

ALSAGER TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

17th MAY 2011

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Report of Alsager Town Council for the Civic Year 2010/11.

Big Decisions on Running Local Services in Alsager

The Town Council is being offered the ownership of some services currently provided in Alsager by Cheshire East Council.

During 2010, negotiations have taken place between Alsager Town Council and Cheshire East Council to decide which of these services the Town Council will have the opportunity to deliver from 1st April 2012.

Some of the services include the Civic Hall, the Wednesday Market, allotments, bus shelters, public conveniences and Christmas Lights but there may be others during 2011/2012.

The dilemma facing the Town Council is that if we do not take over these services then Cheshire East Council might withdraw their funding which, particularly in the case of the Civic Hall, could lead to its closure.

The Town Council's Negotiating Team is currently looking at the financial implications of taking over the running of these services and the amount Alsager residents will be asked to pay to keep these services going.

This is a big step for the Town Council but it is also an opportunity for us to run our own services locally and for the local people and groups to also get involved. Before we make our final decision, public consultation meetings will be arranged so that you can let us know what you think about taking over these services.

Finance

This year the Town Council did not increase its precept which meant that Alsager residents did not have to pay any more this year for the services the Town Council provides. Prudent budgeting enabled us to keep within our current financial projections.

The Town Council has a turnover of over £400k and its 2010/11 precept remained at £192k.

The Town Council continued to help small business and residents through this time of economic uncertainty by:

- Directing as much as possible of Town Council expenditure to local businesses
- Paying its invoices within seven working days to help businesses with cash flow
- Helping individuals and businesses who experience economic problems to find the services that they might require from Cheshire East and governmental bodies
- Our staff will give advice where possible to any resident of the Town who experiences difficulties at the Town Council Offices (3 Lawton Road)

Grants

Each year the Town Council awards grants to a large number of organisations in the Town. This year we made grants totalling just over £23,000. These grants are vital to our local community voluntary sector, which most importantly provides help to the people of Alsager, especially at a time when central government and district council grants are being cut.

An exhaustive list of the grants made by the Town Council may be extracted from our accounts. Below is a list of some of those organisations who benefitted this year:

Alsager & District Palliative Day Centre
Alsager and District Round Table – providing the Christmas Lights, The Big-Switch
On and Market Event and the Annual Carnival
Alsager Bowling and Recreation Club
Alsager Community Church – Special Treasures
Alsager Cricket Club
Alsager District Senior Section (Guides)
Alsager Senior Citizens Club
Cheshire East CAB
Crewe, Nantwich and Congleton Dial a Ride
Home Farm Social Club
One World Week
Samaritans
Sandbach and District Talking Newspaper - provides a service for those who find reading a strain, by the provision of recorded or tactile reading matter.
Visyon

Milton Park

During my year of office the Victorian Sunken Garden has been renovated, and has completed the Milton Park Improvement Project.

At this point I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped with bulb planting and repairs and maintenance at Milton Gardens and Northholme Gardens.

Wood Park Play Area

A new play area has been provided at Wood Park with money from HM Government Playbuilder Fund and an additional £10,000 from Alsager Town Council.

New Co-op Supermarket

Plans for the new Co-op were approved and building work is expected to start soon with a completion date for Christmas 2011. This development includes a new play area at the rear of Fairview car park.

Big Switch On and Christmas Market

I am pleased to report that this event goes from strength to strength with even more people enjoying the festivities each year.

It is a credit to the Round Table that it has become a major event, not only in Alsager, but also in South Cheshire and Staffordshire.

Car Parking Charges – To Pay or Not To Pay

Thanks to pressure from the Town Council, the Chamber of Trade and the Local Action Group, Cheshire East Council has, for the time being, dropped its proposals to introduce parking charges on Fairview Car Park. So, for the time being, Alsager residents will continue to enjoy free parking, but please be vigilant as this issue will return once the Co-op food store is completed.

Alsager Institute

The Town Council owns and manages Alsager Institute through its Alsager Institute Committee chaired by Councillor Ron Tyson.

The Institute provides a valuable community service as a building which is used for:

Pips Day Nursery
Dancing Classes
Whist Drives
Ju-Jitsu
Snooker Club
Road Modellers
Alsager Institute Bowling Club

The Town Council holds its meetings here on a Tuesday evening and details of the dates and times of meetings are available on various notice boards in the town and on our website.

Police Community Support Officers

Safety and security is a cornerstone of the Town Council's vision for Alsager and during my year the Town Council, together with Alsager School, has provided funding for 2 PCSO's in the Town.

The three year contract has been renewed and so will continue to have their presence in the Town to help with the safety and wellbeing of our residents.

Alsager Partnership

The Town Council was fundamental in establishing Alsager Partnership, and it continues to have a positive impact on the Town.

This body, chaired by John Grint, which has four representatives from the Town Council and for which we provide part funding for the Project Manager, is able to obtain grant funding for projects in Alsager.

Planning

During the past twelve months the Town Council's Planning Committee considered and made observations on 120 Planning Applications.

This figure does not include the work the Town Council has actively undertaken with regard to the Lagan Developments on Twyfords, White Moss Quarry, future development of the MMU site and the new Co-op supermarket.

Public Participation

The Town Council has a period of Public Participation at the start of its Meetings to which any elector can come along and raise an issue for consideration by the Town Council.

This is a valuable exercise which keeps us informed of the burning local issues in the Town and during my year of office over a 100 residents have attended our meetings and raised issues which we have done our best to resolve.

Staffing

I would like, on behalf of the Town Council, to thank the staff for their hard work and dedication over the past 12 months which has contributed to an extremely successful year for the Town Council.

Challenges in the Coming Year

The challenges ahead in 2011/12 for the Town Council include:

- Transferred services from Cheshire East Council
- Local management of the Civic Hall
- Localism Bill(Big Society) issues
- Working with Alsager Chamber of Trade and the Partnership to develop the town
- Local cemetery provision
- Keeping Alsager Town Council at the forefront of local government in Cheshire East

Conclusion

In conclusion our Council has had a very busy year and has done its best to discharge its duty on behalf of the Town. We may not get it right all the time and we may not win everything but our Town Council is committed to building on its successes and improving services to Alsager residents.

The Town Council may have different political philosophies between its Members but when we enter the Council Chamber all Members have one common aim – **improving Alsager.**

Councillor W Howell
Chairman
Alsager Town Council
17th May 2010