and unfortunately, we have operated for most of the last year with only 10. Despite the option to Co-Opt onto the council, no one has felt able to come forward and apply but it looks as though we have some serious interest for 2023/24.

We have standard agenda items month on month with occasionally new topics, requests, issues to discuss and decisions to make.

The main regular agenda item is dealing with planning applications. In the last year May 2022-April 2023, the council dealt with 40 planning applications.

These resulted in 11 objections, 24 supported and 5 neutral decisions made.

As a council, we have been frustrated by some of these decisions being overruled or ignored by Shropshire Council planning officers. However, we as a council did have one application passed by Shropshire Council members against the advice of their officers which has opened up the opportunity to hopefully reopen the railway station by having a major public benefit attached namely the provision of land for the station car park.

Shropshire Council Planning enforcement have not been as robust as we would have expected in letting developments proceed without the required conditions being met. Both Parish Councillors, the Shropshire Council Member and local residents have been very proactive in making the planners aware of these contraventions and to date we have been frustrated by the in action of Shropshire Council on these points. We will persevere.

We are also aware, despite the considerable number of houses being built and which already exist that our CIL money generated by these developments may be lost to the parish due to a change of rules imposed by Shropshire Council. This has only recently become apparent, and many Parish Councils are not happy with this proposal and will be objecting forcefully to it.

The object of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) is that in return for accepting new development, the parish would receive CIL money to improve the local infrastructure such as extensions to our schools and road safety initiatives. These are just two examples of how our CIL was used recently. We have however raised considerable sums of CIL and have two major community infrastructure projects planned for the utilisation of these funds.

Firstly, the new Doctors Surgery and Medical Practice. At long last this project is moving forward with the Practice Partners, the Parish Council, Shropshire Council and the Integrated Care Board all meeting and talking with proposals on the table. The Parish Council is fully supporting this project. Watch this space.

The second major project being supported by the Parish Council albeit being driven by a very enthusiastic group called Baschurch Station Campaign, is chaired and led by Andy Woodthorpe who also happens to have been the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council during the last year.

The Baschurch Station Campaign is an independent group of very driven and enthusiastic individuals which is not a part of the Council although a number of Parish Councillors happen to be members of it on an individual basis.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to this group for all they have done to get the campaign as far as it has got and to where we would all like it get to namely the reopening of the Bashurch Railway Station. A long way to go but we've already achieved so much. People power has definitely worked well on this project and the support and attendance at the Corbett School last July is testimony to that. Well done to all involved.

The Parish Council were consulted on the boundary review and appears that common sense has prevailed, and all associated bodies are in favour of Baschurch taking on the whole of Walford Heath as opposed to having half in Bomere Heath and half in the Baschurch ward.

My year as Chair is coming to an end and I agreed to take on the role for one year only as future commitments preclude me from staying any longer.

Baschurch is not only a growing community but a thriving one with a lot of exciting projects on the go and if we are to achieve all these, we need more community minded residents to step up and get involved. Now is your chance to take part in various working groups the Parish Council want to establish to ensure we all get the most out of the opportunities ahead.

Brian Welti

Chairman Baschurch Parish Council 2022/23

24th April 2023