

### **Chairman's Report March 2017**

As usual, the annual report is an account of our various achievements but mixed with an element of some delay and frustration.

The first good news is our success in obtaining a grant of £1400 from Warwickshire County Council to fund larger improvements around the ford area. The award reflects the efforts and commitment from Len Carter's group of volunteers to protect one of the most attractive sites in the area and to sustain this position for many years to come.

A number of Community events have been held and all have been well supported. The Annual Fete at Coughton Court raised a substantial total of £1254. This was distributed between Coughton School, Coughton with Sambourne Parochial Church Council, and the Coughton Community Fund.

Our thanks go to the Volunteers and Staff at Coughton Court, the many people who supported the event through their donations on the stalls, and the many visitors who turned up to enjoy the day.

Volunteers have continued the essential maintenance of the local Cemetery. Last autumn the community fund received a generous donation for the planting of 2000 native snowdrops and bluebells. The continuing efforts of Karen and Den in organising this twice-yearly event have made the cemetery a place for which we can all be very proud.

Residents' fears, over a development at the Rickyard site, were allayed when the Planning Inspector dismissed an appeal from the National Trust over an earlier application. Although the community is very keen for an improvement to the site, this outcome reinforced the overwhelming view that it should be based on a genuine need and sensitivity to the local environment.

The Flood Risk Management and County Highways Teams have continued to support our efforts in reducing the likelihood of future flooding in Coughton. They have liaised with local landowners and residents to identify areas for improvement. These include the provision of additional kerbside drainage in Sambourne Lane, and the clearance of an important drainage ditch, to the south of the village. Again, we have Karen and Den to thank for keeping the various agencies on their toes.

I would like to have reported on positive progress made towards the provision of a school car park, but this is not the case. We have had a further twelve months of near-miss accidents, blocked driveways, and dangerous parking. We know this is not unique to Coughton, but

three years ago we had a solution that the County Council has accepted and was taking forward. After persistent efforts by our local councillors and the school head, an impasse has now arisen over the release of the land necessary for its construction. We have yet to understand the reasoning behind this deadlock, but it must not override the sustainable development of the school, the personal safety of young children and the wellbeing of the local residents.

We attempt to keep our footpaths clean and safe. After an eagerly awaited response from the dog warden we shall be more closely involved in combatting dog fouling, and we still have work to complete on the footpath that runs from Sambourne Lane to the A435.

And finally ... we must say a fond farewell to Karen Parnell, who has been our parish clerk for the past seven years. It has been a time of great activity in the village, and Karen has guided us through this period successfully using her experience in local administration and her knowledge of how the various local authorities operate. We wish her well in her future. But today ... we also welcome her successor, Joy Pegrum, who brings extensive knowledge of the local area and wide experience of administration in local communities. I am very confident she will support Coughton in every way that our village deserves.

JOHN GITTINS

Chair, Coughton Parish Council. 6 March 2017