

Annual Report Presented to the Annual Parish Meeting 5th May 2021

Although most of the past year the country has been in lockdown, work has continued for the Parish Council. Though our statutory responsibilities are few, we continue with many non-statutory roles and have extended these during the year. With the higher profile comes increased workload. Many from outside the village and some residents and businesses see the Parish Council as all powerful and responsible for everything which, of course, is certainly not the case. We are happy to pass the issues raised with us to the responsible authorities or individuals though. As you will see from the list below, we have been involved in a variety of activities that hopefully will have brought an improvement to both the environment of the village and quality of life in Matlock Bath.

Awarding Grants	Website management	Photography competition
Planning issues	Facebook page	Residents litter
Summer tower florals	Twitter account	Dog 'poo' picking
Flower barrels	Quarterly newsletters	Advice / support for residents
Cattle trough florals	Bus shelter maintenance	Liaising & Lobbying
Rose garden	Press releases/radio/TV	Neighbourly Networks
Footpath maintenance	Signage maintenance	Station adoption
Winter service scheme	Climate Emergency	Community Speed Watch
War memorial Cleaning	Nature Reserve:	
Benches & Maintenance	Maintenance & clearing	
Bench plaques		

During 2020/2021 two Councillors left the Parish Council; one of which was through the sad death of Cllr Trevor Bowmer, a much respected and great supporter of the Parish Council. Three new Councillors have since joined us so we now have a full complement of 9 Councillors serving. We encourage volunteers to help with the work of the Parish Council on a casual basis as well as serving on our Committees. Copies of all Committee Notes and Parish Council Minutes can be found on our website. The Parish Council's thanks go to all our volunteers for the hard work they put into the work of the Parish Council for the benefit of the village.

Parish Council Budget – A budget for 2020/2021 of £37,300 (and ringfenced funding of £51,388) was set by Full Council in January 2020 based on recommendations on spending needs from each of the Committees. The precept requested was £28,000, the difference was met from the carry forward from 2019/2020. The budget set for 2021/2022 is £39,865 with a ringfence of £5,400. This was based on the assumption that the sports area ringfenced funding would be paid before the end of the financial year. The precept request was £28,000 – no change from 2020/2021.

Finance and General Purposes Committee - This Committee oversees the *finances* of the Parish Council and deals also with *employee and personnel issues*. As well as managing its own budget, the Finance Committee oversees the budgets of all the other Committees and the financial planning of the Council. The Finance Committee this year has recommended to Full Council to grant an award to Matlock Bath Pre-School and Playgroup.

The Parish Council was approached in 2020 to pay for the annual support costs for the village defibrillator.

Details of the Income and Expenditure for each financial year can be found on our website.

Planning Committee – In the past year the Parish Council has considered many planning and tree work applications. The Planning Committee consider each application in detail and the merits or detriments of each one assessed. Although the Parish Council has only an **advisory role** on planning issues, we feel that this area is important for the village. We have local knowledge pertinent to the needs of the village all of which is in a conservation area and covered by other planning regulations. The Committee has met regularly and sometimes had on site meetings to look at planning applications. It also met with DDDC planning officers to both lobby and seek advice and clarification.

Environment & Conservation Committee – This Committee deals with anything to do with the **environment and conservation** in the village including the **Nature Reserve, florals** around the village, **footpaths** and any other issues. It does not deal with the Climate Emergency; this is dealt with by our Climate Advisory Group. There has not been any volunteer work in the Nature Reserve this year and as a result we had to secure the services of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust rangers for a day who cleared large areas of brambles which had become intrusive in the meadow. They also removed small unwanted self-set sapling trees.

The Parish Council has continued to provide **four three tier planters** along the Parades. We have now purchased the planters which will be maintained by local businesses in the village. In addition, three **flowering barrels** – one opposite Masson Mills and two at the bottom of Clifton Road as well as the cattle trough is planted up and maintained by a local resident. The Rose Garden in Memorial Gardens continues to be maintained when resources allow. An increasing number of residents have asked to be involved in **litter picking** around the village. In addition to the litter picks loaned by DDDC to businesses, the Parish Council continues to have its own volunteers who also have been provided with litter picks and bags by the Parish Council.

