

Chairman's Report Balsall Parish Council May 2017

I would like to thank a former Chairman Councillor Raymond Ritchie for his long years of service to the Parish Council. I would like to welcome our three new Councillors; Cllr Christina O'Sullivan, Cllr Lee Quinney and Cllr Helen Dean. This year councillors have been on training courses for planning, financing infrastructure projects, cemetery management, budgeting, year-end audit preparation, Council law and procedures and the role of the clerk.

The Council have introduced monthly Parish Council meetings. Solihull Council asks for our advice as a statutory consultee and in the last year we have considered 67 planning applications in the Parish. We objected to applications where development is over intensified such as "garden grabbing developments", or adversely affecting the street scene, or out of character with the neighbourhood, and we have commented where there were potential issues of access and nuisance. We have supported applications in line with Government guidelines such as the development of redundant barns and to protect the green belt by encouraging the rural economy.

The Council responded to consultations by Solihull Borough Council for their proposed Local Plan. The Council organised two public exhibitions of potential housing sites in St Peter's Hall in August 2016 and in February 2017. Almost 700 residents provided feedback in August and 528 residents provided feedback in February. The Council represented this residents' feedback in reports to Solihull Council. We are working with our ward councillors to press our case that any new housing for Balsall Common should not be built until after completion of HS2 in 2026, to avoid what Councillor Ian Courts described as a potential "double whammy".

The Council has worked with Solihull Council and with HS2 Ltd with the aim to secure a continuous haul route, to be utilised by HS2 construction traffic, thus avoiding the need for hundreds of Heavy Goods Vehicles to travel along the Kenilworth Road through the village. We have been supported by Councillor David Bell and Dame Caroline Spelman.

The Council has reserves earmarked for legal and professional expenses to support any action relating to the construction of HS2, and for legal and professional fees to potentially challenge the Solihull Local Plan. Reserves have also been earmarked for capital projects at the Village Hall, the Cemetery and Willow Park.

The Council have worked with David Ellis of the BCVRA to significantly improve relations with the Airport Company. We are currently working with seven other Parish Councils and Local community groups, to lobby the Airport Company and SMBC, to limit the effects of the dramatic growth in flights in the night time period from 11.30pm to 6am.

The Council has recruited a new clerk; Judith Parry-Evans, who has extensive experience in local government after a twenty-five year career with Birmingham City Council. I would like to thank our previous clerk Shafim Kauser for her four years of service to the Parish. Shafim left us in August last year and so to manage the Council in the transition four councillors volunteered to do the work of the clerk. Cllr Marsden managed our most significant asset; the Parish Cemetery at Temple Balsall. The Council are creating the Arnold Memorial Garden at the Cemetery with a legacy left for the cemetery by the Arnold family. Cllr Heard reviewed and updated our financial procedures to improve banking, budgeting, reporting and transparency. The Council has employed a bookkeeper for better financial management. We reviewed all of our contracts for maintaining the cemetery and our parks and employed better value contractors. We have moved from the Police shop to a new Parish Office behind Westwood next to the Library.

The Council has worked with SMBC to make small improvements to the village centre with a redesign of the Jubilee car park, repainting lampposts and resurfacing outside Costa. The Council opposed plans by SMBC to remove the grass verges along the Kenilworth road and construct a cycle way. The Council has objected to a 24 hour alcohol license at the Shell Garage. The Council supplied the flowers in the planters in the village centre and we put up the Christmas lights. The Council has set up a working party looking at future plans to improve the village centre.

The Council has removed fallen trees after storm Doris in our parks and repaired equipment following vandalism. The Council have set up a working party to consult with local residents and to develop a plan to improve the facilities of Willow Park. The Council has earmarked reserves for this project.

The Council decided to end the Joint Neighbourhood Planning project following legal and professional planning advice that any plan would be open to legal challenge. We have petitioned SMBC to carry out a Community Governance Review consulting with the residents to consider uniting Balsall Common within one Parish. Our preferred option would be for one Parish to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan for a united Balsall Common. If SMBC will not conduct a review then we will produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Balsall Parish working in cooperation with the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Berkswell Parish.

The Council have awarded grants to the total value of £12000 to Lady Katherine Leveson School, Centre Stage, Berkswell and Balsall Rugby Club, Heart of England School, Jubilee Centre, Balsall Common Library, Balsall and Berkswell Football Club and Balsall Common Lions.

Councillor Mark Tattum

Chairman Balsall Parish Council

18 May 2017