

Chairman's Annual Report

The year has again been a busy one for the Parish Council but not without its sadness as, unfortunately, in the past few months we have seen the deaths of both Geoff Perkin and Alan Morris who were stalwart servants to the Parish Council. Both were Parish Councillors for many years and both served as Chairman, Geoff from 1981 to 1983 and Alan from 2001 to 2002. They will be sadly missed.

The Grounds and Amenities sub-group has been very active this year preparing schemes and raising monies for various projects which will hopefully be completed in the forthcoming year. We have applied to Staffordshire Moorlands Partnership and have been awarded grants to complete the second phase of the Stockton Brook Gateway project which we hope will see the resurfacing and marking out of the parking area.

Suzanne Sillitoe has designed and organised a memorial to Thomas Hulme, the local World War I poet and historian, and again having received a grant from Staffordshire Moorlands Partnership we will be installing the memorial in the grass verge at the head of The Meadows on the 17th September 2017. We also hope to refurbish the two remaining lecterns, one at the bottom of Hillswood Drive and the other at the Black Horse end of the Village in a similar manner to how the lectern at Stockton Brook was refurbished. Again, this should happen shortly as we have now received further grants from Staffordshire Moorlands Partnership for the work. We have already received donations for this work from Councillor Jackson and Councillor Jebb and it is hoped that work on the Hillswood lectern will commence shortly as this is to be re-positioned in Station Road so that it does not suffer as badly from moss and lichen growth as it currently does below the trees at Hillswood Drive. Finally, the trim trail at the Hillswood Playing Fields has been repaired and we hope will now form a more solid base for people using both the trail and the exercise points.

The local Flood Forum group, comprising members of the Parish Council and local individuals, has been active again throughout the year, holding three multi-agency meetings with representatives from the Environment Agency, Severn Trent, Highways and Staffordshire County Council. However, actual results and actions from these meetings are a little disappointing as the major works appear to come from the Flood Forum Group as during this time the group has carried out a survey of all the road gullies in the village, identifying blocked and semi-blocked gullies and this was forwarded to Staffordshire County Council Highways department for actioning. The trash screens and stock proof fencing have been installed round the open ditch drains which feed into the rainwater drainage system off the Highview Road Estate. However, Staffordshire County Council has commenced the survey of the Village Brook and adjoining streams to ascertain whether attenuation schemes can be designed and installed to prevent flooding in the village. This work will also cover investigations into the conflux of the Village and Endon Brook to see how the Endon Brook may affect the Village Brook. The results and recommendations from this survey are due in the very near future.

Despite the flurry of activity last year, little has happened with the proposed local plan in the past twelve months. Following initial comments in addition to S.M.D.C's proposals, the Parish Council prepared its own version of the plan which showed how an additional

64houses could be accommodated on smaller parcels of land spread throughout the village, together with our suggestions to solve the ongoing school parking problem.

This scheme, together with S.M.D.C's proposal were presented to an open public meeting at the Village Hall on the 27th May 2016. Our own proposals did receive a significant amount of public support but was not unanimously accepted. However, our plan and comments on both the Parish Council and S.M.D.C's proposal were submitted back to the Authority in early June 2016 and this is where the matter rests. We have not received any further information from S.M.D.C. although we believe they may have employed further external consultants for advice and guidance.

As we have managed to save the residue of money earlier than anticipated, we have now successfully completed the purchase of the second phase of the Lawn cemetery extension and we now own the complete parcel of land to the east of the present Lawn cemetery, ensuring sufficient burial space for the Village for the foreseeable future. We now just need to arrange for the additional land to be fenced off and this should happen in the next few months.

Unfortunately, we were informed by Staffordshire County Council that funding from them to offset the Lengthsman's costs is to cease from April of this year. However, as a result of purchasing the Lawn cemetery land early this may well release sufficient5 funds for us to continue employing the Lengthsman on a regular basis as the overall volume of work carried out from the Lengthsman's scheme does assist considerably in keeping the public areas of the village neat and tidy.

We have also issued grants during the year to four local organisations to help upgrade and run their organisations. Hopefully we will learn how the money was spent later in the meeting.

A series of smaller improvements and renovations has taken place during the year. The Telephone Box in the Village has been renovated and re-painted and new planting has been carried out around the perimeter. Unfortunately, due to ongoing damp problems no satisfactory use has been found for the interior.

The road through the village up to the Well has at last been patched and an order has been placed for a small bridge to be erected on Footpath 46. This is the footpath which leads down from St. Luke's Church through Mr. Clowes' land towards Holehouse Lane but is virtually impassable at the bottom of a small dip where the stile used to be due to an extensive muddy area that is constantly churned up by cattle. The new bridge will be slightly to the left of the muddy area and hopefully will allow the footpath to be re-used.

I must now thank County Councillor Jackson and local councillors Christina Jebb, Councillor Bond and Councillor Lea for their continued support and efforts during the year as all four have assisted us both financially and physically with many of our schemes and problems.

Finally, once again my sincere thanks to our Clerk Dennis for continuing to run and organise our finances during the year together with his meticulous organisation of the Parish's affairs.