As part of the Rights of Way Minor Maintenance Scheme, the Parish Council has arranged for a number of **footpaths** to be cleared by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. This work was paid for through the Maintenance Scheme at no cost to the Parish Council. We have also supplemented work through a small budget to enable us to clear more paths. However, this work has been delayed due to Covid 19.

In 2020, the Parish Council again joined the **Winter Service Scheme** operated by Derbyshire County Council. This scheme provides free 'grit' to the Parish Council to distribute to residents/businesses who sign up to be a volunteer to clear snow and ice from footpaths during the winter months. Due to Covid 19, few businesses or residents could sign up.

Facilities Committee - This Committee oversees the **sports area, bus shelters, benches, signage** and the **war memorial**.

The Parish Council once again arranged for the bus shelters, village signs and noticeboards to be cleaned regularly. Our war memorial was also cleaned this year.

Work on the renovation of the **sports area** started in January 2021. It is hoped that the project will be completed, despite some minor problems, at the end of April 2021/early May 2021.

The Parish Council budgets each year for benches to be sited in the village. Funding in 2020/2021 allowed us to purchase a further 5 benches which will be installed shortly. Memorial plaques for benches continue to be popular and already 3 of the new benches will have a plaque on them. Following much research, it was ascertained that the three benches on the riverside pavement were the property of the Parish Council so we have been repairing them and altering them to be more covid compliant, backs being added down the middle. Unfortunately, one of the benches has been subjected to vandalism and the matter is now in the hands of the Police.

Communications Committee - The **website** continues to be a popular way of communicating. In September 2020, due to new legislation ensuring all websites were accessible to all users, Councillors agreed to invest in the design of a new website rather than pay for changes to be made to the old website to bring it up to the required legislation. The website contains a vast amount of information enabling us to keep residents up to date with village life and some of this information is mirrored on our **Facebook** page. Both are updated on a regular basis and are extremely reactive tools. News items also are 'tweeted'

Our main vehicle of regular communication with residents continues to be the quarterly **Newsletter**, a hard copy of which is delivered by hand by again some willing volunteers to every resident and business in the village as well as being published on the website. It continues to be well received. The uptake of advertisements in the Newsletter offsets some of the printing costs.

Activities Committee - The Parish Council has for many years promoted 'village' activities, some of which have been open to the wider community. We have continued this promotion both as a community service and to promote Matlock Bath to the wider world. The **Pro Loco Art Competition** has attracted many entries over the years but due to Covid 19 restrictions, it was not possible to go ahead with the competition this year. All entries will be rolled over to the 2021 competition.

The eleventh **Photography Competition** again proved very successful. With over 253 entries made, we had to shortlist to 91, a task which proved near impossible for the Shortlisting Committee. With the high standard of photographs received, we are able to use many of the entries in our publicity material, website etc. Previously both competitions have attracted sponsorship from various sources including Sir Richard Arkwright Masson Mills and Heights of Abraham. This year they agreed to still sponsor the Photography Competition in the "Best Picture of" Categories. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors who were still able to support our competition despite the situation regarding Covid 19.

The Parish Council is very proud to work with representatives of the British Legion to facilitate the **Remembrance** at the War Memorial each year. However, due to the restrictions with Covid 19 we were unable to hold a service for residents. Instead, Councillor representation laid the wreaths on behalf of the village with short prayers led by Holy Trinity Church. A donation for the poppy wreaths was made to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal as usual.

Our Christmas event – **Singing Round the Tree** – again due to Covid 19 restrictions had to be cancelled. As a result, it was agreed that the Parish Council would not provide a Christmas Tree as in the past. This was also partly due to the fact that the electricity supply in Memorial Gardens was not working.

December would have seen the tenth **Seniors Lunch** which was to be held at The Fishpond. Again, due to Covid 19 restrictions this had to be cancelled. The lunch has been re-booked for 2021.

Matlock Bath Climate Advisory Group – This group was set up in May 2019 when it was agreed by Councillors to declare a climate emergency. The Group's focus is on advising the Parish Council the actions they need to make to be carbon neutral by the earliest possible date. The Parish Council in turn will advise and encourage residents, businesses and visitors to be climate change aware and on the actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint. The Group will recommend effective and meaningful lobbying of local and national government on this important international issue. A Policy has been drawn up which outlines what the Parish Council will do to help with the climate emergency.

