

BICTON PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - 14 MAY, 2019

Whilst I am delighted to begin this report by stating that we have arrived at the end of yet another relatively quiet year for Bicton's volunteer parish councillors, I fear that the immediate future may herald challenges on matters both new and old.

On a positive note we have welcomed to our number Councillor Mandie Lee, who has already made her presence felt by representing BPC at the SALC Area Committee Meeting.

Thanks go to Shropshire Councillor Lezley Picton for her active involvement with the parish, and for her level of commitment ensuring that we are kept up to date with issues of a County-wide nature, particularly where they may materially affect us.

PC Ross Cookson, our local Safer Neighbourhood Team leader continues to provide us with crime statistics which, in turn, continue to show Bicton in a most favourable light. We cannot, however, ignore that reports of domestic crimes appear to be edging ever nearer to our boundaries and we need to recognise that the 'outside world' is fast approaching. Indeed, it is with this in mind that BPC is currently working towards helping Bicton become a 'SmartWater Village' on the basis that 'prevention is better than cure'.

At the risk of becoming repetitive, this is now my fourth successive annual report where I state that not a spade has been turned on the SWSUE development of 296 dwellings between Calcott and Shepherd's Lanes. The two ponds are, however, in fine fettle and providing excellent habitats for wildlife.

The long-term housing requirement for the County is still very much a live issue and BPC has been working with Shropshire Council in order to promote a sensible growth plan for Bicton, enabling it to retain its desirable rural status. Less positively, we have recently seen a rekindling of developer interest in a proposal to build 300 dwellings on fields adjacent to the Holyhead Road, Calcott Lane and Shepherd's Lane, some four years after the original attempt was successfully rebuffed. BPC will continue to monitor this situation closely. There is also a proposal to build 300 dwellings on land at Shelton Rough, a development designed to coincide with the Oxon Link Road, which in itself is set to be the

first section of the much heralded North West Relief Road, both projects which generate particularly mixed opinions.

BPC is currently working on a draft 'housing questionnaire' which we are hoping that all parishioners will support, thus enabling us to be ready for future planning strategies from Shropshire with regard to the direction and magnitude of future development, incorporating all aspects of local life and infrastructure. Special thanks go to Cllr Rod Warren for his time and industry so far with this project.

Our footpaths continue to be monitored by Cllr. Sally Maddox, particularly reporting on the ongoing fight against the elements on the Severn Way, which persists in being either too dry or too wet according to the climate of the day, which in itself seems to be less seasonal by the month! Thanks also to Tom Llewellyn of Shropshire Council for his continued support.

This year has seen routine safety work carried out within Muriel's Little Wood and thanks to Cllr. Rod Warren for his involvement with various aspects of this.

It is pleasing to report that a number of parishioners have put their names forward to participate in a volunteer Community Speedwatch Scheme, which will involve civilian manning of safety camera equipment, hopefully leading to reductions in traffic speeds on the Holyhead Road entering the village from Grange Bank as well as in other areas of concern. We are currently awaiting feedback from the local police regarding training and introduction of the scheme. BPC is also considering entering into a joint initiative with Montford Parish Council with a view to adopting a combined approach to traffic management along the Holyhead Road through our two parishes.

Bicton now plays host to two public-access defibrillators, one at the Primary School on Bicton Lane and one here at the Village Hall. It was most heart-warming to see the number of parishioners volunteering for the training sessions both in their usage and also in basic CPR techniques.

As always there are ongoing matters of interest:

- parking on Holyhead Road, Isle Lane, Bicton Lane and The Oval
- Dog fouling
- Grange Bank footpath
- litter
- Drainage

- hedge cutting
- general village maintenance

Thanks go to members of the Brethren for taking over the responsibility for keeping our bus stops in good order.

It is Bicton's good fortune that there are a number of volunteers who are prepared to spend their time and effort in 'doing their bit' for us all. There are also those who are our 'eyes and ears' in the community and who bring to our attention any matters of concern of which we might otherwise be unaware. My sincere thanks go to all of these 'unsung heroes' as well as to the various BPC councillors for their enthusiasm in carrying out and co-ordinating tasks such as the litter picks, path clearing, hedge cutting, fence mending and tree planting. There are so many little jobs that go towards creating the 'greater good' for all.

Yet again, with careful planning and prudent expenditure, the precept remains the same level for the fourth consecutive year, still enabling us to invest in important projects such as SmartWater and also to maintain existing commitments such as Muriel's Little Wood.

Once again I thank Peter for his constant support and sage advice, and also for arranging his own recent medical procedures so as not to miss a meeting, such dedication should not go unmentioned. I am also grateful to Cllr. Elliot Blackmore, Vice Chairman for his unique ability to make things happen.

Bicton Parish Council's volunteer councillors give of their time and effort for the benefit of the parish as whole and it is right that I thank them on behalf of the parishioners for all they do to maintain and improve our rural idyll. I fear that there may be stormy waters ahead with regard to housing and highways however I have no doubt that Bicton has both the representatives and the will to do what is best.

Richard Brett
Chairman

14th May, 2019