

Meriden Parish Council

The Centre of England

Chairs Annual Report 2017-2018

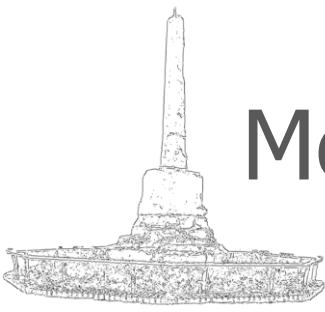
This year has been another full year for the Parish Council. We have attempted to move forward several initiatives, again some of which have been more successful than others. Most things we undertake as a Parish Council involve people volunteering their time, so I thank all Parish Councillors who have given their time. We have had several community volunteers especially Sarah Sharland as Tree Warden and Lynn Parker resident rep on the Quarry Liaison Group, and regular attendees Sue and John Edwards, Gerry Russell, Lew Edwards, Sarah Sharland at the Neighbourhood planning group. None of the things we could achieve as a Parish Council would be possible without our parish clerk. A special thank you goes to Barbara Bland for her exemplary hard work, constant support to me and other Councillors, as well as community members.

We have continued to hold Parish Council surgeries with SMBC officers and 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 our external auditors Grant Thornton gave us a clean bill of health and all recommendations from 16/17 audit have been completed.

The PC has had several open exhibitions at local events on the draft Solihull Local Development Plan. Solihull MBC are still working on their draft and should be out in the autumn. The PC are still 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 twice as a group on Saturday mornings to ensure we can demonstrate that we are a competent parish council. We have upgraded the PC website to meet the improved standard expected of websites and all parish councillors now have a PC email address to comply with the new GDPR legislation.

The parish council are continuing to make good progress with the Neighbourhood Plan. The survey to all households in Meriden proved a good result. We have completed the survey to all local businesses and a summary report has been completed. We were successful again in a 2nd and a 3rd Localities Bid to pay for this and future work for a local survey on housing needs for Meriden residents. The management plan for Meriden Pool Phase 1 started in March. Phase 2 will be the landscaping works and representatives of all relevant parties will be starting the process of putting together a bid to Suez, formerly SITA Trust. Copies of SMBC's briefing on this is on the PC website.

Meriden's First World War group continues to meet and a big thank you to local historian Doreen Agutter who continues to collect information about Meriden's history and its servicemen during the 1914-18 world war.



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The servicemen who lost their lives have been commemorated throughout the year on their anniversary with candlelit vigils. The group has moved a long way in the development of ideas for a lasting poppy memorial on the dedicated Memorial Approach site.

Meriden Sports Park continues to be popular with residents and visitors alike. The play area has had phase two of the playground resurfacing completed in late summer 2017. The demands for usage of the facilities has increased and new holiday sports activity camps have been introduced for children.

Meriden Sports and Recreation Trust has strong partnership working with the sports park directors and the parish council.

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.

You will recall in 2016 an issue that affected many residents' especially older people and those with disabilities was the removal of the taxi bus by TfWM (Transport for West Midlands). The PC hosted numerous public meetings and jointly with Hampton in Arden and Catherine de Barnes formally challenged the premise that its removal had taken place. Community residents took up the hard slog of informing people and keeping the pressure on. The outcome was that TfWM decision was to continue with the taxi bus for Meriden and Hampton residents including a weekly service to the Coventry Mobility Centre. A new bus stop will be installed at the surgery in Balsall Common and hopefully at Solihull Hospital.

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 meet quarterly with SMBC Chief Executive Nick Page.

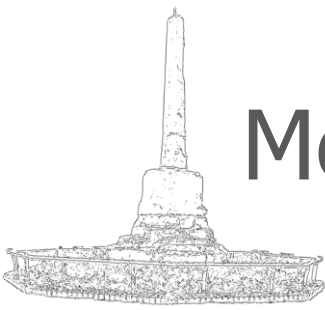
Community events were once again successfully organised. Alan Lole continues to raise much needed funds for Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie Hospice Solihull through the Tree of Thought and Funday Sunday. The 6th Santa Fun Run organised by The Rotary Club in December was well attended by many ages and sizes of Santas! The Family Picnic in the Park was a success in July.

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. Following a spate of burglaries in Meriden, a group chaired by Annie Dingley is exploring more Neighbourhood Watch options and other initiatives in Meriden.

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Cllr Barber has coordinated several Speed Watch sessions. We were 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. However, we have had to stop doing them as the Police have advised that Speedwatch volunteers nationally are no longer covered by insurance.

So, what have we done from the list we compiled from last year's annual assembly? Quite a lot! Some things of note are:

- the PC met several times with SMBC's Head of Highways to look at the issues of parking, speeding and our views are being incorporated into his review of what can be done in Meriden in the future.
- Exercise for the over 40s -we will hear tonight of plans that have started in the Sports Park
- Forest of Arden Leisure have offered a boot camp in the Sports Park when the weather improves
- Astro-wicket – has been replaced and should last another 7 to 10 years
- Footpaths and overgrowth throughout Meriden – there has been a major cutting back thanks to SMBC Neighbourhood Coordinator.

Plans for 2018-19 are to include:

- To hold the second Annual Parish Assembly as part of our Engagement Strategy
- Achieve 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
- Conduct a Housing Needs Survey for Meriden to include results in our Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan
- To publish our Neighbourhood Plan and put it forward to a community referendum after pre-submission and submission plans have been examined and approved by SMBC Local Planning Authority
- To continue working with Head of Highways to improve traffic management throughout the Parish

Rosie Weaver
Chair Meriden Parish Council
April 2018