



Chairman's address 2015

Bickenhill Parish Council was one of the earliest Parish Councils to be created, in the late 1800's and since then there have been many changes.

All those years ago St Peter's Church in the village of Bickenhill was very much the central point for parish activities. What is now Marston Green was then known as Marston Cully; a very small part of the parish with just a few farms and farm cottages.

Things have moved a long way since those times; today Marston Green represents more than ninety-five percent of the parish with more than 2500 homes.

For some time the Parish Council have been considering a name change that reflects the major part that the four wards of Marston Green play in the parish, but at the same time the Council recognised we must not lose our proud history and association with the village of Bickenhill.

After much deliberation we decided to start the name change process. First of all we sent a consultation letter to all our



residents with the suggested new name, **Bickenhill and Marston Green Parish Council**. Of those who responded from both villages, over 97% were in favour of the change. We also had to get approval from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

We then commissioned an agency to submit ideas for our new image. The design chosen features the two iconic clocks of the two villages; the clock tower on St Peter's Church in Bickenhill, and the second is the Marston Green clock situated in the Garden of Memory. This would be underscored with two contours; one representing the hill in Bickenhill and the other the Green in Marston Green.

I think it's important to say the costs of this exercise were well within budget; the design studio's costs were donated to the parish and as we were due to purchase replacement uniforms, advertising boards and stationary in this financial year the name change has not been a major cost to the parish.

Over the last twelve months the Parish Council has addressed a number of issues that fall into two categories: the past the present.



Starting with the past: looking back to the commemoration of the 100 years since the start of World War 1.

The council wanted to give the parish residents an opportunity to participate in the national commemoration, but at the same time pay tribute to those lost from our own villages.

A number of events were arranged over a three day period at the beginning of August 2014, culminating in a service at St Peter's in Bickenhill and dedication in the Garden of Memory in Marston Green to remember those who gave their lives for our future. The council unveiled a special memorial bench in the garden to commemorate the occasion.

Looking now at the present, the Parish Council recognizes the growing importance of social media and now operates a face book page. The council feels it is important that issues affecting the parish i.e. planning, policing, parking and roads, should be accurately recorded and want our residents to have the facts rather than any individual's interpretation on social media. Our face book page will be regularly updated.

Over the last few years The Parish Council has been active in improving the appearance of the village during the summer



flowering months. We have taken over from SMBC the planting and care for the large troughs by the shops in Station Road.

Parish Council staff are also responsible for the formal gardens; the Garden of Memory, Chapel Garden and the Pleck at the junction of Bickenhill Road and Coleshill Road. We also plant and maintain the planters in the Burial Ground and the troughs at all the entrances into Marston Green. We have received many complements on this work and will continue to improve the local street scene for the benefit of our residents.

Complementing this work, the Parish Council has, for many years, sponsored the Gardening Club to plant up the hanging baskets in the village. We used to have 36 baskets but due to health and safety regulations and parking issues, the number is down to 23 and could be reduced further this year.

As this situation has diluted the visual effect of the baskets we have decided not to continue with this format. Instead we will be purchasing thirteen columns that each hold two hanging baskets. Eight of these will be placed in the Garden of Memory and five in the Pleck. We have sponsored the Gardening Club to prepare the 26 baskets in their new situation and council staff will feed and water them through the summer months.



The Parish Council feels that this will enhance our village with a wonderful display of flowers through the summer months.

In Bickenhill Village the council continues to support St Peter's Church by contributing funds for the maintenance of the church grounds.

For the fifth year running we have maintained the precept within inflation. The Parish Council decided that due to the current economic climate there would be no increase in fees for 2015/16.

To achieve all the aforementioned you need a dedicated set of people. I am delighted to say we have this and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank our clerk, Carole Cox and her ground staff team of Nikki Meek and Rob Williams for keeping our parish in such good shape.

Being a councillor can be time consuming and occasionally an unappreciated position, so I feel it would be very remiss of me not to recognise the work of all the councillors over the last twelve months who have represented Bickenhill Parish Council and given their time freely.

I realise it is not always possible for every councillor to attend every meeting or sit on every committee but each



and every one of you has made a contribution and it is important that people understand that you undertake this role because you care and continually want to improve the community you live in, so for that I say thank you.

During the last twelve months, for various reasons, three of our parish councillors decided they were no longer able to dedicate their time to the council and have relinquished their positions. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Cllrs Jim Williams, Julie Brennan and Paul Brennan for their much valued service.

Needless to say we are always seeking local people who are interested and prepared to get involved with the council's activities. If you feel that you would like to be more engaged in local matters and make a difference to your community, please contact the clerk to register your interest.