

Cressage, Harley & Sheinton Parish Council

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

10th May 2022

After a year of difficulties in 2021 due to COVID, Zoom meetings, a local election and 4 clerks, we have settled into a period of calm.

Last May we welcomed 4 new councillors and a new clerk to the Parish Council. Over the last year we have discussed many of the items, which appear regularly on the agenda. Some are resolved – not many, others recur on a regular basis.

Highway Matters enables matter of concern to be brought to the Council's attention particularly:-

Cressage Bridge, the survey, the void, the disappearing kerbs and the placement of traffic lights is a regular contender for frustration. There is still no imminent date for repair but this financial year is promised.

Sheinton Road is almost a monthly item for discussion – the parking of cars outside the school, the state of the pavement from tree debris, the volume of traffic, parking outside the doctors surgery, the volume and speed of traffic using the road, the state of the road surface, the erosion of line markings, After a meeting on site last summer the Parish Council, did manage to get some remedial work done on the road surface together with newly painted lines. We are actively working on the other items.

Wood Lane the missing bollards, is mentioned fairly frequently, but the narrowness of the lane and wider agricultural & commercial vehicles prevents a permanent solution.

Severn Way the leak in the highway has exercised some mind recently specifically Severn Trent. Obviously, a cause for concern when the water froze on the road surface. However, the ball has now been passed to Shropshire Council after a meeting on site in late March. It has been confirmed by S.T. it is not their water, it is actually a spring and S.C. will devise a way of diverting to existing drains.

Configuration of A458/Sheinton Road/Station Road has concerned some residents recently and have asked the Parish Council to flag their concerns.

Speeding through Cressage is a constant monthly subject with fears and concerns rightly expressed. These concerns have been expressed for many, many years. The Vehicle Activated Signs installed some years ago and the regular positioning of the Speed Camera has made drivers more aware of the need to reduce speed. Various initiatives over the years have not been forthcoming and still traffic drives too fast through the village. The Parish Council is actively trying to initiate contact with the Speed Watch & Safer Roads Partnership .

Speeding A458 additional fears are expressed at monthly meetings at the general speed on the main road. With this speeding mind we have resolved to see if consultations with other Parish Councils and ultimately with advice from the Police and Shropshire Council's Traffic Engineers can come up with innovative and/or unique solutions to the A458 route designation. Speeding on A458 has been registered as Community Concern with the promise Shropshire Council will investigate the issues. The Parish Council is following up on physical measures that can be installed to help with reducing speeding. These measures can't be implemented without consultation and agreement with Police and Shropshire Council. As you know it is not a quick fix solution as has been proved for the many years concerns have been expressed.

Young People's amenities and opportunities in Cressage were discussed, realising they could be greatly improved, but how? Why not ask the young people themselves? At the end of last year's summer term senior school children were asked, as were primary age children in the autumn. That information, has been collated but for various reasons, has not yet been presented to the Parish Council. Meanwhile, Shropshire Council's Young Peoples' service has been undergoing transition and we had preliminary conversations with them before the end of last year, which we intend to follow up, accessing their expertise and knowledge, although not being an area of social deprivation, we may struggle to access.

Planning has been granted to The Eagles for conversion into 2 dwellings – for many years it has been a blot on our landscape. The building was deemed to have grade two listed status, which may well have delayed commencement of conversion. Although asked for its opinion the Parish Council expressed grave concerns regarding access from this site on to Sheinton Road and particularly the lack of footpath provision but this concern has been disregarded.

Outline plans have also been submitted for the Car Park at The Eagles - the Parish Council has maintained its objection to the application as there was no provision for a footpath or for suitable or appropriate site access/egress.

Vicarage / Glebe field site outline planning application has been discussed and our concerns registered there are many features, particularly the access/egress onto A458 which are cause for concern.

Raby Estate/Shrewsbury Road plans have also been submitted – however this plan is a late submission and with the exception of the plan for the conversion of The Eagles, none of the applications will be determined until Shropshire's Local Plan (to 2036) has been approved by an external body. Those findings are expected later this year.

Ironbridge development although not in our parish the proposed development on the site of the old power station will inevitably impact significantly on our village in accessing services but specifically increase traffic through the village both on A458 and Station Road. Although, there was an action by Much Wenlock Town Council to 'call in' the application, the move was ineffective.

Aware of poor communications between the Parish Council and residents we have resolved to publish in Village Life a precis of each month's meeting and Parish Councillors' contact details. As a reminder to residents, the meetings are open for residents to attend, to contribute or to listen. This is local democracy at work, the meetings, are on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (except August), usually in Cressage but for the moment in Harley until the Cressage Village Hall problem is resolved.

Environment The Parish Council did refuse a suggestion last year to manage the Cressage/Harley Lay-by's in an environmental manner, We did so on safety grounds, which proved to be justified with two road traffic accidents in the vicinity of the lay by shortly after. In the light of Shropshire Council's net zero policy, their role and ours is to encourage residents to adopt actions to reduce their own carbon footprint. The Parish Council recognised this some years ago and installed LED units into street light lighting and a 'green' supplier of electricity to the pavilion. We are more aware now 'of the clock ticking' and our own requirement to consider seriously the Parish Council's carbon footprint in some of the decisions it makes and actions it takes. Recently, elected councillors I hope will alert those of us 'buried in the old ways' to an environmentally friendly future.

During the autumn we had several discussions on how best to proceed in making Smartwater available to residents without committing the Parish Council to a significant outlay. We believe we have found a solution and will discuss the roll out at this meeting following this one.

Playing Field & Under 11's play area. The under 11's play area has been closed this winter due to flooding. As a result the annual safety inspection was delayed until February. Some remedial and temporary work has been done to alleviate the flooding. This now needs to be solved on a permanent basis. During the period of proposed groundwork the remedial work on the equipment should be carried out. Hopefully the Under 11's play area will reopen by mid May. Approval of works will be discussed at the meeting following this one.

Finance It came to light in early autumn the Parish Council had a liability to pay a one off sum of £10,000 to the local government pension scheme as their contribution to the previous clerk's pension, as if they were her contributions, although not working for our parish council. The Parish Council has questioned this requirement and has exhausted all possibility of extricating ourselves from this payment. Negotiations have allowed us to pay over 5 years without incurring further penalties.

The Grounds Maintenance contract is due for renewal at the end of 3 years. Renewal will be discussed at the meeting following this one, in closed session.

The Parish Council is committed to maintaining the Defibrillator a new cover and battery have been replaced. Additional volunteers have enrolled.

The Parish Council has agreed to hold the application for the Precept for 2022/23 at last year's level, mindful of the potential hardship on household budgets and the increased cost of living in the foreseeable future. ,

Concern has been voiced at meetings relating to the closure of Christ Church. The Parish Council has also been asked for their opinion on the closure of the church by the Diocese. The Parish Council having recently asked residents' for their opinions on the closure in Village Life – there was no responses. I believe the last church service was held on Easter Sunday with the Diocese now applying their appropriate closure procedures over time.

It is 5 years since the last Parish Plan was published. Some households may still have a copy 'in that kitchen drawer!' We are considering the need to refresh this document to reflect the current wishes of residents of the 3 parishes. It isn't a quick fix document and previously it has taken 2 years from start to publication and needs significant input and support from residents. We will be discussing this in the meeting following this one.

Finally, a thank you to our Parish Councillors and to our Clerk for the time commitment and support they are giving to our parishes.

Victoria Todd

Chairman
Cressage, Harley & Sheinton Parish Council
10th May, 2022