

Chairman's report 15th May 2023

Good evening residents, members and officers.

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting. It has been an honour to serve as Chairman of Barrow Parish Council for the last year. We have a great team of Council Members and of course an enthusiastic and dedicated Parish Clerk. Having a great team makes things much easier and more enjoyable for us all. Let's not forget that Members of the Council do this role in our own time with no reward other than making a positive impact on where we live.

It has been a unique year for us. In June 2022, we supported the celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's reign of 70 Years. Then, with great sadness Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II sadly passed on 8th September 2022. More recently we supported the celebrations for the coronation of King Charles III.

As a Parish Council we saw the resignation of Jean Brown, who had loyally served with the Parish Council for many years. To help with our work we welcomed back Stuart McGregor to the Council, who agreed to help as an interim measure until the recent Parish Council elections. As a Parish Council we would like to thank both Jean and Stuart for their service over the years.

The Parish Council has worked hard to improve the area in which we live. Following both formal and informal engagement with our community, we have developed a comprehensive plan and drafted our priorities for the next period, which I'll come to later.

For now, let us revisit some of our achievements over the last 12 months, which have only been realised due to the efforts made by the Council, our Clerk and with our ongoing support from our Borough Councillor - David Birtwhistle:

- We have continued our engagement with the Assistant Police Commissioner and partner Parish Councils for the introduction of Speed Indicator Devices. This will help with both traffic calming and the collection of speed data. All data collected will be used to inform future interventions to improve Road Safety in Barrow.
- We have made significant improvements to our Asset Management Register and Policy, Tree Management Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Model Publication Scheme (including Council communications), and our Financial Regulations.
- Regarding financial management, we have moved from an antiquated paper intensive finance management system to an on-line banking and authorisation system. This has made us much more efficient in terms of process and audit. As part of this transition, we managed to incorporate and ringfence the 'Barrow Action Group' funds (for 2023) which will fund additional improvements, over and above our usual budget.
- We have made general improvements to Trafford Gardens and the Parish boundary including new paving, benches, bins, planting and of course our usual Christmas and remembrance Sunday decorations.
- We have started the introduction of CCTV to the area to help with improved safety and security for residents.
- Throughout 2022, we implemented a programme of engagement with the community, through surveys and direct interaction - seeking their views on our plans and priorities.

- We continued our drive to secure ownership of the woodland, including the pathway (from the Printworks to Whalley Road). Ultimately, this will support more active travel around the village and reduce reliance on shorter drive journeys.

Moving to our plans for the next period. I mentioned previously that we have engaged with both residents and wider stakeholders on where our priorities lie for the next period. I will summarise the top 10 most strongly supported initiatives for 2023. These of course will be subject to final agreement and further funding from the Parish Council.

1. Ownership of the woodland (Printworks to Whalley Road). The advantages are noted earlier, but I will reiterate that owning this woodland would protect this woodland area and provide an asset to the Parish.
2. Improvements to the Playing Fields by replacing and adding play equipment to the area, improving surfaces and replacing as much furniture as our budget allows.
3. Improvements to the Parish owned car park (rear of Old Row) through improved surfacing and the introduction of a 'community area' for village use.
4. Continue to seek interventions that improve Road Safety throughout the village. Using our collated traffic data to inform LCC and the Police of the issues and seek better support for both speed compliance and speed enforcement measures as necessary.
5. Progress our programme for the implementation of Council owned CCTV. This is aimed at helping with monitoring traffic issues, deterring anti-social behaviour and improving safety and security around the Parish.
6. Improve the provision and management of key facilities in the village, including more defibrillators, dog waste bins and improved seating for Parish owned areas.
7. With the support of our Borough Councillors, we will respond to planning requests with a view that any new plans are compliant, sustainable and of course do not introduce adverse issues for our community.
8. With the support of our Borough Councillors, continue our liaison with LCC to seek improvements to our bus shelters, pavement, road surfacing and markings.
9. Littering is becoming a massive problem around the Eurogarage site and playing field areas. We must liaise with the public, RVBC and the retailers to help with managing littering.
10. Addressing anti-social behaviour around the Eurogarage site and the playing field. We must continue our efforts in seeking more support through our police liaison activities, as well as encouraging more of our community to report issues directly to the Police.

I would like to thank Members for supporting our meetings and of course supporting the many initiatives and improvements we have made to the area in which we live. A special thanks must be made to Mike Hill, our Clerk who has made such a positive difference to our progress.

Finally, as you are aware, I have been elected as Borough Councillor for Wiswell and Barrow, along with David Birtwhistle. I will therefore have to focus more of my available time in that role. I will continue to serve the Parish Council for the time being, although I will not be seeking to be either Chair or Vice Chair.

Lee Street
Chair
Barrow Parish Council