

Chair's Annual Report 2007/2008

This year's report shows that there has been a wide range of activities and events within the Parish. More and more local people are getting involved in the range of issues and activities within the Parish and with this commitment the successes are many. Without these volunteers, there would be none of these successes.

The Parish Council elections in May 07 resulted in five new Councillors being elected. Formal thanks must go to previous Councillors that had served over previous years for the contributions they made to their local community. It was with great sadness for many people when they heard of Jackie Eccleston's death. She was a long serving parish council member who had lived in Meriden for over 40 years. Our sympathies go to her family and friends.

The Meriden Festival grows from strength to strength and has had regular successful events including Jazz on the Lawn.

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.

A large initiative that the Parish Council resolved to undertake is developing a Parish Plan from a Village Appraisal. An independent Steering Group chaired by a volunteer local resident Iain Roxburgh and a number of volunteers now meet on a regular basis to steer this large joint initiative. This steering group includes representatives from the Parish Council. Success for funding has been achieved through Big Lottery funding and a grant from Solihull Borough Council.

This Appraisal is a review carried out by local people on all aspects of the community. It identifies the strengths and assets, its deficiencies, problems and needs and its future challenges. This is the first step in enabling local people shape the future of our village and community with a plan of action and it will help influence decision makers especially Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. This has now got to the stage of sending questionnaires to all households within Meriden, Millison's Wood and surrounding areas. There have been a number of public meetings about this which have been very well attended and newsletters have been delivered to every household and business.

This year the Parish Council has developed a communication strategy which will 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 and the Playing Fields development. All these have been very well attended. We have also developed a website (www.meridenparishcouncil.org.uk) which has 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 a village blog where people can put their views and comments to the Parish Council.

We have also improved the way in which village issues are recorded to enable a more effective reporting system to Solihull MBC. Councillors and residents alike can access a "log sheet" either via the website or at Parish Council meetings. Once completed these are forwarded to the Clerk who then liaises with SMBC.

In October Mavis Edwards retired. She had been the Parish Clerk for 8 years. Her dedication and commitment to the Parish will be missed and on behalf of the Parish Council I wish to give a formal thank you to her in the Annual Parish report. We undertook a successful recruitment process and appointed a new clerk Julie Hall, who also lives in the Parish. Julie already has been building on the work Mavis had been doing.

Alan Lole again organised The Meriden Tree of Thought, the third special Village tree, in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. It raised £3401 through the dedication of a light in memory of a friend or loved one. This tree had over 1600 lights and looked spectacular.

As Chair of the Parish Council, 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 of this group and this has helped raise the profile of Meriden. The long awaited Local Council Charter has at last been agreed. This document is an agreement between all the said councils and SMBC - our Unitary Authority. A copy will be available on SMBC website and also our website.

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. The developer has been identified by SBC. This will be Bryants and the Parish Council have asked them to a public meeting this month on April 30th to discuss the plans and hopefully improve working together so we can influence the outcome.

The duck pond needs some extensive work. Initial investigations will commence early in the next financial year. We have replaced the bus shelter in Millison's Wood, and after full public consultation with residents a decision was made to demolish the public toilets in May 2009. We have funded an artificial Cricket pitch for Meriden Cricket Club and supported Age Concern Solihull to provide computer training courses at Meriden Library for the over 50s. The Fouling of Land by Dogs (Solihull) Order 2007 was implemented this year making it an offence for non-disposal of dog faeces by the owner.

Meriden Village Green came 2nd in the Solihull in Bloom competition and has been entered for the National and Regional Solihull in Bloom 2008 competition. The scouts have planted a number of young trees this year behind the scout hut and The Firs and have kindly donated the Parish Council 10 trees to plant in the Parish.

The changes implemented by the Solihull police meant that the Remembrance Day service road closures had to be organised locally which was done very successfully. This will continue in future years. Community surgeries continue to be held once a month at the library. Any member of the public can talk to the police representative and the neighbourhood coordinator from SMBC. All Parish councillors now have ID cards with photos which will be shown to members of the public on request. This initiative is supported by the local police.

The goals for the Parish Council for the next 12 – 18 months are to:

1. Complete the village appraisal and Parish Plan
2. To work towards having Quality Parish Status
3. To continue to improve communication with residents, businesses, District Councillors and Officers from Solihull MBC.

Rosie Weaver
Chair
April 2008