

Clerk to the Council: **Joy Pegrum**

37 Westbourne • Honeybourne •  
Worcestershire • WR11 7PT

☎: 01386 830995

email: clerk@coughton.plus.com



**Draft MINUTES of the Parish Council Assembly**, held in The Primary School, Coughton on Wednesday 21st March 2017 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillors John Gittins (Chairman), Len Carter, Maureen McTavish, Roy Piddington & Lynne Stanton; Clerk, Joy Pegrum:  
25 members of the public were in attendance

**Attendees were welcomed with refreshments and an exhibition featuring:**

- The Parish Council's Website;
- Local Neighbourhood Watch;
- History and research group 'Friends of Coughton Court' Talks and Visits;
- Wellbeing for Warwickshire Mental Health Support
- A Coughton themed photographic display from the archive of Alcester Heritage Network

1) **Apologies for acceptance:** WCC Councillor Clive Rickhards sent his apologies.

2) **Minutes** of the Council Meeting held in March 2017 were reviewed and agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3) **Matters arising** from those minutes were covered in the Chairman's Report that followed

4) **Chairman's report:** Councillor Gittins read out his annual report outlining the Council year's work on:

- updating governance;
- restorative work at the Ford beauty spot;
- efforts to get road damage repaired and the need to make the Parish's voice heard on traffic issues;
- planning applications and an upcoming public consultation on a small development of affordable houses in the village;
- Community activities;
- provision of a Parish Defibrillator
- lack of any progress on a car park for Coughton School
- an introduction to new Councillor Lynne Stanton.

**A copy of the report is attached and forms part of these minutes.**

## **Open forum:**

**Mary Addyman**, National Trust's Assistant Conservation Manager at Coughton Court, was invited to take the floor to outline her work at the Court. She described the opportunity that repair work to the House had afforded, allowing a peek into the Throckmorton family's personal archive. This, alongside research by volunteers, had helped inform the property's latest exhibition, entitled 'Four Women. One War.' and currently on display in the Saloon. This examines contrasting lives and responsibilities across the spectrum of social class during and just after the First World War, using as examples four contemporary women from the Village: Lady Lilian Throckmorton; Isabel Eagles; Emily Ainge and Kate Mason.

**Karen Gazey** addressed the assembly on two points:

- a reminder to everyone interested in seeing the Court's exhibition that village residents are entitled to a free family pass to the Court and should contact her to obtain a card.
- a reminder that anyone with a local business to promote could do so on the Council's website free of charge.

The Assembly closed at 8.30pm

A date for the next Assembly will be decided at the next full meeting of the Council, on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Signed:

Date



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### **Chairman's Report March 2018**

Last year I reported on the mixed progress we had then made over the year. I have to say it is a similar story this time but a great deal of work has taken place behind the scenes.

12 months ago we welcomed our new clerk, Joy Pegrum to the team and I know my colleagues will agree that she has fought her way through quite a demanding year. She brought us up to date on good practice, such as moving to electronic payments, and making better use of our website. And, after battling with HSBSC for 12 months, our bank mandate is now in order. She has dealt with partner organisations, in a very efficient and respectful manner, gives support and advice when we need it, and keeps us in line should we ever stray.

Our finances are clearer. The precept remains at the same level this year and we have identified a meaningful use for the surplus that we had built up over the last few years. We shall be seeking ways to develop councillors training, and we shall encourage more ideas from residents. A response to our Xmas mailshot will result in a new seat at the bus stop, but we obviously want do more than this.

Last year, with support from Cllr. Rickhards, we received a County Council grant that enabled major improvements to the landscaping around the Ford area. We now have log seating, an open and secure environment, less maintenance, and a far safer footpath for pedestrians, who can now dispose of their litter thoughtfully. We have all seen an increase in visitor numbers and we often receive very favourable comments.

There was another successful application this year, from Karen and Den's Community Group, which allowed them to purchase a gazebo, table and megaphones, and they are available for use by anyone in the Community.

We must also thank Karen and Den for their work on the social events, including another successful village fete, the twice-yearly village walks, and the hog roasts. Equally important are their efforts in chasing the Highways Dept. and Severn Trent to maintain the drainage systems. There is still more work needed to keep the drains clear and the area safe from flooding. And now, the bad news on our vision for a school car park. It was announced last autumn that lack of funding for the highway alterations has blocked any likelihood of the project going ahead. This is not just a blow for the village, but a major step backwards for the safety of young people who will be educated here. We have always viewed this project as an investment in the school's infrastructure, its future, and their pupils, not simply a way to keep the cars off the lane. But we all know that the real danger is the traffic on the A435. We all know that transporting

goods is essential to our economy, but we also know that you cannot mix 140 children on their way to school with a road that carries an average of 4,000 goods vehicles every day. As a comparison; the total number of vehicles passing through Coughton, is 10% higher than the total no. of vehicles that use the Evesham bypass. We, as a community, must emphasise that the proposed commercial developments to the north and south of this area, take full account of the infrastructure needed on our road network to prevent any further damage to the village, or put any risk to its residents and schoolchildren.

This month has seen the coldest March on record, freezing us to a standstill and blocking the roads. Although it has now gone, it has left us with a large number of deep potholes in most of the lanes. We must thank local residents for spreading the salt and the local farmers for quickly clearing the snow off the lanes and the A435.

Most planning applications this year have been for fairly small-scale improvements, except for a proposed car park at the Throckmorton Arms. We raised a number of real concerns to the planners at Stratford, which may have contributed to the application being refused. We are not aware of any proposals at the Rickyard site but we will strive to keep any development here in keeping with the nature of our village and to benefit more people rather than a few. Over a year ago we were presented with the possibility of a supported housing scheme. It would be a small-scale development whose priority is to meet local need. We hope to announce a consultation date very soon, when everybody will have the opportunity to see an outline of the scheme and to put their views forward to Warwickshire Rural Housing.

The Parish Council was recently given a defibrillator, and following consultation with residents, we intend to install this next to the telephone call box on the main road. We would also like to introduce some training in its use that could involve a number of residents interested in First Aid training. We also made some urgent repairs to our notice board that was in danger of collapsing at the school entrance.

Finally, I am very pleased to welcome Lynne, our new parish councillor who joined us almost a year ago. She listens to residents and works hard to represent our best interests, which for any councillor is an achievement. We are always on the lookout for residents who wish take an active interest in the village, and for those interested in joining the parish council, our clerk, Joy, has a useful booklet for you.

I would also like to thank everyone who has helped to chair our parish council meetings over the last year and to thank everyone, who supports us.

John Gittins