

Bickenhill & Marston Green Parish Council: Chairman's Address 2016

2015 was a very eventful year for the Parish Council. It all started when we launched our new name and logo. The response to this has been very positive providing a more balanced better representation of the four wards within the parish.

Community Projects

The Parish Council moved forward on a number of other projects in 2015. In Marston Green, as reported last year, the council purchased fourteen columns each holding two hanging baskets. The plan was to centralize the baskets into the heart of the village. The Parish Council sponsored Marston Green Gardening Club to plant and prepare the baskets for the summer and were put in place in June of 2015. The watering and feeding was done by the Parish Council Groundsmen. The Gardening Club entered the baskets into the Solihull in Bloom competition and were awarded third prize, a very commendable achievement for their first attempt.

The Parish Council also entered Marston Green into the category for the best kept village, we were delighted to receive second place in the whole of the borough in this very competitive competition.

The Parish Council invited our two local schools, Marston Green Junior School and Marston Green Infants Academy to participate in planting a wild flower meadow in The Pleck. Both schools supported the project and over a period of a week over 100 children attended and planted wildflowers. The Parish Council arranged for gardening expert Geoff Croft to be in attendance to talk to the children about wildflowers and their importance. It is planned to continue the project over the next few years and develop this area in The Pleck as a wild flower meadow.

Over the last few years the Parish Council has been active in improving the appearance of the village. During the summer of 2015 we ran an anti-litter campaign which called named "Keep the Green Clean" to raise litter awareness. We invited our Junior School to run a competition for the children to design a logo to support our "Keep the Green Clean" campaign. We had an excellent response from the children and received over 100 entries.

The Keep the "Green Clean Project" was supported by Solihull MBC, our local schools, Marston Green & District Lions, the Marston Green Scouts and our residents. Over four weekends in September last year we picked up over 100 sacks of litter.

Incident

In May of last year, we had a number of travellers set up an encampment in our Millennium Wood. The gate and fencing at the access to the wood from Bickenhill Road was damaged beyond repair where they entered the Parish Council owned ground. After four days and much activity between the Parish Council, Solihull Borough Council and the Police the travellers left the area. The area the travellers vacated in Millennium Wood was left in a very bad state. A clean-up operation by our Groundsmen and gratefully received help from Solihull MBC was immediately implemented. Repairs to the area cost in excess of £1500.

Following information received from Solihull MBC and the Police that the reported number of Traveller encroachments is happening more frequently, the Parish Council decided to take action to protect the parish land from further problems of this nature, it was agreed to spend up to £6000 to purchase height-restriction barriers to be located in our vulnerable areas. These barriers are now situated on Bickenhill Rd entrance to Millennium Wood and the entrance to the Burial Ground on Bickenhill Rd and one on the driveway at the Recreation Ground. The Parish Council will continue to monitor this situation on a regular basis.

Social Media

The Parish Council recognises the growing importance of social media and now operates a Facebook page. The Council's view is that issues affecting the parish i.e. planning, policing, parking and roads, should be accurately recorded and wants our residents to have the facts rather than an individual's interpretation on social media. Our Facebook page is regularly updated and at the time of preparing this address we have nearly 600 people that accept the posts we put on our Facebook page.

Work carried out in the Parish

In the autumn we had the paths in the Garden of Memory and The Pleck resurfaced.

Christmas activity in Marston Green is mainly focused in the Garden of Memory where the Christmas tree and the Marston Green Memory tree is placed. The Memory tree has been featured for the last three years. Last year residents placed over 100 baubles to the memory of loved ones. The Parish Council will continue to support this project.

Last year the Parish Council implemented phase one of the installation of Christmas lights in Marston Green village and paid to have eight lamp posts converted and fitted with timers and Christmas decorations on Station Road by the Garden of Memory. This will enhance the area where we currently feature the Christmas trees. The Council also purchased new lights for the Christmas tree in the Garden of Memory. This project was well received and we are currently seeking sponsorship from the local businesses to assist with the cost of extending the lights into the rest of the village.

The Parish Council staff are also responsible for the formal gardens, the Garden of Memory, Chapel Garden, The Pleck at the junction of Bickenhill Road and Coleshill Road and the Burial Ground. We also plant and maintain the planters in front of the shops in Station Rd, the Burial Ground and the troughs at all the entrances into Marston Green and Bickenhill Villages.

Bickenhill Village

In Bickenhill Village we continue to support St Peter's Church by contributing funds for the maintenance of the churchyard. The Parish Council have also contributed funds for furniture in the new meeting room in St Peters Church. We have also purchased new equipment for the play area in the Vicars Field in Bickenhill Village.

The Christmas tree on St Peters Lane at the entrance to the village also benefitted from new Christmas lights

In Summary

A Parish Council is limited in the things it can achieve, in areas such as planning, transport and policing these subjects are handled outside the parish remit, but in saying that we still have a part to play in the consultation process regarding planning matters which affects our residents.

Our Councillors represent the parish and attend regular meetings with Solihull MBC, the Police and our nearest neighbour Birmingham Airport. What we can do is make sure that the residents' concerns are brought to the attention of these organisations.

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.

Last year we lost Councillor Peter Seazell who passed away in November. Peter was very hands on, he represented the Council on the Airport Committee's, he always delivered his reports in a way that was interesting and clear he will be sadly missed.

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 and Marston Green 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 on behalf of all our residents I say thank you.

I am pleased to announce that four new Councillors are due to be co-opted onto the council means we have a full complement of twelve. I would like to take this opportunity to wish our new Councillors a warm welcome and look forward to their contributions.