

## Chairman's Report to Mellor Parish Council Annual Meeting 20 May 2021

First of all I would like to welcome Robin Walsh to this meeting and congratulate him on being elected to RVBC as a Borough Councillor. I have no doubt the residents of Mellor Ward will keep him busy!

In August our friend and fellow Councillor, Noel Walsh, sadly passed away following a serious illness. As I said previously Noel was an exceptional individual, completely dedicated to his role representing and supporting the residents of Mellor and the Ribble Valley. He lived in Mellor for 41 years, had been a Parish Councillor for over 25 years and was the longest serving Borough Councillor at RVBC. He will be missed by all who knew him.

This is the first opportunity I've had to report on the work of the Council for 2 years, although we produced a Newsletter last December to keep residents up to date with matters affecting the local area and I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all those who went the extra mile to support the vulnerable and those at higher risk in the local community.

Due to Govt Regulations and social distancing since the pandemic began, MPC resolved to work under "Emergency Powers" for much of last year and all of this year until tonight. The Clerk has worked closely with both me and the Vice Chairman throughout this period.

One of our main concerns throughout was how to involve all councillors. We resolved that Councillors continued to receive regular email updates, the normal email distribution, including planning and the Clerk ensured that all Councillors were consulted and their vote registered before any important decisions were made.

However, according to some emails I have been copied into, this practice has clearly not suited everyone. In fact, I have been very concerned with the tone of some emails received by the Clerk on various issues.

I fully understand the frustration of some who felt that we should hold remote monthly meetings. There are, unfortunately, difficulties in operating via "Zoom" or other platforms in the Mellor Area. Mellor has inherent problems with the reliability of the broadband supply on which "Zoom" relies. Also, procedures would have had to be agreed by us all before any remote meetings could take place and those procedures would have had to cover what would happen should any live meeting be disrupted by one or more attendees being cut off mid-session, especially the Chairman, Vice Chairman and/or Clerk.

Also, we have seen what problems can occur when remote meetings become chaotic....the **Handforth Parish Council** Zoom meeting back in December went viral. I will say no more.

So, as we are now back to our normal way of working, I would like you all to press the restart button and let normal business resume. As it stands, following a ruling in the High Court, remote meetings after May 7<sup>th</sup> are not allowed although the court implied that it was really a decision for the

Govt and not the Courts. The Govt's « **call for evidence** » is currently open leaving the decision open to review at some stage in the future.

**On Remembrance Sunday**, I attended the War Memorial and paid my respects to the bereaved and laid a wreath on behalf of all parishioners. As only a few people could attend it was strangely surreal but also very moving. My abiding memory is of our local resident Bill Thompson, supported by his son, reading out the names of the fallen "Mellor Men".

**The Book of Remembrance** was well received by each of the local churches who received a copy. This was a fantastic effort by all involved. The Remembrance Project is ongoing and the details from the book along with other documents have been assembled into a website <https://mpc.mogweb.org>. As new information comes to light it can be added to these records.

**The Playground** reopened when Cllrs felt its use complied with government guidelines and we have kept it open throughout the latest wave of infections.

Several villagers responded to our request in the **December Newsletter** and put forward plans to re-design the grassed area above the play area. I brought these ideas together in a sketch which all Cllrs received. I hope that as restrictions ease we are able to consult widely with residents and get a clearer view on its future design and use.

Following a flood at the **Village Hall**, we submitted a successful insurance claim for damage to the newly laid hall floor. Myself, a local joiner and Cllr Hymas completed temporary repairs to the floor while we investigated a more permanent solution.

The Parish Council secured a flood relief grant from RVBC enabling a new French Drain to be installed at the Village Hall to capture and divert surface water away from the foundations. I inspected the work daily and, as a qualified (if retired) surveyor, signed off on the work. MPC has been reimbursed by RVBC, so this work was completed at no cost to either MCA or MPC. We have ring fenced the insurance pay-out until we know whether the drainage work has been a success.

To protect MCA finances, we also paid to re-roof the equipment store as the existing roof was in a very bad state of repair. Thankfully, I agreed with the roofer to re-use most of the existing tiles which not only saved money but made use of perfectly serviceable materials.

In December Cllr Hymas proposed **The Mellor 2020 Footpath Project**. I hope that this can now be progressed in line with the decision taken at the December meeting.

On other matters, the council negotiated a contract with "Charge My Street" to supply 2 electric car charging points on the village hall car park. These are up and running.

Cllr Hymas, together with Cllr Colborn and the Clerk have been heavily involved in investigating Green Energy production and this is ongoing.

The PC has continued to press RVBC for dog bins to be placed strategically throughout the parish however despite our requests RVBC has stated that even if additional bins were installed, they would not be able to empty them.

The iconic red telephone kiosk on Mellor Lane has been purchased. We now need to decide on its future use.

We continue to press LCC Highways to look at the issues regarding speeding in and around Mellor. I am extremely disappointed by their negativity and lack of action. However, I would like to thank Cllr Schofield for his continued support. I am aware that local police officers have started doing random speed checks on Mellor Lane. Let's hope these continue.

We acquired "litter picking" equipment, but unfortunately due to Covid Rules have had to put this on the back burner.

MPC continues to respond to planning applications through the Clerk, who raises objections where a majority of councillors express legitimate reasons to do so. Please note that Planning Law is due to change again and we are in discussion with RVBC about how Parish Councils can receive updated guidance on new regulations as they come into force.

Regarding MCA, we offer a special thank you to Janine Foster for all the hard work she put in as Chairman. Paul Wallace has taken up the mantle and we are working closely with him and the Trustees to ensure that the Village Hall continues to serve the needs of the residents.

I'm sure I have not covered everything but it was only a round up.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Cllrs for their support, helpful and constructive comments since the start of Lockdown. I would particularly like to thank Cllr Hymas who has given wise advice and enormous help to both me and the Clerk whilst we operated under Emergency Powers.

Hopefully, normal service is now resumed.

P Cllr Nick Marsden, Chairman, Mellor Parish Council.