

## **Kelsall Parish Council NEWSLETTER July 2004**

Your Parish Council was elected in May 2003, at a time when the whole structure of local government was under review. This process continues with the next major step likely to be a referendum in the summer on whether there should be an elected assembly for the North-West. Such a re-structuring could have a major impact on the delivery of services to our community. This could result in the Parish Council being given greater powers, or alternatively being taken over by a different, wider body. The roles of the District and County Councils are similarly uncertain and, perhaps as a result of this, they are showing greater sensitivity to our needs and our views. Some of the Parish Council's concerns and activities over the past year are summarised below, followed by our plans for the future.



### **PUBLIC FOOTPATHS**

Public footpaths, as we all know, are an important amenity within any village's infrastructure. Kelsall is no exception and remains well provided with numerous well-established and constantly used routes linking amenity areas within the community boundary. Such facilities, established through regular pedestrian use during the past 150 years or so, continue to be vigorously protected through supportive Government legislation – and rightly so. The significance and value of maintaining these much used and important public rights of way can not be over-emphasised. It is therefore up to each and every one of us to ensure that privately owned hedges located alongside public footpaths and footways are properly maintained and never allowed to cause obstruction (or injury) to walkers. Owners of overgrown hedges will continue to receive

notification from the Parish Council (or the County Council) regarding their legal responsibilities, although it is hoped that the number of reportable instances will remain few and far between.

### **HIGHWAYS**

Shortly after taking office, a group of Councillors met representatives from Cheshire County Council Engineering Service and inspected some long standing highway problems that had been previously identified. The result of the inspection was successful, as within a few days repairs to roads and footways had begun. Small beginnings, but beginnings nevertheless. The condition of Church Street was a cause for major concern and the end result as we all now know was that a full resurfacing was completed a few months ago. The Parish Council is well aware that many other areas are also in need of repair and will continue to press the Engineering Service for action.

### **SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Kelsall Community School has undergone major alterations and improvements during the last twelve months, one of which is the provision of a new Community Library. Housed in the former staff room the new library has been stocked with books to suit all ages and tastes and will act as a supplement to the Mobile Library that calls at the village each week. It was opened for the first time immediately after the school's Easter break. The Parish Council made a substantial seed-corn donation to the school, enabling them to secure further grant aid through Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN). Opening times are Tuesday 3.30-6.30; Friday 1.45-3.45. For more information contact the school on 01829 751343.

### **RECREATION LAND**

The Chester and District Local Plan should finally be adopted in the coming few months. In its current form the Government Inspector stated

categorically that land adjacent to the Olive Tree public house must be retained for both formal and informal sport and recreational activity.

He also emphasised that settlements of comparable size to Kelsall *and especially Kelsall* must be provided with sport and leisure facilities including play areas for children and that the securing of land for such purposes must be vigorously pursued.

Contended land issues are rarely settled quickly, but these important policy conclusions add weight to the Council's case. Kelsall Parish Council and Chester City Council continue to pursue a satisfactory arrangement with the landowners and remain hopeful that, in due course, these facilities can be constructed.

### **OPEN SPACES**

You may have seen a working party of Councillors replace the beech hedge at the back of the Church Street car park, or tidying up some of the rough areas in the centre of the village. This self-help campaign to improve the amenity of the open spaces will continue in the autumn the planting of more bulbs in some of the more untidy spots around the village.

### **KELSALL YOUTH**

The Parish Council has contributed towards the starting costs of two local initiatives for youth work.

The Kelsall Youth Voice Project spear-headed by District Councillor Joan Fairhurst was given funds to help it get off the ground before grants became available. This project has already seen youth workers meeting with some of our young people and talking to them about their needs in the village. They are aiming to develop safe recreational activities locally. The possibility of installing a Youth Shelter will be discussed on 15 July, 7-9pm in the Methodist Meeting Room - open to any parents and young adults who are interested in supporting outdoor activities for young people during the summer.

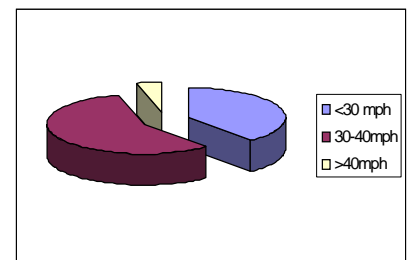
The Youth Club started by members of St Philip's Church had assistance to hire the Community Centre for its first few monthly meetings, and to purchase some equipment.

The club is open to all village youth in the 11 to 14 age bracket, although membership is currently limited to 30. The club offers a varied programme of activities. It provides a venue for young people to have fun together and encourages them to have a responsible attitude in their relationships with each other and with the world around them.

### **SPEEDING**

It was not without some trepidation that members of the Parish Council manned a speed warning sign on Chester Road at the end of January. Such activities are

most unlikely to be received favourably by local drivers, most of whom live in the village. However, concern from residents about the high speeds of some vehicles passing the entrances to their houses prompted this campaign. Although carrying no legal force, this highly visible equipment was effective in reminding drivers that the speed limit in Kelsall is 30mph and most responded positively, (along with the residents who supplied hot drinks to those manning the machine). The chart shows the breakdown of speeds, most drivers exceeding the limit by a little. There were a few, however, who drove at



dangerously high speeds and were clocked as high as 48mph. Reassuringly, all the Arriva buses logged were within the limit.

