

Meriden Parish Council

The Centre of England

Chairs Annual report 2016-2017

This year has been a busy year for the Parish Council. We have attempted to move forward a number of initiatives, some of which have been more successful than others. Most things we undertake as a parish Council involve people volunteering their time so I thank all Parish Councillors who have given their time. We have had several community volunteers especially Rosie Nunn (admin support) and Lynn Parker (Quarry Liaison Group), and regular attendees Sue and John Edwards, Gerry Russell, Lew Edwards at the Neighbourhood planning group. A special thank you goes to Barbara Bland the parish clerk for her unstinting support to me and other Councillors, as well as community members.

We have continued to hold Parish Council surgeries with SMBC officers and also joint Police surgeries. Unfortunately, these are poorly attended by the community. We will continue to hold them to ensure communication and information sharing continues.

This year has been a challenge after the Grant Thornton Intermediate audit plus the changes in the Transparency Code for Parish Councils.

Some of the recommendations from the GT audit have been completed and others we challenged but we have not had a confirmation from them as yet. However, we will be having yet another intermediate audit this year by the same company. As the previous Chair identified last year the Finance committee HAS reviewed all finance policies and regulations in accordance with NALC recommendations for the changes in the Transparency Code for Parish Councils.

The PC has had a number of open sessions on the draft Solihull Local Development Plan. This plan proposed 18 sites within the Borough for the 6150 houses that are needed. Meriden's PC engagement with the community via the Parish Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan and open sessions all confirmed that the old caravan site storage and garage was the most suitable site for housing in Meriden. SMBC have accepted this proposal.

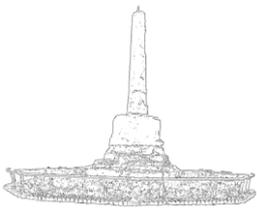
The PC achieved the General Power of Competence last year and we have been working towards accreditation to achieve a quality standard in the Local Council Award. Parish Councillors have undertaken individual training on a range of topics and have met 3 times as a group on Saturday mornings to ensure we can demonstrate that we are a competent parish council. We are upgrading the pc website to meet the improved standard expected of websites.

We have made positive strides forward with the Neighbourhood Plan. The survey to all households in Meriden proved a good result. A big thank you to local businesses for the draw prizes. The next stage is a survey to all local businesses that are on the SMBC database and hopefully we will be successful again in the Localities Bid to pay for this as before. Key issues that have come out of the household survey can be found in our News section on our present website and will have its own section on our new website due to be released shortly.

A management plan for Meriden Pool undertaken by an external company has at last been completed and Chris Barr, Environment Manager (Streetcare, Forestry, Environmental Crime, Parks and Open Spaces) is the confirmed lead officer of this project. Meriden PC welcomes his involvement. Representatives of all relevant parties will be starting the process of putting together a bid to SITA Trust.

Meriden's First World War group continues to meet and has produced an amazing book led by Cllrs Mel and Paul Lee and local historian Doreen Agutter about Meriden's history and its servicemen during the 1914-18 world war. Meriden Sports Park continues to be popular with residents and visitors alike. Adult and Junior football and cricket teams have achieved successes. The play area has had Phase one of resurfacing and Phase two will happen in early summer 2017.

Meriden Sports and Recreation Trust are now a registered Charity and strong partnership working is being developed between the trustees, the sports park directors and the parish council.



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The Quarry Liaison Group continues to meet quarterly and attendance by quarry operators has been high. SMBC and Environment Agency officers also attend. Issues raised by both Hampton and Meriden PC are taken seriously and actioned. These meetings have improved communications and information sharing, reduced lorry movements through Meriden Parish and makes better the nuisance, noise, litter, dirt and dust within our local environment.

An issue that has affected many residents especially older people and those with disabilities is the removal of the taxibus by TfWM. The PC has hosted numerous public meetings and jointly with Hampton in Arden and Catherine de Barnes challenged the premise that its removal has taken place. Community residents Jeannette Gray and Pat Mills have taken up the hard slog of informing people and keeping the pressure on. We are not sure of the outcome as yet as discussions are still ongoing but we do know that TfWM are making some concessions to the original plans.

Cllr Rosie Weaver continues to be Deputy Chair of SAC and is Deputy Chair of WALC. These groups enable all parish and town councils to share their experiences and good practice and raise issues as a collective. In Solihull following the Charter guidelines, the Chair and Deputy Chair of SAC meeting quarterly with Chief Executive Nick Page.

Community events were once again successfully organised. Alan Lole continues to raise much needed funds for Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie Hospice Solihull through the Tree of Thought and Funday Sunday. The 5th Santa Fun Run organised by The Rotary Club in December was well attended by many ages and sizes of Santas!

Meriden Watch website has increased its followers and provides up to date Neighbourhood watch information and is supported by the police. There is good information sharing between them and the PC.

We would like to thank our new volunteer Tree Warden, Sarah Sharland, for doing an excellent job. She has revised Meriden's tree database, continues to gather information and records, and attends Solihull Tree Warden meetings.

Cllr Barber has coordinated several Speedwatch sessions. We are limited as to the number of sessions we have been able to do as we need some more volunteers to undergo training. We have asked the police to provide this and are still waiting for some dates.

Solihull are ditching Neighbourhoods in Bloom this year and recommending Communities enter Heart of England in Bloom instead. Due to the lack of volunteers, Meriden will not be entering Heart of England in Bloom due to the level of work required. Bloomers however, will continue to provide flowers and colourful displays of planters and baskets around the village.

Plans for 2017-18 are to include:

- Accreditation with the Local Council Award Scheme.
- Continue to secure funds and complete the Pool Project
- Continue to update the website and meet the new regulatory codes.
- To develop the Poppy site for a fitting sustainable memorial.
- To hold the first revamped Annual Parish Assembly as part of our Engagement Strategy.

Rosie Weaver

Chair

May 2017