

Wigginton and Hopwas Parish Council Chairman's Report May 2014

This last year has been one of consolidation. We have continued to maintain the areas we are responsible for, these being Hopwas Playing Field, the Wigginton Jubilee Memorial Green and as Trustees, the Comberford Millennium Green. Some of the equipment at these sites will shortly need improvements and this we will undertake as funds become available.

We unfortunately lost two Councillors this year. Both John Chesworth and Ian Harding found the commitment involved together with full time jobs and families too onerous and therefore resigned. I must thank both of them for the contributions they made in the short time they were Councillors.

We are now in the rather difficult position of only having four members to represent the views of the Parish residents. I must say yet again that volunteers are needed.

Our main commitment at the moment is the work involved in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. This involves a considerable workload but we are very fortunate in having been able to form a small committee of dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled residents. We are finding this a totally new adventure involving a steep learning curve. I consider that this task is vital for the communities particularly as the Local Plans for both Tamworth and Lichfield are due for imminent publication and the development threats are considerable. We could easily see the character of our villages change forever and all efforts need to be taken to avoid that situation arising. I know that is what residents would expect of us.

As far as the financial aspect is concerned, last year we found it necessary to increase our precept considerably. This has now put our financial position in a much healthier state. We are carrying forward the recommended funds into the present financial year and this should cover the costs involved in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is also anticipated that it will allow the areas we maintain to be improved. We anticipate that the present level of precept is sustainable and thus is remaining the same for the current year.

The Council also acts as sole Trustees to the Wigginton Village Hall Trust. The Trust still holds the funds on deposit from the sale of the old Village Hall.

As a result of the questionnaires returned at the end of last year, we are pursuing the possibility of extending and improving the Parish Centre next to St Leonard's Church. It is a source of personal frustration that more progress has not been made with this project during the year.

Finally, I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors for the time and effort they have put in this last year, they all do this totally voluntarily. I would especially like to thank our clerk Margaret Jones, she is always up to date with her tasks, a source of valuable and relevant information and her timely reminders are invaluable.

