



Chairman's Report 2018

November last year we were shocked at the news that Councillor Margret Wilden had passed away. Margret was elected to serve this Parish Council in May 1999, over the next eighteen years she had served on all the committees and many of the external committees associated with the Parish Council including a time as Chairman and Vice-chair.

She also served as a trustee of the Parish Hall for many years as well as having close links with St Leonard's Church.

Margret's family have donated to the Parish Council a set of commemorative plates that belonged to Margret, they depict various buildings that are part of the history of Marston Green.

The Parish Council felt that these plates should be displayed as a fitting token of respect and remembrance for the service, Margret gave to this community. The Parish Council have purchased a cabinet to display the plates, and with agreement of the Parish Hall Trustees the display cabinet will be sited in the foyer of the Parish Hall, for all to enjoy.

Being a Parish 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 who over the last twelve months have represented Bickenhill and Marston Green Parish Council and given their time freely.

An example of this was the long and protracted issues associated with the plans that were eventually approved by Solihull MBC to build warehouses on the land adjacent to Blackfirs Lane and Coleshill Heath Road.

The Parish Council employed the services of a qualified planning expert to represent them in regard to the application and the concerns of their residents. I feel it is important to note that every member of the Parish Council plus our Clerk attended the final meeting at Solihull Council's office in support of the residents.

The main object of the Parish Council after the plans were approved was to work with Prologis in order to ease the transition and support some of the outstanding issues for the residents living in Blackfirs Lane.

A Parish Council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in their Parish. It is the level government closest to the community. Parish Councils invariably are the first-place people will go with their concerns or ideas.



Bickenhill and Marston Green Parish Council has twelve councillors who are elected or co-opted to serve, each councillor represents a ward within the parish boundaries. In addition to representing the various wards, many councillors sit on external committees relating to issues which affect our parish. For example, we have representatives on the Airport Consultative Committee, HS2 Committee attending the relevant meetings.

Recently we have been involved with Highway England regarding the consultation for the improvements to Junction 6 of the M42 and presentations have been delivered at the Parish Council Meetings.

It's important to highlight the fact that we have a Planning Committee which meets once a month to discuss and comment on planning applications and as I said earlier and we robustly fight any inappropriate developments.

The Parish Clerk is an employee of the council, she is also the Proper Officer for the council and is responsible for ensuring that decisions are legal and the implementation of those decisions. The position is key to the day to day running of the council's business.

The council also employs two ground staff who report to the Clerk.

The Parish Council is well aware of the current financial strains on our residents and for the past five years the Parish Council, with careful planning and good housekeeping, has been able to maintain and in some cases improve the work done on behalf of the residents within the parish. It is important to note this has been achieved with no more than cost of living increases to the precept, which is collected as a separate charge through the residents Council Tax by Solihull MBC on our behalf.

Three years ago the Parish Council agreed to start a project to install and maintain festive decorations during the Christmas period on the main roads through Marston Green. Had the Parish Council decided to complete and pay for this project in year one, it would have been necessary to seek a substantial increase in the precept. Instead the Parish Council achieved this by purchasing the decorations over a three-year period. Last Christmas we completed this project and Marston Green will have Christmas lights for the foreseeable future.

A major project for this year will be to replace the planters in front of the shops on Station Road, the original twelve planters belonged to and were maintained by Solihull MBC but because of budget cuts were removed from their situ in Station Rd. The Parish Council at that time felt that the planters were an important feature in the village and made a request to Solihull MBC to return the planters with the agreement that the Parish Council would take responsibility for the maintenance. I am sure you would agree that the displays brighten the area and is a worthwhile project.

The original twelve planters are now in a poor state due to the ravages of time, the Parish Council has decided to replace them with sixteen new planters and the installation program will take place with the planting of the summer bedding which is normally end of May or beginning of June.



During 2017 we have completed the following projects:

- New cremated remains garden in the Burial Ground
- Refurbishment of the Pavilion with new fascia and soffits
- Purchase of phase three of the Christmas Lights project
- New signage to Millennium Wood, Garden of Memory, The Pleck, Allotments and Amenity Land.
- Purchase of the sixteen new planters
- Designated an Allotment as a Community Garden project for Marston Green Infants Academy

The Parish Council also continues to organise support and sponsor important events.

- Organising the Remembrance Day Service in Garden of Memory (plans are in early stages for a special and permanent feature to celebrate the 100 years since the end of WW1)
- Supporting & Sponsoring the Gardening Club in the planting of the Hanging Baskets. The Parish Council erect them ensure they are regularly watered and fed throughout the summer period.
- Organise the erection of the Christmas lights
- Organise the installation of Christmas Trees and the lights in Bickenhill and Marston Green
- Organise the Memory Tree, Marston Green
- Donation to St Peter's Church in Bickenhill Village, towards the maintenance of the Church's Burial Ground.

Our Ground staff are responsible for the planters and formal gardens in Marston Green, as well as maintaining our Burial Ground to a high standard. Their duties also include work in the Recreation Ground. I am pleased to report we have received many compliments for the work that they do.

After nine years' one of our team Robert Williams recently retired, on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Robert for his service to this community.



We are pleased to announce our new member of the team Tony Head. Tony is a Marston Green born and bred resident he brings a wealth of knowledge to the team having worked in a local nursery for some years. We wish Tony a long and enjoyable career.

Finally, I would also like to thank our clerk, Carole for the great job she does for Bickenhill and Marston Green Parish Council. Carole has been our Clerk for over ten years and she is the important link that is needed to make a Parish Council work, so in conclusion I would like to say our Parish Council does work.

Frank Bunce
Chairman
2nd May 2018