

## **Annual Report 2020 to 2021**

This certainly has been a difficult year for many people. COVID-19 has affected us all in different ways. We will all know people who have lost their lives to this dreadful disease and those of us linked to the Parish Council send condolences to their friends and family. We have planted a Cherry Tree on the village green to commemorate those people.

To support residents to cope with covid 19 and its effects of lockdowns, illness and reduced social activities, a Meriden Action Team was set up with St Laurence Church at the start of the pandemic. The telephone helpline is answered every day between 8am and 8pm by volunteers and we recruited more volunteers to support people to do shopping, pick up prescriptions, and offer a listening ear. To date we have answered 750 phone calls. A big thank you to you all. Without you we would have been unable to have such a coordinated response to support our community. Thank you to Rev Lynda Lilley for being a core team member and the Parish Council wishes you and your husband the best of luck in your move to a new parish in South Warwickshire.

The Parish Council has carried on business by using zoom thanks to government legislation that allowed us to make decisions this way. We have been able to live stream most meetings on the parish council Facebook page, and people have been able log in themselves using a zoom link. In fact, this has increased attendance at parish council meetings, and has been reflected across the parish and town council sector in England. A big thank you to Barbara Bland, the Clerk, who has continued to maintain an excellent service to the parish. She has worked from home throughout the pandemic which has been more difficult for her to access the range of documents and files in the office.

The Parish Council has been able to develop a parish action plan which will be the focus on the annual parish assembly on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Some of the key outcomes will include developing a working group on climate change; recruiting young people for a youth council; and taking the Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum. This will be on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and is the culmination of over four years work. We hope there will be a yes vote as the plan will become a formal planning document and legally must be considered by SMBC. The Parish Council would like to formally thank the members of the Steering Group in helping us get it completed.

We formally advertised to a Parish Councillor casual vacancy and from the recruitment process the successful candidate was Carmen Smith.

We were successful in securing a grant from the War Memorials Trust and restoration and maintenance work has been completed on the Memorial on Berkswell Road.



The quarry liaison group has managed to meet during the lockdowns and there is a lot of activity on the quarry sites that continue to affect the community including dust, noise and extra lorries. Discussions continue re this with the Environment Agency, SMBC and our local MP.

The Parish Council have been having monthly ZOOM rebranded “tea and talk” sessions during the restrictions and we continue to engage with the West Midlands Police Rural Team on parish policing. The PCSO’s have continued with Speed Watch. Members of the public can access these meetings either via the internet or phone.

Our discussions with SMBC re us sharing the Library building has reached a shuddering halt. SMBC property services have decided that despite us talking with SMBC for 7 years, that the library will need major structural works to strengthen the first floor but also the fire regulations are so extensive that it will be impossible to enable the upstairs to be used.

We have secured from Taylor Wimpey the transfer of our Allotments to us and we are just awaiting the deed of transfer from the Land Registry.

We want to thank the Meriden Mag and Meriden Bloomers who have donated seats to Meriden Pool and a new Memorial Bench will soon be installed on the Village Green. Covid safe working has pushed back installation on all of them – but they are on the to do list!

We have continued liaising with SMBC Highways colleagues for traffic calming measures to be imposed for the parish rural highways. We have taken on board resident’s suggestions and this has fed into the wider plan for Meriden which has included additional yellow lines, parking restrictions, disabled parking bays, and the reduced 20 mph speed in the Village centre.

VE75 was commemorated by residents participating in tea and cake on socially distanced driveways and plans are being made for Jubilee 2022 with the return of picnic in the Park. There have been a number of significant efforts showing support to the NHS and keyworkers – the Tree of Thought, door step clapping, local fundraising for hospitals and donations of food from and to foodbanks.

So, despite all the restrictions this year, the Parish Councillors and the clerk have worked really hard to keep things moving forward. Thank you I appreciate and value the teamwork.

Cllr Rosie Weaver BEM  
Chair