

Annual report March 2022

Annual Meeting, Tuesday, 8th. March 2022, St Peter's Church.

As I start this report, the office is closed again and staff are working from home. In September 2021, we returned to the office and some sort of normality after a long period of closure. The staff were beginning to settle in, filing was being done of the work completed during the six months they had been out of the office, and people were once again, ringing the bell asking for help and information. Then, in December, once again, files had to be packed up and transported to homes.

The move to home working in 2021, had financial implications for the Council as we had to provide computer and printing equipment to staff. This time, we are already equipped and BT has facilitated the move of our office phone to the home offices. This allows residents to contact us directly on the office number as well as on the mobile numbers we have in place.

It would be too obvious to say that 2021 was a year like no other: a year like no other for almost everyone. However, despite that, work did continue and until May 2021, the Council was allowed to meet virtually and so all meetings continued. However, the legislation allowing virtual meetings ended on May 7th, 2021, and Government failed to extend it despite strong lobbying from Town, Parish and District Councils. As a result, face to face meetings began again in June 2021.

In September 2021, the Government asked for feedback on how meeting should/could be held, but as yet they have not reported on that consultation.

The Council holds monthly Parish Meetings and also has a number of committees that hold meetings at other times. The following sections outline some of the work done by the Council Committees during the last year.

The Highways, Environment and Emergency (HEE) Committee targets identified areas of need, recognising priorities in each of the core areas.

The Committee has an agreed long term development plan which extends to 2025, an agenda of annual key objectives, and it also responds to items of interest raised by members of the public. Despite the effect of COVID restrictions, some notable community focussed actions have been achieved and progress made in areas of growing concern around the village.

By far the largest demand for intervention has come as a result of anti-social driving and excess vehicle speeds. This has been compounded by several road incidents on various roads. In response, engagement with County Council and Warwickshire Police has taken place, with a clear direction of remedial actions. This multi-agency group engagement will expand in 2022, to look at multiple traffic related issues including the effect of heavy duty vehicles on village roads and the disturbance experienced by residents.

2021 also saw the introduction of phase one of the 20's plenty speed awareness campaign. This program is widely used across the UK and has been largely appreciated as part of driver awareness education. Phase two will see the campaign materials moved to a different part of the village, along the entrance to the village on Charlecote Road and continuing along the Kineton Road. In addition, the volunteer local Speed Aware group was finally established after a long delay awaiting relevant training. The Parish Council supported the group by agreeing to purchase handheld speed measurement equipment. Working in support of the community, the group carry out regular speed monitoring at different areas around the village, working closely with Warwickshire Police.

If you are interested in helping with this, there is still the opportunity to join the group. Please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

The Committee has also reported positive results in challenging environmental issues, raised by residents. These include excess noise from commercial premises, nuisance caused by unsociable commercial lighting, poor attention to grass verge maintenance and footpath concerns. All of which were challenged and rectified.

Prudent fiscal management not only allowed the launch of the 20's Plenty campaign but has allowed additional support to be made available for the new developments. Funding for the provision of new refuse bins and dog fouling signage has been made available for both the Ettington Park and The Grange on its completion. While

demands for support continue to grow, the HEE Committee has agreed to manage planned initiatives, in the short term, without corresponding demands for increased funding.

To recognise changes in priorities and to ensure accurate planning, the Committee's long term development plan will be reviewed early 2022.

Stuart M Jackson

Finance committee report

The committee's role is to pre-digest financial issues, with more time for discussion and analysis than is available to the full council. The monthly management reports from the finance officer and the outcomes of internal and external audits are scrutinised before they are put before the council.

The major task of the year is the November/December preparation of the coming year's budget when the council's projected spending is balanced against the income required: provided by council tax, often, as this time, supplemented by drawing on the council's reserves. This results in a resolution to put before the council, which then requests the District Council to provide the amount of council tax which is needed.

As with all council committees, meetings are open to the public and anyone is welcome to be there.

Rosalind Bolton

Community Facilities Committee

During the year, significant work has been done on the open spaces in the village, including the provision of further play equipment on the Mountford Play Area, that are the property of the Parish. The Council seeks to maintain these as pleasant areas for residents to use for recreation and relaxation. A number of benches were named as happy benches offering people the opportunity to sit and chat and to show that they would like to chat.

One major initiative this year was the removal of the dilapidated Youth Hut and the creation of an upgraded car park in the middle of the village. The car park is a huge improvement on what was formerly there and the provision of disabled parking spaces has made access to central facilities easier. Currently, we are exploring the provision of EVC provision in the car park. This would be a service to residents and encourage the use of electrical vehicles.

The Council has also taken possession of a mobile skate ramp from Stratford District Council. We are currently planning the first outing for this. We hope it will provide much needed enjoyment for many people in the coming years.

We have been in discussion with Persimmon about taking over the open spaces at Mountford Place (the extension on the Dovehouse estate) and The Grange. The legal papers are being drawn up for this and we hope to have possession of these spaces shortly. The Council decided some while ago that it wished to take on open spaces on developments as we feel that we can provide a more immediate response to issues.

I am disappointed to say, that there has been little progress linked to the Newbold Road field and the provision of parking and sports pitches. We appear to be trapped in planning at the moment but hope to be able to move this along in the coming year.

Dog Close

The lease to Dog close has now been signed and we are in a position to move ahead with providing an open space for residents. The first work to be done is replacement fencing along the edge of the area on Bridge Street and through the coppice by the riverbank to the field. There will be some repair work to the internal fences as well. We will also be constructing a pedestrian access into the area from Bridge Street.

In the next few weeks, we will be looking at the coppice and what is needed to improve the health of the trees and shrubs in the area. It is intended that the rest of Dog Close will be meadow with mown paths through it and we will be looking at the seeding of this in the coming weeks also. There will also be a variety of seating.

We have a small group of volunteers from the community working on plans for this area and we will be holding open days when the weather is better, so that you can see the area for yourselves and learn about the proposed plans. We are looking for more people to help with this as there will be planting to be done and regular work on the area. This is an opportunity for community involvement.

The working group has committed itself to a time scale with a planned opening of the area for your use in June 2023.

Please keep an eye out for the open days and also opportunities to help with what is a major development for the village.

Anne Prior

Grants for Community Projects.

The Council has set up a scheme for 2022/23 of small grants of up to £250 for groups wishing to start new community projects or events. This is in addition to the annual grants that we make to groups in the village. We recognise that new groups spring up with new ideas and as we only make our grant decisions in November, that they may miss out on the opportunity to obtain seed funding for their ideas. This is an opportunity for that and the money can be applied for at any time during the year. The application forms are on the website. So, if you have an idea for a new event or happening in the village, this is an opportunity to obtain some funding.

Annual Parish Meeting

This meeting will be held on Tuesday, 8th. March at 7.15pm in St Peter's Church.

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting hosted by the Parish Council for all members of the Parish. It is not a Parish Council meeting and the rules governing usual meetings do not apply. However, at this meeting, the rules of decent behaviour towards each other will still be expected. The meeting gives you, the residents, the opportunity to raise any matter of relevance to the parish and to ask questions about the work of the Parish Council.

During the last two years, we have had a number of new Councillors and the responsibilities of the Council have grown. There has been much new development in the south of the village bringing new residents. We would like to hear your views about what we have done, about what you think needs to be done to make the village a safe and pleasant place to live and raise your families.

Anne Prior

Chairman, Wellesbourne and Walton Parish Council