

# The Malpas Plan

## Social Issues

### Focus Group Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005

#### Present:

##### Steering Group Members

Peter Howell (PH)  
Church  
Margaret Barker (MB)  
Eric Barker (EB)  
Anna Patten (AP)  
Sally Sharp (SS)  
John Pierson (JP)  
Eric Beak (EBk)

##### Community Representatives

Sue Gallacher (SG) High Street  
Mark Williamson (MW) "  
Barbara Latham (BL)  
Jenny Hume (JH)  
Terry Davies (TD) Jubilee Hall  
Rosemary Caine (RC) Parish Council

PH - gave a brief introduction to the purpose and scope of the meeting and how it ties into the Malpas Plan. He explained the purpose of the Parish Plan and what it might include. In terms of social issues this could cover what we have in Malpas, including: - medical facilities such as GPs/Health centre, dentist, opticians, alternative therapists; social facilities; educational facilities; care facilities for the elderly, young, disability groups. It could also include policing, transport, traffic, shops, and pubs - the whole infrastructure of the community. Communication and new technology, working from home, voluntary groups, sport or culture based groups, churches, community spirit or involvement and contact with other neighbouring communities. In looking at our strengths and weaknesses in all these areas we would be looking at our aspirations for the future and our fears.

To begin, he asked those present to comment on what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses in the social life of Malpas

JH - Good village schools both primary and secondary

SG - Not a lot of villages of this size have a secondary school

RC - We all look out for each other, we all know each other - community spirit

PH - It's something that's often said, but what do we actually mean by that?

TD - We had visitors from 172 village halls come to see us - I've taken photos over the years of all different events - I put a display up of these named 'Community Spirit in Action'. The majority of those visitors who came thought it a marvellous display

JP - Another indicator might be the number of clubs and organisations. There's a heck of a lot going on

SG - and a lot of charity work goes on

BL - Excellent medical and nursing services and community care services. And that medical and nursing staff socialise in the village and are known to us.

JH - A weakness is that there are no preschool facilities, no toddler group, playgroup

PH - Is there a reason for that?

JH - Beeches pre-school is the recognised one. Years ago it was at St Josephs, then the Alport, now it is at Edge. Parents drive from Threapwood, NoMansHeath, Malpas

SG - A lot go down to Bickerton toddler group.

JH - Yes, they used to meet at the Jubilee Hall but the accommodation wasn't really suitable - they were down in the basement, there was nowhere to store the toys and they used to get mouldy.

BL - There used to be a handyman service run by Age Concern which did odd jobs for people and old fashioned 'home-help' service

SG - The Young Persons Centre is a strength, not just the building but what goes on inside - and the Rec

BL - The footpaths are well kept on the whole and signposted.

TD - The lane to Craddock Court is bad, but on the whole there are good walk ways

BL - Mediation at St Josephs

RC - Also we have every sort of shop on would wish to have

JH - Other than a hardware shop now that Wycherly's has gone

RC - There isn't one shop in Malpas that won't get what you want, order it if they don't stock it

Mervyn Pierce - What I would like to see is a road connecting the Springfield Estate to Chester Road. All the people who live there have to drive through the middle of the village to get out.

JH - Traffic is a big problem but one reason for using the village facilities is that I can park outside shops. So it is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Parents using the Heber also use the Malpas shops because it is so convenient - they can just pop in when they are collecting their children. The main issue with traffic are the big refrigerated wagons coming through

PH - The social mix of Malpas - what sort of mix might there be in the future? Will this be skewed in any particular way.

JP - Can young people get a foothold, can young adults/families afford to settle in Malpas? It is an issue. Obviously the school attracts young staff, can they afford to settle?

PH - How do those who have lived here a long time feel about how it has evolved and changed?

TD - Looking at how the Jubilee hall is used - the facilities we have act as a magnet. There is an ideal place to create community spirit. We're taking more booking for the Jubilee Hall - the population is growing and the number of groups using the hall for social and community groups.

BL - As individuals we don't know what's happening. We need a directory/booklet about what's going on.

PH - A lack of information?

BL - Someone asked me what do I do to be accepted, I have no child, what can I do to get to know people

RC - We had this at a previous discussion - we do need to produce a booklet of some sort

JH - I didn't know anyone when I moved here, I did have the advantage of two young children. There is an onus on the individual to make an effort

RC - A brochure needs to be attractive - a lot of people don't look in the Parish Newsletter. I do think there is a tremendous warmth in the village

JP - But it needs to be a bit more organised to draw in newcomers

SG - A lot of people find it very difficult to make the first move.

BL - There's lots going on but you have to be prepared to make the effort

SS - A web site is a good source of information

AP - The parish council are working on one now and hopefully that will make it easier for something like a brochure or directory as a result

PH - From newspapers we get a picture emerging of what Britain is like. How does Malpas compare with the vision of England as a whole?

JP - There is a drug problem, a drug culture. A lot more now than when I first came here

SG - A lot more antisocial behaviour than there used to be

TD - We had 8 fire extinguishers stolen. We've had to install CCTV. The doors of the Jubilee Hall have to be open when the hall is being used. We used to have trouble with

youth messing about and throwing things up the stairs, but it's much better now there's a camera. The cameras have made people feel safe

PH - What impression do we have of younger people in Malpas

RC - We're never going to get a 'so called' perfect society, yes there are problems but we're lucky here in Malpas. I can list the names of youngsters who many think are difficult but always treat me with respect. A lot depends on your own personal ability to communicate, to understand

JH - There are always some 'rotten apples'

PH - There's always the 'it was a lad from Whitchurch'....

BL - There is a change in society because so many have families where both parents work, fewer people volunteer in society. We are very lucky in Malpas really

MW - In previous generations there was a great deal more help within the extended family

JH - There is a problem in finding volunteers to help with things like Cubs, Scout or Brownies. It tends to be the same small group who do a lot of voluntary things.

It is the exception now when there is a family where both parents don't work

SG - There is a greater awareness of problems now. The shops are very careful about not selling drink or cigarettes to under age children

JH - I am surprised that the church isn't more involved

SG - About a third of the volunteers at the Young Persons Centre are from churches

EBK - There is a large group of people from the 3 churches in the village who contribute to these things. We're talking about Christian Morality - that's what most of our behaviour is based on

There's nobody here under the age of 20, no one from the Springfield Estate. We have a huge problem of people being too busy. If we don't do something about stimulating community involvement we will have huge problems. We need to address these issues. Malpas punches above its weight in the facilities it has but they will only be sustainable if we get our act together

PH - Np one has said anything about policing - does any one have anything to say on that?

JH - What about the village policeman? I see the police house is being sold.

AP - Since April rural policing has been re-organised into Neighbourhood Policing Units, we now have a new village policeman, PC Rob Boulton, who is an 'old style' village policeman. Walking on patrol in Malpas, meeting people, talking to people, getting to know us. I am very optimistic that we will see a tremendous improvement in our policing

RC - There are still problems in communicating with Cheshire Police. Dragon Hall is not manned enough. The public calling the police have to ask to speak to a police officer and ensure that they are given an incident number.

PH - There have been some interesting things come out of this. Communication is an interesting theme that seems to have come out of this, having an awareness of what's available, or how to join. It doesn't seem to be a lack of willingness to do things but .... I don't want to stop anyone if they have anything they want ...

JP - I think there isn't enough about cultural horizons and cultural diversity, the twinning association seem s to have been one association that has been lost. I think it's a great loss. We are in a global world and Malpas is part of that world. We should be able to maintain that link with internationalism and the diversity of cultures that we have here in Britain.