

The past year has seen us make significant progress on a number of long standing issues.

- 1 Laburnum Road Playfield Field is at last starting to look like a proper play area. This past year has seen two major phases come to fruition, the Toddlers Play Area last July and this month the completion of the Adventure Play Area. In addition we have some of the tree planting in place, waste bins located, the much needed safety fencing in place around the pond and field signage.

Still to come are the next phase of tree planting, the seats and wild flower margins.

Although we now have a better working relationship with the Laburnum Road residents we are still, some way from the much needed improvements materialising. It does not seem to be in anyone's interest, either residents or the image of the village, for the deterioration of this road to continue.

Perhaps subject to improving Laburnum Road, we can also look forward to using the Welcome Home Fund towards memorial gates thus fulfilling both the purpose of the fund and enhancing the village.

- 2 Part of that enhancement should be the proper maintenance of our assets and we do need to be more attentive in looking after both our natural assets such as trees and equipment such as the seats around the village.

We now have proper system of safety monitoring and maintenance of play equipment in place which has already resulted in remedial actions at Butchers Stile.

- 3 Antisocial Behaviour and petty vandalism is still with us but fortunately at a much lower level than in other areas. However there was significant damage to the Christmas tree lights last year which meant that they had to be prematurely removed for safety reasons. Whilst litter and dog fouling seems to be declining, there is still a small minority who do not seem to either use the litter bins or clear up after their dogs.

- 4 Parking is a continuing problem as is speeding traffic. We do have a problem in the village, partly due to the lack of off-street parking, all the more reason for responsible parking and a willingness to walk a few more metres to the shop or pub. There are of course safety issues - particularly in the village centre and Church Street when vehicles are parked carelessly or [particularly for disabled people] block footpaths. Our PCSO has carried out speed and parking checks and the issuing of parking fines and warning letters.

Cycling on footpaths seems to be on the increase and can be a considerable hazard to pedestrians. With care it does help to keep young children more safe but there have been some near misses particularly with teenagers and adults riding on

footpaths and travelling at speed. The footpaths should primarily be a safe place for pedestrians, not cyclists and parked vehicles. On this the Highway Code states quite clearly that cycling on footpaths is against the law.

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- 5 The issue of a new parish Council for Kingsmead is now happily behind us and we are now a smaller, more coherent, community and able to concentrate on some of the longer term issues in making Davenham and Whatcroft an even better area to live. The slight drawback is that a smaller community has meant that we have had to increase our small share of the Council Tax as the smaller size does not significantly reduce the councils administrative costs.
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- 6 In looking to protect our community, especially in the light of recent changes in planning legislation, the Parish Council has begun work on a 'Neighbourhood Plan' which supersedes the previous process of Village Plans. If we do not prepare one [in conjunction with Cheshire West and Chester Council] we are less likely to be able to prevent what we would call, inappropriate development or possibly be unable to get improvements we may like to see in the village. Preparing a 'Neighbourhood Plan' is a long and time and resource consuming exercise which will involve consultations with the whole community.
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- 7 There is the possibility of PC's being offered more responsibilities by the larger councils [CW&C] - but will it be fully funded by the new councils or an added charge on our council precept? Will PC's have to employ more staff to administer extra services? We will have to be very careful in considering any proposals which may come forward.
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- 8 Despite all our problems, the Village is still a good and attractive place to live and offers many benefits to residents and visitors alike. We and the community all have a responsibility to care for it
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- 9 Finally, may I thank all members for their work over the past difficult 12 months and making the meetings relatively easy to chair. Although we may benefit from adapting the rules of a well know radio programme and avoid 'repetition, deviation and [sometimes] hesitation. I would particularly like to thank our new Clerk - Phil Sanders who took over the post in January, for so quickly and efficiently picking up the reins.

May I end by offering my successor Chairman, Tony Sellers, our best wishes for his year of office.

Cllr Arthur Wood
Chairman 2011-2012

May 2012