

Flooding and road conditions

Flooding is still an issue in some parts of the parish. Work has been carried out by WCC to improve the situation, although there are still certain areas where more work is needed. Councillor Taaffe has been in regular contact with WCC concerning these issues, in particular with regard to Middletown Lane. Other areas of concern have been reported to WCC, some more complex to remedy than others. The quality of some of the road repairs performed by WCC has been disappointing and will require further action within 12 months of the initial repair.

Public footpaths

Over the past year Cllr Moon has attended many meetings with numerous bodies to source funding to improve access for footpaths in the area. He has been successful in obtaining grants and this summer we contacted local landowners to improve stiles, gates etc so that everyone in our community can enjoy the countryside around us. We hope that this work can start when the crops are off the fields, later this year. Again, thank you, Nick, for all your hard work on this – we need to make it happen now!

Planning

Applications have come at a steady rate throughout the year. Our responses in the main have been supportive, or not objecting. Retiring councillor, Phil Jones, has for some time been the co-ordinator of councillors' responses to planning applications; the agreed response then passed to the clerk for submission on the planning portal.

General running of the council

The year has become quieter as we have progressed, as the excessive correspondence we were dealing with has now eased. Sambourne Parish Council is ably supported by our clerk, Teresa Murphy, who has dealt with many issues for us in a very professional manner and has kept the councillors up to date with information and support.

Two councillors decided not to stand for this year's elections. David Shaw and Phil Jones have both served for many years on the council. I would like to thank them both for all that they have done over the years, which has been wide and extensive.

We are lucky to have two new faces coming on to the council, Rammy Arafa and Rob Clarke who both, I know, will bring new ideas to SPC and continue to make the parish a great place to call home.

4. Annual Accounts of Sambourne Parish Council 2022-23

The Clerk reported that the accounts for 2022-23 have been finalised and Part 2 of the AGAR completed.

- 1) The Certificate of Exemption 2022/23 for Smaller Authorities was signed and will be returned to the external auditors by the Clerk.
- 2) The Internal Audit Report 2022/23 has been completed and signed by Eleanor Choudry, the Internal Auditor for Sambourne Parish Council,
- 3) The Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 was agreed by a unanimous vote and signed by the chairman.
- 4) The Accounting Statements 2022/23 were approved by a unanimous vote and signed by the chairman.

5. To receive a Report from the Sambourne Trust

David Shaw gave the following Report from the Sambourne Trust:

It was refreshing to commence our year without Covid restrictions. This enabled us to continue with our planned property improvements, which included a driveway for No 7 cottage. In addition to this, all the single glazed windows in the four bungalows were replaced with double glazed UPVC. A reduction in maintenance costs is now expected, together with improved thermal efficiency to the benefit of the tenants.

Local tradesmen are always used as far as possible. We have used the same gardeners for many years and they keep the ditch clear of debris, maintain the hedges and keep the grass and shrubs under control. There have been no property vacancies during the year and there is the usual waiting list in the event of an unexpected vacancy.

The sudden death of Neil Brown, the owner of 'Mr Taxi', who provided the weekly shopping bus, caused some consternation. Fortunately, a replacement was quickly found, enabling us to continue the free service with the loss of only one week.

Financial support has been given to the two Air Ambulances which serve this area. Donations have also been made to the Shakespeare Hospice, Myton Hospice and Primrose Hospice. Friends of the Alexandra Hospital, Cancer Research UK and Studley First Responders have also benefitted from a donation to enable them to continue with their voluntary service.

Donations have been made to students to help enable them to continue their studies. Local organisations have also received financial help, including Coughton School towards a much-needed classroom. Lifelines have again been made available to vulnerable people within the parish.

The annual distribution has continued to parishioners of 70 years and over, which has resulted in many letters and cards of appreciation.

With bank interest being so low it has been decided to divert a portion of our capital to an investment with a greater potential return.

My grateful thanks go to my fellow Trustees for making regular checks on our properties and the surrounding area, liaising with our tenants and generally assisting with the smooth running of the Trust.

6. To receive a Report from Cllr Kerridge (WCC)

Cllr Kerridge was unable to attend the meeting but forwarded his Report for Sambourne parish:

Cycle Route from Redditch to Alcester and beyond

WCC commissioned Sustrans to produce a report on possible off road cycle routes. This study is now complete and it is hoped an informal consultation will be organised soon. The likely route would approximately follow the old railway line but some sections could use country lanes, fields etc. The initial section being looked at will be a link from Alcester to Coughton.

Councillor grant: Applications accepted from 9th May – 18th June 2023.

Cllr delegated highways budget: Sambourne rights of way access project

Cllr Kerridge has approximately £10K of delegated highways budget over his 4 year term to spend in Sambourne parish. This has been dedicated to the SPC project to enable trampers and the less able to access rights of way from Studley, Coughton and Astwood bank to Sambourne. He is delighted that SPC is leading on this trailblazing initiative.

7. To receive a Report from Cllr Neil Edden (SDC Studley with Sambourne)

Cllr Edden introduced himself and said he has been re-elected as our SDC Councillor for the next four years. The remit of the District Councillor includes planning, waste disposal and tourism. He has been a member of the SDC planning committee and has in-depth knowledge of planning matters.

The leadership of the District Council has changed and is now under Liberal Democrat control. It is as yet unclear as to what decisions will be made, but discussion is taking place concerning sewage, waste disposal and the re-introduction of parking permits for people aged over 66. Climate change is also a topic high on the Agenda.

Neil concluded by saying he looked forward to working with the parish council and residents of Sambourne for a further four years. If anyone has a problem that he can help with, please do not hesitate to contact him.

8. To receive a Report from Cllr Peter Hencher-Serafin (SDC Studley with Mappleborough Green)

Cllr Hencher-Serafin was unable to attend the meeting but forwarded his Report:

- 1) The Structural Report on the old Railway Bridge in Green Lane will be released to the public shortly. Warwickshire Bridge maintenance has recommended repairs to the bridge, which sounds positive.
- 2) A number of residents on the Slough feel that the 50 mph is too fast and that 40 mph would be more in keeping with the 40 mph further down the Slough, Node Hill and Bromsgrove Road. It is hoped that SPC could support this speed limit.

9. *Other matters raised by an Elector of the Parish*

No matters had been raised by parishioners.

- i. The chairman spoke about the problem of fly tipping and suggested there needs to be a coordinated approach between parish councils and SDC. If parish councils provide SDC with details of fly tipping action can then be taken. The chairman asked Neil Edden to work with the parish council on this and to share our ideas with SDC. The problem is light at the moment but is likely to become much worse.
- ii. Phil Jones raised the question of refresher training on the use of the defibrillator. Neil has a contact who has been a First Responder for many years and would be willing to do some training with us. He was asked to send details to the clerk.
- iii. Cllr Moon had suggested it would be a good idea to invite an outside speaker to a parish council meeting to give expertise on a local issue of interest. The chairman thought this a good idea and agreed to take the matter forward.

The meeting closed at 6:55 pm

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