

Chairman's Report for Acton Burnell Group Parish Council 2014 – 2015.

This year we have held 6 meetings that are required by the Standards Board and The Code of Conduct Regulations. Our Internal Audit has been completed and will be sent to the External Auditors.

The main problem we have encountered this year is the ever greater financial constraints from Shropshire Council, their reduced budgets mean less spending on the infrastructure of 'roads and drains' etc, especially in our rural parish's and also reduction of Staff, particularly in Planning .

The issues we have discussed and dealt with this year are :

Planning; the SAM DEV strategy put forward by Shropshire Council, has still not been signed off, and to complicate matters Central Govt asked the Local Councils to show that they had a 5 year land supply for house building which has led to a large number of speculative planning applications being made. Our Parish Council's position to be 'Green Open Countryside' means we can make no serious comments on applications we receive and the Officers in the Planning Department make decisions on them in an 'ad hoc ' and random way. I would suggest that we review our position when we have a clear and definitive stance from Shropshire Council.

For the record we have had over 30 applications made in our Parish's, although 10 have been for Tree works as we are a Conservation Area, 14 relating to Houses many being for 'Discharge of Conditions' and 6 for agricultural buildings.

Finance; we did not want to increase the Parish's share of the Council Tax so the Precept was set at £5219 but the withholding of the Grant from Shropshire Council meant our income for the year will be less but we should have sufficient funds for the year. We agreed to increase the Clerks Salary an extra pay point, which was accounted for in our budget. There will be an income from Light Source due to the completion of the Solar Parks at Stock Batch and Berriwood. This is the Community Benefit Fund and is given to the Parish Council for the benefit of the Electorate in the 4 Parish's and will be made annually for the life of the Solar Parks.

After a recent spate of thefts in Acton Burnell we wrote to the Police Commissioner, Bill Longmore to voice our disappointment about the lack of 'rural policing' and to his credit a meeting was arranged with Inspector Graham Preece, which our Clerk and Councillor Morgan attended. Although sympathetic to our views, Govt cuts have resulted in fewer Officers on the beat. A suggestion was made to have a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme again, which the Council will discuss.

We have lobbied English Heritage about the demise of Pitchford Hall and also over the precarious state of the Roman Bridge on the old Watling Street between Acton Burnell and Pitchford. Unfortunately there has been no action on either site.

We are still waiting for some response from Shropshire Council regarding the cross roads in Acton Burnell. It was identified as a Site of Community Concern, and a plan to give right of

way once again for traffic travelling from Pitchford to Ruckley in an effort to slow traffic down and be safer.

Severn Trent is to update the Sewerage Plant in Acton Burnell in order to make it more efficient and safer to the environment but it is still at the planning stage.

We have made an application for a Defibrillator for the Parishes, under a scheme offered by the Council and are waiting for a reply, but success will depend who else applies as there are a limited number and they are to be spread around the County.

I would like to thank our Clerk, Mrs Lorna Pardoe for her hard work and also for the support of the other Councillors throughout the year.