

Report to Annual Parish Meeting 15 March 2011

This has been a busy year, particularly for the staff in the office. There have been a number of pressures, making representations on the Core Strategy which will determine new building policy for the District, and on the effect of local spending reductions on the Parish and its services, as well as all sorts of enquiries. The bulk of the burden on this has fallen on the Acting Clerk, Julia Lipman to whom the whole Council is very grateful.

Could I just summarise briefly the position on several major issues which have been the subject of discussion during the year.

Flood Defences

The work by the Environment Agency on the River Dene, by the District Council on the Newbold Brook and the County Council on the drainage systems affecting should all have been completed by early in the new financial year. Whilst this work has not necessarily included as much work as we would like, we will be in a better position to monitor the recommended maintenance regime now in place.

The Sports and Community Centre

The Parish Council acquired the former Sports Club building from the receiver towards the end of last summer. There are a number of building repairs and changes required to make the building safe, secure and watertight, and the Parish Council has made some resources available in order to do that, and substantially more

The Parish Council is seeking expressions of interest from residents to join an Advisory Group to explore options for the future use of the building. There are a number of possible routes forward such as a new base for a Youth Club, a fitness suite, and a venue for all sorts of activity.

Village Hall

We have not been able to agree an arrangement with Walton Estate to bring the Village Hall up to date. We will continue to pursue this, especially as this is important to the commercial centre of the Village.

Parish Plan

We have concentrated a great deal on the Parish Plan at the Parish Meeting. Wellesbourne has been without a Parish Plan. With one in place we will be able to back up requests for action from elsewhere with better evidence

Chedham's Yard

Now the Chedham's Yard Trust is picking up the reigns, we hope to see the restored Chedham's Yard taking shape. We must be grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the BBC Restoration Fund for their continuing support. David Close and Tony Copeland have offered themselves to support the Trust.

Now some thoughts on the Shape of things to come

Localism

The Government promises greater powers to Local Councils, including a General Power of Competence, which may give Councils greater freedom to act on behalf of communities. It will, one suspects, require greater controls on spending, which have not till now been imposed on Parish Councils. It is not yet clear what impact this will have on Parish Councils. The Government Department responsible has not yet issued the advice required.

Sustaining services in the future

The changes in the pattern of public services emerging over the coming months will mean that there will be an increasing opportunity for volunteers to take forward all sorts of initiatives. Whether it is operating a traffic speed camera, acting as a snow warden, helping in the Library, supporting youth activity, or assisting at Chedham's Yard, all sorts of opportunities will emerge. Many of these require selection and support processes, and insurance cover. Though it is not clear how these will develop and will be organised, we will try and capture as much information as possible at the Parish Council, in the office or on the website.

Thanks

Could I thank all the members of the Council who have worked hard during the year, and have supported me ? Support does not necessarily mean agreement. Constructive challenge at the right time and place is also vital, so thanks for that.

David Johnston
Chair
Wellesbourne Parish Council