

Sandymoor Parish Council AGM

Chair Report May 2021-2022

The coronavirus pandemic continued in 2021 and into 2022 and affected many lives across Sandymoor before, during and after vaccinations took place. May 2021 heralded the end of covid restrictions by the Government and so Parish Councils were required to move from Zoom meetings back to face to face again.

May 2021 also brought about the delayed 2020 elections for the Parish Council. These elections resulted in changes to the line-up of Councillors with Colin McNulty leaving and two new Councillors joining, Nigel Cannam and Simon Cieluch. In total seven people applied and as we have eight Council places available, they were all appointed on an uncontested basis.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the excellent contribution Colin made across the council, selflessly giving up his time and energy to support the working groups he attended along with sustaining an elevated level of Parish Council attendance at the monthly meetings.

In addition to new Council members, we also changed Chair and Vice Chair with, Simon Hurst stepping down as Chair and Adam as Vice Chair.

Steve Mahon was voted in as the new Chair along with Tom Willett as Vice-Chair. This would also be an appropriate moment to thank Simon who has worked tirelessly over several years as both Vice Chair and latterly as Chair to support, nurture and develop Sandymoor. The same goes for Adam who has given tremendous support as Vice Chair not just to Sandymoor but also within the Parish Council. Fortunately, both Simon and Adam have chosen to continue as Parish Councillors and I for one am grateful for their support and advice, particularly as they have unrivalled knowledge of the history, workings and events that have shaped Sandymoor to date.

To improve our effectiveness as Chair and Vice Chair, both myself and Tom Willett undertook a series of training courses by Chalc (Cheshire Association of Local Councils), of whom Sandymoor are a member, which we believe has

helped deliver a more focussed agenda to the activities through the last twelve months.

The council discussed a list of priorities for the year ahead in addition to the ordinary course of events and has worked hard for the residents of Sandymoor. It could be said that recording and uploading zoom meetings to YouTube helped extend the reach of the PC meetings to residents, but we would still very much welcome a greater involvement by the public in helping us shape the strategic direction.

To promote conversation, and to help the council shape its own strategy we launched the “Have your say” resident focus group project. The idea was to hold public consultations to help stimulate discussion over what residents would like to see within the Parish. This was led by Cllrs Tom Willett and John Secker who did a fantastic job at identifying the right questions to ask, taking the time to get out into the community and ask those questions and then producing an amazing video with the results which is available online both on YouTube but also on local Facebook groups.

This year we signed off an agreement with Ormiston Academy Trust for the use and management of the playing fields. The rent which they will pay to the Council is being invested for the future replacement of the facilities. The monies are reported on at each Parish Council meeting.

Within the infrastructure of Sandymoor developers are still building. Just as Morris Homes finished their building Bloor homes have started the second half of their development which now runs behind the back of the school and along the edge of the Swans reach estate whilst being sandwiched by the railway line. This is a development of forty-five homes which is expected to last around 18 months. Halton Borough Council have agreed to an emergency access road leading onto Keckwick lane. The Parish Council along with several residents objected to this on the grounds of safety as speeding vehicles may well have an accident with pedestrians, particularly children who could exit via this access road.

Vistry are still building both new homes and the assisted living building which certainly has been met with much criticism by residents especially those living in that part of Sandymoor. The Parish Councillors have met with Vistry on a number of occasions seeking clarification over who will be living there. We subsequently met with the new owners, Halton Housing Association. HHA have

7500 properties under management, and we took up their offer to tour a similar scheme over in Widnes at Barkla Fields. The view of Councillors was unanimous in that the quality of final fit out, operational management and selection processes for residents are all to a high standard and if replicated in the new development then resident's fears will be hopefully allayed. In addition, HHA will be working closely with those nearest to the new site giving guided tours and answering any questions as it gets closer to opening. In addition, there will be community-based activities such as yoga and Pilates along with a bistro which will be open to the public. HHA have also offered to work with the Parish Council in supporting community-based projects and have generously donated £5000 to be used for items such as Benches, Planters and Bins and anything else the PC wishes to deliver for residents.

