



Meriden Parish Council

the centre of england

Meriden Annual Parish Meeting 25 April 2016 Chair's Report

Last year I focused on our successful partnership working with local government, businesses, community groups and residents. This does continue through the efforts of our clerk, Barbara Bland, with support from members.

This year has been a year of planning matters and with it has brought many frustrations to us as a parish council and residents alike.

But first, a review of the highlights in the past municipal year:

Barbara achieved her CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration). This qualification means that Meriden Parish Council is eligible to operate under the General Power of Competence. It also enables us to apply for the Quality Standard Award from the Local Council Award Scheme.

We retained our Solihull Neighbourhoods in Bloom BEST VILLAGE title and also won the RHS Britain in Bloom, Heart of England SILVER award for Large Village.

Cllr Barber took over responsibility for Community Speed Watch which resumed in July.

Meriden Sports and Recreation Trust was formed in October which will oversee and govern the work we do for Meriden Sports Park and allow us to apply for charity funding through the trust. Sports park funds were handed over to the trust so as to invest it with CCLA and provide a financial return on investment.

Meriden's Neighbourhood Plan is now up to speed following the successful funding bid made by Cllr Weaver and Barbara to Locality. The £5566 has paid for the work needed on researching the community asset register compiled by Cllr Lynch-Smith and added to by other members and expanded on by Cllr P Lee. The funds will also be spent on the printing and analysis of the paper and online questionnaire. The questionnaire will be put through every household in the parish throughout late May and early June.

Cllr Weaver in her role as Vice Chair for Solihull Area Committee worked with the chair (Brian Hannaford Brown) to meet Solihull Chief Executive Nick Page on a quarterly basis.

Guest speakers at our full council meetings included

- Kirsten Kane, Head of Sustainability, Birmingham Airport,
- PC Simon Harrison, Rural Neighbourhood Police Team
- Tom Cox, GP Planning Limited, agent and planning consultant for Beechwood Recycling
- SMBC Officer Harvey Speed, Drainage & Flood Risk Management
- SMBC Officer Jo-Ann Williams, Community Engagement (Clean for the Queen)
- Mr Robert Williams, Agent for A & A Recycling

As mentioned earlier, planning matters throughout the year have taken up a lot of time for Barbara and our members including the development work on our Neighbourhood Plan.

We defended our decision to object to the controversial glass extension to Meriden Hall, Pertemps' head office. Despite the unanimous objection from Solihull Council's planning committee, Pertemps



Meriden Parish Council

the centre of england

appealed and won. Cllr Weaver represented the parish council at the committee meeting and the appeal to deliver our reasons for objection which we agreed with our planning consultant, Avon Planning.

The historic copse and bridleway is being eroded by properties extending gardens. The Parish Council is working with SMBC officers to protect the remaining copse and bridleway immediately adjacent to the Sports Park. A woodland walk, footpath, gate and wildlife habitat boxes and information boards will be provided. It has been included on our community asset register and has been registered by SMBC as such.

Beechwood Recycling's planning application for a biomass waste treatment facility at Meriden Quarry prompted us to invite them to discuss their plans with the council. This took place in October and after a site tour we published all the facts on our website including our response to the application with a list of conditions. In March, UKIP distributed a leaflet to residents which was filled with inaccuracies. Beechwood's response featured on our website and they have organised two drop-in sessions for residents this month. Last week's session attracted 12 residents and the second one takes place tomorrow night.

Our first 'away day' was held on a Saturday afternoon in January. The first half of the day was taken up with a presentation from Cllr Ian Courts and SMBC Officer Maurice Barlow who discussed their Local Plan which has been challenged by the planning inspectorate to provide for an extra 4,000 homes in the borough on top of the proposed 11,000 by 2028. They explained the possible ways to meet the demand which was then in the consultation phase. We spent the rest of the day, working through the consultation questions and putting our comments together to meet the submission deadline. Planning matters took over our development day.

There has been unsatisfactory progress on the Birmingham Road old garage and caravan site and the unlawful caravan site which we continue to monitor. The latest application for two 4-bed houses by Mr Rajvinder Singh contradicts his previous application for 14 bungalows. There is a need in Meriden for bungalows, not 4-bed houses. The council will object as it does not align with our Parish Plan or Visual Design Statement.

We have sent our HS2 petition against the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill to the House of Lords. I would like to thank our vice-chair Cllr Weaver and our clerk Barbara Bland for working so hard to put together the concerns of Meriden and a detailed list of mitigation clauses that must be considered. All members approved this petition and I thank them too for their support.

In the last year, outside of planning issues, Cllr Nunn conducted an online and face to face survey on the service provided for the 82 bus route. The results will be sent to Diamond Buses for comment.

Meriden's First World War Centenary Commemorations included a commemorative cricket match in August and football match in October with the Royal Corps of Signals, an evening with Doreen Agutter – Meriden in the Great War earlier this month and the Great War Society weekend just gone. The latter two events were very educational and both have been captured on video. Remembrance Sunday Parade and Act of Remembrance continues to be supported by the parish council in providing the road closure service.



Meriden Parish Council

the centre of england

Community events were once again successfully organised. We send a special thank you to Alan Lole for Meriden Tree of Thought who has raised to date over £48,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie Hospice Solihull of which nearly £6,000 was raised at his Funday Sunday and Tree Dedication events last year. Special thanks also go to Meriden Rotary Club for Meriden Megaride in June and the 4th Santa Fun Run in December.

Here are plans for the forthcoming year:

- Our finance committee will undertake a review of all finance policies and regulations in accordance with WALC recommendations for Audit/Transparency policy.
- Our clerk will identify and secure funds for the Pool Project. Work in partnership with local businesses and set up working group to identify who is doing what, when and how, supported by Cllr Haque.
- We will work with Beechwood to achieve financial settlement in mitigation of the biomass plant.
- Local Council Award Scheme to be completed to achieve the award of Quality Standard for Meriden Parish Council.
- Cllr Kipling will chair our newly formed planning committee.
- Meriden Bloomers with the support of our clerk will plan for Solihull Neighbourhoods in Bloom & Heart of England in Bloom 2016. The theme for 2016 floral displays is red/white/blue to commemorate the Queen's 90th Birthday celebration.

I thank all our councillors and the clerk for their contribution and commitment over this past year.

Melanie Lee
Chair
2016