

The year started with many Councillors standing down from the Council after many years of service. These Councillors were

- Don Edwards
- Bryan Morgan
- Angela Neame
- Owen Darlington
- Mark Lockett
- Richard Powell
- Moya Walker

Along came the local elections for Wem Rural in May. After nominations closed there were only 5 names put forward. All 5 Councillors were elected. Council needs to have twelve Councillors. With not having an election, we could not exercise the general power of competence which was very disappointing. We needed to agree a procedure in relation to the co-option of Parish Councillors. It was resolved that Candidates should express a letter or email of interest to be considered at the June meeting. At the June meeting the Council had five nominations to be co-opted as there were fewer candidates than vacancies. These successful nominees were

- Bev Gee
- Peter Marsh
- Jeremy Parsons
- Peter Shack
- Liz Vernon

Fiona Ford was then co-opted on and in October Lorraine Pugh joined bringing the numbers back up to twelve.

Throughout the year, the Community-led housing project near Ash Grove was discussed (now named Round Meadow). I am not going into a lot of detail about this project as there will be a presentation on the project. I would just like to say that I am proud that these affordable houses and bungalows are being built to help the people of Wem rural to be able to afford a house to rent in their area.

Highways is always a concern in Wem Rural and in July Mr Ian Walshaw, Highways Manager from Shropshire Council came to explain the new process of Highways Management called 'Hedge to Hedge'. If there are any defects in the road that are not mentioned on their work sheet, they will still repair them.

Repairs to the bridge at Aston, are now ongoing and will take 8 weeks to complete. The road is closed and a diversion is in place.

We have numerous planning applications during the year. This year – 46 – this is more than Wem Town. There have been a number of exceptional sites given planning permission for people that live in the area but cannot afford to buy a house in the countryside. If they have a plot of land they can build their own house but it cannot be sold at market value at a later date.

Shropshire Council organised Locality Commissioning. A governance board was organized by Mr Neil Wilcox. The Parish Council agreed to take a seat on the governing board for Wem, you will hear more about this in a presentation by Mr Wilcox.

The web site for Wem Rural is up and running now – the Parish Council purchased a gov.uk domain name. I would like to thank all those who contributed in getting the web site running.

The Parish Council had several meetings with Network Rail and Wem Town Council to discuss the changes at the level crossing in Wem. Since they have become automated the down time seems to last longer. Discussions are still being held. There was an incident on 14 May 2014 when the barriers stayed down for 1 ½ hours causing grid lock to the town.

This year, the Parish Council awarded grants to

- Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery, Wem
- Newtown Community & Recreation Association
- Parish Church of King Charles the Martyr, Newtown
- Wem Town Hall Community Trust Ltd.
- 1st Wem Scout Group
- Edstaston Village Hall

These organisations wishing to apply for a grant have to fill in an application form where they send to the Parish Council to consider support.

Newtown C of E Primary School had an outstanding ofsted report. The Parish Council sent a letter of congratulations. The Council also worked to erect a bus shelter at Newtown.

After Cllr Staines diligent work Wem Rural Responders had taken delivery of the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) sited in Robinson & Young's garage.

The Gas mains repairs in Wem caused a lot of disruption, not knowing which road would be closed when you came into town. The works are now completed and a distant memory.

P G Skips was discussed at many meetings with concerns from local residents about noise. After a meeting with Mr Fairweather from the Environment Agency, the firm was given until 31 July 2014 to implement the improvement plan. The work seems to be progressing well.

The adoption of Wem Rural Community Plan took place in October thanks to all those concerned.

The Rural Review is going from strength to strength – now an 8 page newsletter owing to all the news we have in the parish.

WW1 Commemorative Event - 2 August 2014 – Parish Council involved with other organisations.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity in thanking the councillors for all their hard work during the last 12 months. I hope that the new councillors have enjoyed their first year on the council and a big 'thank you' to Carole for her continuing support.