

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

As we move in to the final twelve months of the present Council, we can look back with pride on what has been an exceptionally busy and productive year; indeed probably the most productive year in the history of this Council.

This time last year, we had two major drainage schemes in progress. At the Council's Shore Road Recreation Ground, land drains which had been laid over twenty years ago had failed resulting in many months of the grounds being in an unusable state. Our contractor "**Duncan Ross**" undertook the laying of new field drains, spiking and sand banding of the whole field along with replacement of collection and discharge drains, which had been incorrectly installed by previous contractors, through the Council's carpark. This latter work also necessitated the re-surfacing and marking out of the car park. The work was initially held up by the ground being so wet that it could not bear the weight of the contractor's machines only to be followed by a period of drought making it impossible to lay the drains; the initial estimate of four week's work ended up lasting over twelve weeks.

At the same time, the Council as landlords and the football Club as tenants undertook a major reconstruction and drainage of football pitch at the Centenary Sports Ground. This major scheme undertaken by sports ground specialists "**Danvic**" was another job compromised by the summer of drought necessitating major water supply works being installed to prevent the newly seeded pitch drying out. The total cost of both schemes financed by the Council approached £100,000 with the football club entering into new lease terms effectively re-paying the Sports Ground works through an increased ground rent.

The Centenary Sports Ground main carpark also benefitted from the installation of LED floodlighting which has vastly reduced nuisance and drug abuse.

The Council also embarked on an extended "Lengthsman" scheme during the year with our contractor "**Brian Parkinson**" taking over weed control on our roads from the Borough Council; this year that has been extended further with maintenance of the grass verges and the cleaning of road and traffic signs being vested with the Lengthsman.

Roads and speeding were highlighted by residents and councillors alike. The Council responded with the purchase of three "Speed Indicating Devices" (SPIDS) now located on the old railway bridge, Shore Road and Moss Lane. The Council were the first in this country to import these high-tech devices of French manufacture at significantly less cost than the British equivalents, statistics have shown an average of over 8% reduction in speeds as well as recording details and times of all passing vehicles which are passed to the police.

Maintaining the Parishes assets has always been high on the Council's list of priorities and during the year our three Play Areas were all fully overhauled with the safety surfacing being repaired throughout. We continue our weekly inspection by Councillors of all community assets with engineering inspections each quarter and full insurance inspections annually. We still look forward to being able to take control of the Play Area and Green space at Poppyfields/The Green once the Borough Council can agree terms with Morris Homes.

The Council were pleased to receive the gift from the Eatough and Plant families of the strip of land between Granville Avenue and Sidney Avenue which is a popular shortcut. The Council will be improving the area over the coming months.

We were also delighted to receive the significant gift of the former railway track-bed on the Westerly banks of the Douglas from “**Henry Alty & Co**” as they finally left the Brickworks Site. This strip of land runs from the Southerly end of the Persimmon development initially to Sutton Avenue with a further strip to the east of Merlecrest Drive. Through this land and beyond to the canal sea-lock, the Council intend to develop a multi-use pathway as both for leisure and a traffic free route. Funds which the Council will receive from the development levy imposed on the Persimmon development will be entirely devoted to this scheme. The Council also took ownership of several small parcels of land around the village with a view to converting eyesores to assets and intend to provide additional wayside seating in the coming months.

In time for the Early Spring Bank Holiday, work was completed two weeks ago on the new £14,000 “**Outdoor Gym**” at the Shore Road recreation ground financed almost entirely from development grants. This has already proved extremely popular with people of all ages; it was indeed very rewarding to see whole families using the new equipment together.

The Council continue to support the Community Centre in their ambitions to develop the site with a new purpose built building and have committed the receipts from other Infrastructure levies to that cause.

The “**Love Hesketh Bank**” initiative continues to grow in popularity with the “**Best Kept Street**” accolade being added to the list of awards. Sadly despite efforts like this, irresponsible dog owners still leave dog excrement for others to walk in and remove, whilst the litter louts think it’s OK to drop anything they’ve done with.

The Council has also agreed to work with the “**Lancashire Volunteer Partnership**” in progressing the “**Parish Champion**” initiative which aims to give a uniformed presence in the rural areas. To date we have one resident who has come forward and are looking for a further one at present.

All this has been accomplished with a Parish Precept which is 21% less in real terms than it was ten years ago.

I couldn’t finish without again thanking **Duncan Taylor** who continues to decorate the village centre each year with Festive Christmas wreaths to set off the Council’s luminaires then in the summer providing hanging baskets from the lamp standards and filling the planters at the Moss Lane junction.

I would personally, and on behalf of the community, like thank all of the Members of the Council for their dedication and the hard work they voluntarily undertake for the whole community within our Parish. Finally I would also like to thank our Clerk, Ian Cropper for managing the work of the Council and his continued support and guidance to me and all the Councillors.

Paul Sergeant **Council Chairman.**