



Meriden Parish Council

the centre of england

MERIDEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 14 APRIL 2010 CHAIR'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I present this year's report which shows that the range of activities and events within the Parish have increased this year. There are many local people getting involved in the range of issues and activities within the Parish. Things are changing in a positive way within our local community.

I have to report obviously about the initiative that the Parish Council resolved to undertake two years ago. The Parish Plan was published and delivered to every house in the Parish. The independent Steering Group, chaired by a volunteer local resident Iain Roxburgh, and a number of volunteers still meet on a regular basis to steer this large joint initiative and the group continues to find others to join it and have renamed it "The Meriden Parish Action Group." This group still includes representatives from the Parish Council. The Group continues to meet and review the Parish Plan every six months with all our partners – West Midlands Police, a range of departments within Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Solihull Care Trust, Meriden GP Practice, and the local schools.

We have continued to improve communication with people and businesses in and around Meriden. We have had a number of public meetings which have included discussions about the Village Appraisal, Transport Issues, Anti-Social Behaviour, and the Playing Fields Development. All these have been very well attended. The website (www.meridenparishcouncil.org.uk) has continued to be used and contains pictures of the Parish Councillors, minutes of the meetings, links to other organisations and District Councillors. There is a "What's On" section thanks to the information supplied by the Meriden Mag and the Meriden Festival website, and a village blog where people can put their views and comments to the Parish Council. We are also on "Twitter" a social networking site. I must thank Cllr Melanie Lee, our communications expert for driving this forward.

We have also teamed up with the Local Ward Councillors and introduced regular evening Joint Community Surgeries in the Village Hall. These give residents the opportunity to communicate their concerns not only to the Parish Council but also their elected Ward Councillors. Their popularity is increasing and therefore we will continue to hold them so please do take the opportunity to come along.

Our involvement continues with Solihull Area Committee of the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils where representatives from all the Solihull parish and town councils meet. I have been elected Chair again of this group and this has continued to raise the profile of Meriden. Issues that are common amongst all the Councils are discussed e.g. good governance, partnership working, community speed watch, to name a few.

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Parish Councillors are now representatives on a number of committees: Meriden School Board of Governors, Solihull MBC Conservation Committee, Meriden Village Hall Management Committee, Solihull Area Committee, Solihull MBC Standards Committee, Police Rural Assembly, Meriden War Memorial Committee. We have also met with Meriden School Council and Meriden Scouts where the children chose amongst themselves the pieces of equipment they would like for the new playing fields which hopefully will be completed by the end of this year.

The development of the playing field on the Hampton Lane site and the new housing development on the existing playing fields has continued to move forward slowly. Planning permission has been granted and the developer David Wilson Homes meet every quarter with Solihull MBC and the Parish Council.

Meriden Pool still needs some extensive work. However, a joint project between Meriden C of E School, the Parish Council and Solihull MBC cleaned up the Pool, painted the benches and fences, built bird boxes and planted daffodils. An information board has also been erected which gives names of the birds seen on the Pool.

Community Speed Watch has started. This project trains local volunteers to use a speed device. From the Appraisal, the key roads that had been identified as problem areas now have a regular Speedwatch team. We always need more people and anyone who is interested please come and volunteer. Training is provided by the police and a full risk assessment is done by them to ensure the safety of all volunteers.

Solihull MBC was successful in this year's Heart of England in Bloom competition. They picked up a Gold award in the city category, city category winner award and were overall winners in the Heart of England in Bloom competition. This is the first time since 1996 when they first entered that they have achieved overall winner, so this is a significant achievement for the borough.

More locally, a Meriden resident picked up several individual awards and the overall champion prize in the Solihull in Bloom Competition. Meriden also achieved second place in a Best Kept Village Competition which Berkswell, Hampton in Arden and Barston also take part in. This is our best result since 2005.

We are setting up a Football Academy again, this time in partnership with FUSION during the summer holidays and Saturday mornings. Further details are in the Meriden Mag and Parish Plan newsletter.

As a result of the Parish Plan and the work which the Parish Council has been undertaking to highlight ASB issues in this area, West Midlands Police recruited a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) specifically for the Parish of Meriden. The Parish Council are working with West Midlands Police and Solihull MBC as a joint initiative to convert part of the public conveniences to a police office for the PCSO. Funds previously allocated to the demolition of the public conveniences are now being put towards this project.

Another initiative from the Parish Plan is being set up with AGE Concern, Solihull. This project will help to recruit volunteers to help older people to complete forms to ensure that they are getting the most help they need.

The Remembrance Day service road closures had to be organised locally again by volunteers this year and which was done very successfully. Thank you to Melanie and Paul Lee for the time and effort they put into this. This will continue in future years.

Community surgeries continue to be held once a month at the library or in the neighbourhood police van whilst the library is being refurbished. The library will open again in July. Any member of the public can come and talk to the police representative and the Neighbourhood Coordinator from Solihull MBC.

All of the allotments have again been let this year and we still have one of the lowest rents around! The Parish Council has been having discussions with Solihull MBC to improve the roundabout. Unfortunately the roses have had blight and we have attempted to rescue what we can. Several new plans have been reviewed and hopefully we will be having new planting with lots of colour.

The Meriden Festival grows from strength to strength and has had regular successful events including the Cyclists Memorial, Meriden Festival Fair (Centre Celebrations), Kinwalsey Tree Service and this year Jazz on the Lawn was excellent although very wet later in the afternoon! The Meriden Festival website has more information www.meriden-festival.org.uk.

The Meriden Mag continues to be delivered by volunteers to each and every household on a quarterly basis. It is an excellent means of communicating Meriden issues and information and the Parish Council always has a detailed report printed in it. It is still the most used and valued source of information about Meriden and the events and activities in the Parish.

The Meriden Parish Action Group have provided regular updates via a leaflet drop to every household. The Parish Council and the Action Group are having open sessions outside the library on 17th and 24th April and the 8th May.

Alan Lole again organised The Meriden Tree of Thought, the fifth special Village tree, in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support where people could dedicate a light in memory of a friend or loved one. This tree had over 1600 lights and looked spectacular. The tree did not emulate the Leaning Tower of Pisa this year!

The Parish Council are pleased to have given financial support to Meriden Village Hall, 1st Meriden Scouts, St Laurence Church, Meriden School, British Legion and the Meriden War Memorial Committee.

Julie Hall the Parish Clerk has been a great support to me as Chair and also the Council as a whole. She has nearly completed her CILCA qualification which is an essential criterion for us to apply for Quality Parish status.

On a personal level, I want to thank all the other Councillors who have supported me this last year. We have achieved a lot and we have a Parish Plan that we are proud of and where we can improve the Parish further. Also I want to thank all the volunteers involved in all the initiatives that have been set up. Finally, on behalf of the Parish Council - a big thank you to Julie Hall the parish clerk who gives more than her allotted time in a dedicated and professional manner.

Rosie Weaver
Chair
2010

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