Matlock Bath Development Association - Though a body independent from the Parish Council, this was borne out of the Parish Council initiative with Derby University – the Into the Future project. In addition, what MBDA do is closely aligned with the work of the Parish Council so we work collaboratively and supportively.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions the Directors have not been able to meet and progress with any work. This will resume as soon as possible.

Peak Leader Grant Application - Residents will be aware that the winter lighting was paid for out of this grant funding together with other grants obtained. The Parish Council therefore contributed a small amount towards the lighting. The final leg of the grant funding was completed with the installation of two new fingerposts and four information lecterns. These have already proved to be useful for visitors.

Re-Opening Up of the High Street Safely Funding - In May 2020 we were notified by DDDC that Matlock Bath would receive funding of around £10,000 for measures to be put in place for re-opening up of the high street. After several discussions and 9 months later, we finally were able to purchase and install new signage, pavement stencilling and lamppost wraps to remind people that the virus is still with us, that social distancing is still in place and to wash and sanitize hands regularly. Our signs were designed in heritage colours in keeping with the village and though visible, not intrusive. These signs came at no cost to the Parish Council.

Community Speed Watch – The Parish Council agreed to embark on this new initiative to try and help with speeding in the village. 13 volunteers have come forward to be trained and hopefully speed watch duties will be resumed as soon as restrictions are lifted. We were very fortunate to receive funding from our County Councillor, Irene Ratcliffe, to purchase our own equipment. This will give us more flexibility in when our volunteers can go out rather than share equipment with Cromford.

And we also

As well as the work of the Committees, we have representatives on various bodies including The Derwent Valley Rail Partnership, Pavilion and the DDDC Illuminations Liaison Committee. We lobby the higher tiers of local government (County and District Councils) on a regular basis on behalf of residents and on general issues of concern in Matlock Bath from water leaking onto the highway to dangerous trees, from the provision of grit bins to litter and refuse.

2020 saw the introduction of our Matlock Bath Summit meetings under the auspices of the Police Crime Commissioner. These meetings are also attended by DDDC and DCC Officers and local Police. The meetings came as a result of the problems which the Parish Council raised and are an attempt to co-ordinate issues across the many agencies. Our meetings have continued throughout lockdown via Teams. The areas of concern have been:

- Re-opening up of the High Street Funding
- Accessibility for pedestrians on the pavements along the Parades
- Social distancing
- Parking Enforcement
- 'Boy' racers in the car parks
- Litter problems.
- Noise and pollution from traffic on the A6
- Travellers in the car parks

Once again, **our adopters of Matlock Bath station** planted and maintained planters and barrels with summer bedding and winter flowers.

During the Covid 19 crisis we have continued to be involved in assisting with the **neighbourly networks** which have been set up by residents throughout the village. This seems to be an excellent way of communicating information to residents.

During the lockdown, we have continued to liaise with District and County Councillors and lobby to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents of the village. The release from the lockdown could be problematical for the village with many residents having concerns about the possible influx of tourists throughout the summer.

The Parish Council would like to thank our District Councillors and County Councillor for their work in keeping us up-to-date with what is happening at District and County Council levels and for all the lobbying they have done on our behalf throughout the year.

Sadly, the start of 2021 saw the death of our much respected and admired District Councillor, Cllr Joyce Pawley. Joyce fought extremely hard for the village with her level head and determination. She will be very much missed by the Parish Council and the District Council.

We also continue to have regular **Closer Working** Meetings with DDDC which are held every three months. These meetings allow us to raise issues/concerns formally with Officers and receive feedback.

The Future

During these unprecedented times, it has been the shining light in the gloom to see the community spirit thrive and grow. Though the topography of the village does not lend itself easily to help us bond into a community, the activities and social media links that have formed have enabled us to act together. Thanks go to all those who have worked so hard in everything we do for the village and, of course, to those who selflessly give their time to act as Councillors or volunteers with the only reward being that we do it to make Matlock Bath a better place to live, to work and to visit.