

## **Chairman's report to the Annual Parish Meeting, 19th April, 2011.**

This Annual Parish Meeting is the last of the current administration as the local elections will take place on Thursday 5th May. We requested changes to the Parish Wards as Hadley & Leegomery was one of the largest in the Borough with over 7,000 voters. Our request was accepted and we now have four wards of similar size each having approximately 2,500 electors. They are Apley Castle, Hadley Castle, Hadley Manor and Leegomery, each with 4 Councillors to represent them on the Parish Council.

Although the ratio of Members to electors has been unusual, we have always been available to respond to local people's expectations as well as concerns. One of the major ways we have been able to help is over The Nettlefolds Estate on Britannia Way. The residents have been subjected to inordinate amounts of anti-social behaviour emanating from the raised footpath beside the old railway. As is usually the case, by the time they approached us their pleas had been dismissed by the agencies who have a duty of care, and the Parish Council was where they found support. Final arrangements are imminent after many difficult months of patient work by Members of this Council and the Clerk, and residents will have new fencing to help shield them from the source of the problem. I'm grateful to Cllr. Sean Thomas for his unstinting effort.

Planning has continued to cause concerns but our views have continued to be expressed in the fight for reasonable and fair decisions. This has been helped by the introduction of the right to speak at Plans Board meetings and more robust representation has had an impact on the resolutions made.

Another value of this Council has been in facilitating opportunities for groups to meet and discuss issues in order to reach helpful outcomes. It has been surprising how simple discussion and communication has made this happen and it is a privilege to help people in this way.

Following the registration of the Village Green, we embarked on the replanting of the shrub beds which were overgrown and unattractive. In spite of our best efforts, the unprecedented weather conditions made it impossible for many of the new plants to survive, but this has now been addressed and replacements provided. A colourful backdrop should see another successful Village Green Fun Day on 26th June to which our community will be invited to enjoy an afternoon of free entertainment. Much of the preparatory work has already been done and we are grateful to Cllr. Chris Harrison for leading this project.

The regeneration of Hadley Centre is due to begin next year. All steps will be taken to ease the transition from old to new but the benefit to this area will be immeasurable as we see new life breathed into our commercial heart and once more, people coming together to shop and to enjoy the new facilities in their own community.

We have had to fight for this as we have fought for the retention of the services at the Princess Royal Hospital. At long last the pressure from all our councils and MPs, clinicians and the general public has resulted in a promise to keep full A&E services, not only in Telford but in our Parish, where they were originally intended because of necessity. Our support will continue as we look forward, with cautious optimism, to the future.

Our grant funding has again helped many local causes including the Severn Hospice to whom £1000 was donated. Our finances are extremely well managed by our Clerk and the Finance and General Purposes Committee under the chairmanship of Cllr. Richard Dickens with Cllr. John Smart as his deputy. I cannot stress enough how commendable it is that in spite of the current national and international financial situation, this Council has maintained all its services and activities as normal, and has done so without incurring any rise in the precept. We have continued to provide what the people have expected of us at no extra cost to them.

One service over which we have no control is the police. After having 2 officers supported by CSOs, the decision was made to second PC Claire Walker-Shale to Oakengates for several months to cover absence. PC Brenda Bellamy has proved to be another superb officer who works diligently and willingly for our safety and for this we are very grateful. She is ably supported by CSOs Alan Ambrose and Rachel Hughes who also work hard to take care of us.

Hadley Learning Community has now come of age. This year sees the first GCSE exam entrants who have completed the full 5 years at the school. Year 7 is fully subscribed while many other secondary schools struggle to meet their admission figures. Our association with the school is close and supportive, a fact which is greatly appreciated as it helps to cement the link between school and community. During a recent meeting with Dr. Eatough, the Principal, I gave her 2 new trophies to be awarded annually to individual pupils for achievement in singing. These are in addition to the Music Shield which I had already donated. I do this to try to uphold our local musical tradition, especially of choral singing. Anyone who attended the Christmas Carol concert will testify to the delight and pride of the recipients and their families when, on that lovely occasion, 2 of the cups were presented to young singers from Apley Wood and Millbrook Schools. Further events are hoped for in the future.

We have much heritage to be celebrated and residents and visitors alike are being reminded of this by the new gateway signs that have been installed throughout the 4 areas of the Parish. They have attracted much attention and certainly give our Parish a distinctive image. Again, thanks are due to Cllr. Thomas for all the work that he did to this end.

I wish to record my thanks to all our Members for their hard work, some of whom I have already named. In addition to them, I should like to thank my Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Hazel Dickens for her support and encouragement and Cllr. Ron Plenderleith for his unstinting efforts on our behalf while working through PACT and ASB meetings.

My final thanks are greatly due to our staff; Cliff Henderson for keeping our Cemetery in wonderful condition; Helen Simmons and Vera Holland for the immaculate state of this Community Centre and for their willingness to come and help whenever they are asked; Mark Palmer-Burridge for his success in taking the Youth Café to exciting new areas of activity for our young people; Gail Lawrence, our Administrator, for all that she does and is capable of doing in her role especially for taking the reins when the Clerk is on leave; and last but not least, to Colin Potts who began as Clerk just after I began as Chairman so we have grown together in our respective roles. He has to be among the best clerks in the Borough and I am very proud of his grasp of the work and the total reliability and commitment that he shows when managing our Council affairs. The Parish Council benefits greatly from the extensive qualifications and experience of our Clerk and Administrator. Thank you to all of them and to all of you who have worked for the common good of this community and the people that we were elected to represent. May I wish you all good fortune in the forthcoming election and trust that whoever takes office after 5th May will continue to work hard to improve life for all who live in this Parish.

I shall end with a quote from two residents who took the trouble to send a letter of thanks which ended 'We are proud to live here'.

Job done!

Written by Councillor Pat Smart  
April, 2011