On the other side with Vistry themselves we have received a significant number of complaints about their approach to being considerate builders when it comes to residents living adjacent to the building site. It has to be said that although representatives of Vistry attended our Parish Council meetings, Vistry's performance over their management of speeding trucks, workmen parking and noise levels is still a cause for concern and the Parish Council continues to work for the residents in trying to broker a settlement with the developer.

The Council invited the Environment Agency and Halton Borough Council to discuss the ongoing concerns over flooding, the clearance of Keckwick Brook and continued flooding of the subway after heavy rainfall. The meeting was well attended, and EA and HBC have delivered to a certain extent on their promise to clear downstream problems, but it is something the Parish Council remains vigilant over and will continue to monitor and pressure both organisations for work to be both undertaken and completed.

Sandymoor Parish Council continues its work engaging with Homes England and Halton Borough Council over future developments and this year saw the consultation of the proposed Sandymoor South and Wharford Farm development take place. There has been a huge outcry over the loss of green space for houses, the subsequent pressure on road infrastructure along with massive concerns as to flood management will be handled. This has been the subject of most local election candidates campaigning and whoever becomes the new local councillor for the area the Parish Council continues to feed back residents' concerns to both Homes England and Halton Borough Council.

This year has also seen Redrow start their massive development linking Daresbury at the north to Keckwick lane in the South. This will result in a new junction being built off the top end of the express way and the current planned eventual closure of Keckwick Lane to vehicular traffic. Redrow continue to make minor changes to the plans, and we will keep residents informed accordingly.

Finally on developments Lane Ends finished stage one of their development with the completion of the new shops complex. The Coop opened just in time for Christmas and a Vets will be opening on the end unit nearest the Community Hall. The remaining units are currently unlet.

The next phase is for Lane ends to build the over 55's complex and work is now well under way. We will give updates for opening during this year. The final part will be the construction of bungalows on the land at the rear of the shops.

In November of 2021 by way of co-option we welcomed Barbara Schon onto the Parish Council and Barbara has proven already to be an active member, I wish her the best of success for the future.

At time of writing unfortunately both Nigel Cannam and Simon Cieluch who joined the council last year have decided to leave. We plan on co-opting two new members in the near future.

The council believes passionately about Sandymoor and are working hard on several different projects. We started a planting Committee which is a collaboration between council and residents to trial planters in the area. The first two will be arriving in late May and one will be placed outside the High School and the other opposite the mini roundabout on Wharford land and Newmoore Lane. The Parish plans to increase the number of these in the area and we will be using money from the donations received, thus no cost to residents.

Cleanliness is a big topic and Cllr John Secker has been highly active with the Love Sandymoor group in both supplying litter picking equipment but also giving up his time to clean up our area. In addition, it is wonderful to see the public-spirited individuals who help clean up the litter problem. The council wishes to see a lot more bins in the right locations in the area and we are in discussions with all parties involved in the decision-making process to make this happen.

For the Jubilee this year the Council is not only delivering on Planters and benches but also plans to use Parish Council land to put in a green canopy project. The planning for this was started last year and will take place through the jubilee year. The idea is to add to this annually and create a space of enjoyment for all, for contemplation and somewhere to relax.

In January the Clerk resigned and left early February. The Council formed a working group and subsequently appointed two people effectively splitting the old role. Arthur Neil is now the new Clerk to the council and Louise Irvine has been appointed to the role of Responsible financial and digital officer. I wish them both the best of success for the future.

The Parish Council has decided to update its digital footprint and will be delivering a new Website with Facebook integration to help communicate more effectively with residents. We will be providing useful contact details for other organisations along with a more comprehensive FAQ section, so watch this space!

In conclusion I would like to thank everybody for their support during 2021/22, it should be recognised that Councillors work hard for residents and give their time, skill, effort, and enthusiasm for free to try and give something back to their community, it has been a privilege to work alongside you this year.

Steve Mahon

Chair Sandymoor Parish Council 2021/22