

CEPC – Chair Review of the year. April 2022 to March 2023

I think it would be fair to say it has been an interesting and challenging 12 months. The previous 3 annual reviews have mentioned the dreaded pandemic but the good news is that we are back to the new norm.

The composition of the PC continues to change. We started the year with a full complement of 5 Councillors. Myself, Andrew Taylor as Vice, Rachael Molitor, Duncan Mathison and Gemma Smith.

Duncan left the PC in July but still remained involved with community activities and has now decided to rejoin as you have heard earlier and this is his first meeting back. Gemma recently decided that work commitments were such that she could not commit herself to the time required to undertake the role so she regrettably decided not to stand again this year. She showed enthusiasm and commitment and we are going to miss her especially as she was going to get embroiled in some social events this year. She has been formally thanked for her contribution.

However every cloud has a silver lining and Jayne Warmington was co-opted to the Council in January this year after undertaking sterling work helping to organise our monthly coffee mornings.

So on a recount we are back to 5 Councillors and it would be great if we could retain some form of stability for the future. I would like to thank all Councillors most sincerely for their support and contribution over the last 12 months.

The annual review provides the opportunity of hearing what the Parish Council has achieved in the last 12 months. We have made some progress in key areas but there are other areas where a lot more is required. We also need to involve even more of the community to support us.

Our one employee Parish Clerk, Kerry Finlayson, has been a constant through out the year but over the last few months has had the difficult task of juggling her new work and shift patterns with BA with her Parish Council duties. She has done admirably and continues to make a considerable contribution to the workings of the Council for which we are very grateful.

Our financial position continues to be strong. The precept for the financial year 2022/3 was agreed at a figure of £14465 which represented a large increase of 9.5% on the previous year and reflected the massive increase in energy costs and other inflationary pressures which have been well documented. This equated to a Band D property paying £41.81 compared to £38.51 in the previous year with an actual increase of 8.6%. The closing balance on our bank account as at 31st March 2023 was nearly £10k so we are still in a comfortable position and have some funds available to put towards future projects. The financial audit undertaken at the beginning of the financial year was once again outstanding with no remedial action required.

A key role of the PC continues to be the review of local planning application cases. We try to remain objective and get a balance between appropriate building and protecting the Green Belt. Only development seen in the Green Belt has been limited to infilling and also a number of instances of the development of existing agricultural buildings into small housing developments using the existing blueprint. We have had one instance of an approach to all residents in the parish by the agents of a local landowner for GB development following a refusal by the Parish Council to enter into discussions with them. A residents campaign ensued to ensure that the views of many regarding GB development were heard. Fortunately at this stage no further approaches have been made.

Our key asset is the village hall with playing field and playground. Major refurbishment of the Village Hall was completed early 2022 only to find out there was a desperate need for soundproofing and an

improvement in roof insulation. As a result we have not marketed our facilities and social events were not progressed because of this issue. Use of the Village Hall has been limited to children's parties and one regular weekly booking.

However the good news is that within the last month Sound Proofing has been installed which has made a massive difference and the plan is to try and encourage and market more useage by locals to enhance our income.

We wanted to showcase the facility and we used yesterday's Coronation Tea as our first social event for some time and the aim is to have at least 2 more perhaps a quiz and skittles evening this year.

The Coronation tea can only be described as a fantastic success with between 60 and 70 people attending and I would like to thank Jayne Warmington, Maxine Murley and Celia Shrimpton for their sterling efforts to organise this and other volunteers for setting up and clearing up together with those who cooked cakes and scones. A great Community event run by community people.

Whilst we do rely on SMBC for a number of our services we continue to be very grateful to local volunteers who regularly give their time to help our Community. This last 12 months has seen even greater involvement than before. Without these helpers our village would not be such a nice and safe place to live. These activities include litter picking coordinated by Duncan Mathison who ensures a group of 16 volunteers regularly patrol their stipulated routes to keep verges and roads tidy. An invaluable service thanks Duncan and all those involved. Rewarded by an invite to Thomas Savoury's lovely house who kindly hosted a litter pickers barbeque.

Andrew Taylor very kindly acts as liaison between the police and village regarding Speedwatch as well as being our representative on the Crime Reduction Panel. Speeding continues to be a major problem but regular visits by the police act as a deterrent with fines and court appearances for the worst offenders. We can assure you this problem will continue to have our close attention. Thanks Andrew.

July saw rejuvenation of our monthly coffee mornings on the second Wednesday monthly. Jayne Warmington, Celia Shrimpton and Maxine Murley kindly volunteered to run these and we've never looked back. We've had an attendance of some 25 to one of these and I know there are one or two who use the occasion to for much needed social interaction . Long may it continue.

Roger Shrimpton has arranged for our walking club to undertake more frequent walks over the last 12 months . They happen on average every 2 months and its nice to know its there for any resident who wants to partake. Thanks to Duncan Mathison for coordinating these with Roger and publicising them.

We continue to have a fair share of problems with roads and grass verges. Our relationship with the Highways department at the Council has improved with more regular discussions over issues we may have. Achievements include replacement of Give Way signs with Halt signs on the Oldwich Lane/Warwick Rd/Netherwood Lane crossroads and the addition of intelligent lighting in the road. Following a bad accident on the Bakers Lane Bridge arrangements were made for Direction signs to be installed which was undertaken very quickly. A brown sign on the Warwick Rd coming from Knowle before Chadwick End directing traffic to Baddesley Clinton NT avoiding Arbour Tree Lane and Netherwood has also been installed.

I hope I haven't forgotten too much that has happened over the last 12 months. To repeat some progress has been made but still a lot more to do – communication has improved with the use of

social media but further work is needed. Its not been an easy year but I'd like to thank Kerry and my fellow councillors new and old for all their support during 2022/3 which is very much appreciated.