

## **Ercall Magna Annual Parish Meeting - 18 Apr 23**

### **Chairman's Report 2022 - 2023**

As I report on the year since our last parish meeting, I do not intend to catalogue the complete list of business conducted over the last year. Our Parish Council meetings are comprehensively minuted and these minutes are available on the Council's website, or through the Parish Clerk. Instead, I will concentrate on some key topics and ongoing matters of interest to residents.

It has been a year of highs and lows. This time last year we were looking forward to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's platinum jubilee celebration events in May and June. The parish council provided funding towards some of these community events as well as buying commemorative 'coins' for school age children in the parish. Then, only 3 months later, the country was shocked by the Queen's death on 8 September; at which point King Charles III acceded to the throne. Following centuries old tradition, the King's accession was proclaimed across the country, including within Ercall Magna Parish. Many of us will have watched the events associated with the late Queen's lying in state and funeral and now look forward to the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla on 6 May.

Turning to matters closer to home, the parish council continues to press T&WC for improvements to our local highways. While progress is often a lot slower than we'd like, there has been some success. In particular, the long awaited improvements to the B5062 between Cotwall and Crudgington were carried out last year. Final work, to reposition some of the road signs, is expected on 27 April. Unfortunately, movement on delivering a road safety scheme in Roden, funded through S106 contributions from 2 developments, has stalled until very recently. Despite a draft scheme being discussed and modifications agreed between EMPC and T&WC in January with a public consultation planned for February, nothing happened until T&WC sent a new draft proposal to the parish council for comment less than 2 weeks ago. The latest proposal includes significant differences to that previously agreed. Consequently, I have written to the relevant director at T&WC asking for clarity and confirmation that the elements already agreed will be included. I await his response. Another key element of our road safety strategy is the use of mobile SIDs. These require sockets installed in locations agreed by the highways authority, after which the devices can be moved between sites. The first location (Poynton) is operational although we await the installation of sockets in other places.

Moving on from highways, I want to highlight 2 planning matters. First, the parish council made comprehensive amendments to the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan in response to the Local Planning Authority's comments during Regulation 15 consultation. The amended draft was returned to T&WC last autumn, for them to review and then appoint the external examiner to undertake Regulation 16 scrutiny - the last stage before going to referendum. The external examination will proceed following the local elections on 4 May. The other significant matter relates to the Cleveland Arms. The building's owners applied again last year for change of use and planning permission to convert the pub into residential accommodation. Following numerous objections and the production of an independent report by a specialist consultant, T&WC Planning Committee refused planning permission last September. In March, the owner lodged an appeal, which is currently with the Planning Inspectorate. Written submissions have been sent to the inspectorate and a hearing will be held, in public, on 27 June in HEVH, starting at 1000. Anyone wishing to attend should register with T&WC (not the Planning Inspectorate) in advance.

Next, I'd like to highlight a couple of recent successes. In Roden, responsibility for managing the children's play area passed from T&WC to the parish council on 1 April. Prior to the transfer, T&WC refurbished the play equipment and installed a new wet-pour rubberised floor. We have taken over the site in excellent condition and will now be able to maintain it, as we do the one in High Ercall, directly without having to refer to the borough council. Money is allocated in our annual budget for this. Residents will know that in recent years most of the bus services through the parish have been withdrawn. So, it's great news that new rural bus routes started on 27 February. A total of 5 new services were introduced across the rural areas north of Telford. Two of these serve Ercall Magna parish. The 104 connects Ellerdine with the PRH and Wellington; albeit, only once a day in each direction. Of greater benefit is the 103 service between Wellington and Newport, serving Roden, High Ercall, Walton, Rowton, Ellerdine and Cold Hatton as well as other rural settlements in other parishes. I expect the routes and timings to be monitored and adjusted if necessary to meet demand. As with most services, there is an element of 'use it or lose it'. Our Ward Member has fought hard, supported by the parish council, to get these services which are proving a lifeline for some residents.

Finally, I mentioned in my introduction the local elections on 4 May. These elections are the first since some significant changes have come into effect. First, there are boundary changes affecting both the borough and parish elections. Following a review by the Boundary Commission, T&WC have changed the boundary between the borough wards of Ercall Magna and Wrockwardine. As a result, Roden and Poynton will now be served by the ward member for Wrockwardine, at the borough level. At the same time, T&WC have split the parish of Ercall Magna into 2 wards: Roden and High Ercall. While the total number of parish councillors remains unchanged at 13, 2 will now be elected to the Roden ward and 11 to the High Ercall ward, reflecting the population distribution. Nominations for the local elections closed on 4 April. At the borough level, seats will be contested by the vote on 4 May. In both wards of the Parish Council all nominees were elected uncontested. In the High Ercall ward there are 3 seats vacant and these will be available to be filled through co-option in June, after the first meeting of the new Council in May. Finally on elections, a reminder that electors wishing to vote in person will now need photo ID - no ID, no vote. Acceptable forms of ID include: passport, driving licence and age-related bus pass. Anyone without suitable ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate so long as they have a recent photo and NI number. To get a certificate in time for the 4 May election, applications need to be made by 5pm on 25 April (less than a week away). See Gov.UK website for details and to apply.

Cllr Kevin Connor OBE  
Chairman  
EMPC

18 April 2023