

## **Chairman's Report 2017/18**

An interesting year in which we almost became insolvent, questioned our existence as a council and achieved a full compliment of Councillors for the first time in many years when we were joined by Susan Celino in March.

### Planning Issues

Fewer planning applications were dealt with than in previous years, but some of the old ones were still hanging on well into the year. In particular the application to build several houses on land at Hedley East Farm has still not been resolved despite several meetings with the applicant and his land agents and discussions around granting some land to the village in exchange for modifications to the village green.

During the processing of these applications we had some serious disagreements with the County Council which led some of us to question what was the point of being a Parish Councillor when our views and local knowledge were constantly ignored. It remains to be seen if our complaints were listened to.

Another year has gone by without the extreme concern of imminent opencast coal operations on our doorstep. However the coal reserves are still there, and whilst we hope that the current aversion to coal continues to make it economically non viable to pursue those reserves we have been made aware that interest in obtaining the coal may come back as a result of decisions in other areas of the County.

### Parish Upkeep and Services

We have been gradually using up our cash reserves over the years, and as we had also been keeping our Parish Precept as low as possible came within £50 of running out of money in March. Accordingly we have set the 2018/19 Precept at £6000. Although this is a 20% rise it should be remembered that it only represents an increase of less than £10 per household per annum.

The major annual expenditure we incur is grass cutting, and we have reduced the cost of this substantially by changing to a new contractor. We also concluded a £600 grant to the Hedley WI this year.

Along with the rest of the County the condition of our roads is getting worse. However the repairs to the verges on the West Hill have survived and the gulleys are being cleared on the road to High Mickley which prevented the ice build up seen previously, but the new adhesive cats eyes on the road to Currock Hill were ploughed off when the snow was cleared. Hopefully these will be replaced when the road patching we have been promised happens.

A comprehensive report from the village survey conducted last year was presented to the Council and has been published on our website. Our thanks to all who produced this document which will be informing our decisions going forward.

We contributed to the recent Schools Consultation for our area and stated our objections to all the proposals that were being made and pointed out the effect schools closures would have on all rural communities.

As in previous years, we conducted a successful litter pick from the roadside verges in the Parish in April and picked up a large amount of rubbish with a dwindling number of Parishioners. Our thanks to those people from the village who did participate. We also now have a garden refuse bin service which can be requested by purchasing a waste bin from the county Council.

**Dr. R. J. Penny**  
**Chairman**

8<sup>th</sup> May 2018