The exercise will be repeated later in the year.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

Planning issues in Kelsall broadly tend to fall into one of three categories; extensions or alterations to existing houses, single dwellings as infill, or larger housing developments on new sites. Many applications may have an adverse effect on someone, depending on their proximity to it, which is why planning is a

sensitive issue which takes up a lot of our time.

The Parish Council is notified of all applications and has about three weeks to comment on them. We delegate two Councillors each month to view all sites and then report back to the full council who will take a decision to either recommend approval, with or without conditions, or to object to the application, again with reasons. As we are not the planning authority we can only make recommendations to Chester City Council and then it is up to their planning officials and planning board to reach a final decision. What may seem to be an easy decision is often a minefield as each level of local government can take a different view. The County Council has a ten year forward development plan, the District Council has its own agenda and the Parish Council wants what is best for its own residents. So it's not surprising that you can't please all the people, all of the time.

Over the past few years the positive line taken by the Parish Council against the loss of further green field sites in Kelsall seems to have registered with our District Council. There is also a requirement for them to allocate playing field and recreation areas for everyone, but our local land bank is now severely depleted. This decision to restrict some remaining land for recreation will not

preclude developers from attempting small infill projects however and this is already becoming evident.

We are working with Chester City Council to decide on a future strategy for the village and have stated our priorities.

Preserving the existing greenfield sites within the village envelope is important both for aesthetic and recreational reasons. We urgently need a playing field and play areas for our young people and we want any future building in Kelsall to focus on houses for first time buyers, possibly through a housing association so that they can remain affordable. A major requirement also is for some form of sheltered housing for older people who wish to remain in the village when their present house has become too large. These priorities outweigh all other speculative building projects. Kelsall Parish Council is forming a steering group to formulate and publish a Parish Plan and a Village Design Statement. More information is contained below and we encourage all those who want a say in the future of their village to attend the public meeting or to contact any Parish Councillor.

### **PARISH PLAN**

The Parish Plan is a strategic study of the problems and opportunities presented to our community. It should represent the views of the village as a whole and highlight areas for action. In principle it will cover both

social and infrastructure issues. The detailed agenda and scope will be set by a steering committee on which Parish Councillors will be a minority.

This is the most ambitious project of its kind ever undertaken by this council and the intention is to involve the whole community through public meetings, consultation and working groups.

We estimate that it will take a year to complete and we will need a lot of help, particularly from those with experience of strategic planning, facilitation, IT and publishing.

The main outcome is a published document that summarises the views of residents and gives an action plan for implementing improvements. There may be other outcomes, for example a computer – generated model of Kelsall that can be used to visualise suggested changes, but this will be determined by the steering committee. The first step will be a public meeting – please look out for notices in the near future.

### **VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT**

In parallel with the Parish Plan, we will also start the preparation of a Village Design Statement. This is an opportunity to determine the future appearance of the village in relation to its setting in the landscape. Although primarily concerned with aesthetics, there is an opportunity here to generate Supplementary Planning Guidelines for incorporation into the Parish Plan and these

will have legal force. It will then be easier to guide developers towards appropriate housing developments and resist opportunistic blots on the landscape. Again, we will need volunteers to support the Parish Council in this endeavour, particularly those with an eye for the aesthetic or with knowledge or experience of architecture. In order to minimise the cost to residents, we have applied for grants to cover much of the cost of these two exercises.

### HOMEWATCH

Homewatch is enjoying a revival in Kelsall. There are long established named contacts for Church Street, Brooms Lane, Elizabeth Close and now active support in Bramley Close and Flat Lane. No doubt there are many other groups of neighbours who informally look after one another. There are however benefits to being on the registered network and it would be very encouraging to hear of other contacts willing to provide the link not only to neighbours but also to the Homewatch Manager, Dave Owens based at the Mickle Trafford Police Station and to the Community Safety programme for the rural area of Chester District through Keith Briggs of Project Rural Matters. For further information contact Dave Owens on 01244 301581.

### ODD BITS

- ✓ Under the new Chairmanship of Derek Carter Kelsall Gardening Club has undergone a fairly dramatic revival. Over forty people attended each of the last two meetings and the future of the Club is looking much brighter. For more information about the Gardening Club and to find out more about the varied (or perhaps variegated) programme of up coming events give Derek a call on 749014.
- ✓ Kelsall Community Primary School has recently prepared a Travel Plan the main aim of which is to encourage children to walk or cycle to school rather than go to and fro by car, thus reducing congestion along Flat Lane, Pasture Close and The Wynd and making it safer for all pedestrians and cyclists. A recent survey carried out among parents and children found that the most common cause of concern was dog fouling on footways. It's not the fault of the dogs, they have to 'go' somewhere, but it is the clear responsibility of the owners to clean up the unpleasant 'messages' left behind. Narrow footways made even narrower by overgrown hedges were another concern highlighted by the survey.



### FREE COMPUTER

If any village organisation needs an old computer to maintain membership records or accounts, please contact John Leather on 752100

### KELSALL PARISH COUNCIL

Natalie Read (Clerk)  
751352  
Noel Dutton (Chair)  
751449  
John Leather (Vice-Chair)  
752100  
Tony Castle  
752315  
Rev. Ian Enticott  
751472  
John Gray  
752833  
Richard Hill  
752132  
Mrs Ann Lacey  
751237  
Mrs Nancy Sutton  
751611  
One vacancy

### CITY COUNCILLORS

Tony Castle As above  
Dr Joan Fairhurst 751954

### COUNTY COUNCILLOR

John Burke 01244 679657

### CHESTER CITY COUNCIL

General Inquiries  
01244 324324

### ✓ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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