

Residents may be aware that there is significant pressure from central government to build new homes. Our location close to the main part of the West Midlands conurbation makes this area particularly attractive to developers, this can be seen by looking at the number of potential sites put forward in the recent "call for sites". If we are to retain as much as possible of the rural nature of our parish we need to have an acceptable plan in place as soon as possible.

The Parish Council, therefore, needs as much help as residents can afford to offer in order to move forward with this plan. We are at present gathering as much useful background information as we can in order to set the scene for what might happen in the future. With the best will in the world change cannot be prevented, but we can try to get the best possible deal for current and future residents by developing our plan. The plan has to be acceptable to a majority of residents before it can be adopted, and it is also subject to an independent examination to check it meets all necessary requirements.

So far residents have been consulted on a number of occasions since early 2015 via two newsletters and a presentation which was given to Cheswick Green Residents Associ-

ation and to members of the U3A. We are hoping to consult further soon via a questionnaire in order to obtain residents views on how they see their parish developing over the next few years. Hopefully ideas can then be incorporated into a first draft of the actual plan. The plan will then be subject to revision and examination before it can go to referendum. Only once agreed by referendum can it form part of plans for the future of our parish.

**The next meeting of the Cheswick Green Parish Council Planning Committee will take place on Monday 14th November at 10am in the village hall (small hall). If you are able to offer any assistance please attend, or contact the Parish Council directly if you can help out but are not able to attend the meeting.**

### **EXERCISE CLASSES FOR THE OVER 18'S**

A 1 hour exercise class runs in the Village Hall on Mondays at 2pm. There are currently spaces available, so why not go along and join. The cost is £3 per person per class.

# Newsletter October 2016

Serving the residents of  
Cheswick Green and Illshaw Heath



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## **WORK OF CHESWICK GREEN PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council forms the lowest tier of local government. It has very limited powers within the community. It is an elected body and at present there are 7 members. The last election was in 2015, but no vote took place then as only 7 candidates came forward. Elections take place every 4 years. Since the 2015 elections several vacancies have occurred and residents have been given the opportunity to call an election to fill these vacancies, but this has not happened, therefore new members have been co-opted. Members have to follow a strict code of conduct.

The Residents Association is open to all residents who pay an annual subscription to join and membership of its committee is decided by the residents who attend their Annual General meeting. The Residents Association has its own constitution. It is responsible for organising social events such as "Party in the Park". It can comment on planning applications.

The Parish Council is mainly funded by the annual precept which every

householder contributes to via their council tax. Therefore, members have to ensure that what is spent gives the best value for money and all expenses are thoroughly audited. Parish Councillors are not paid, they all give their time voluntarily, however elected members can claim a small allowance to cover some expenses they incur. Currently all Councillors live in the parish and they aim to do what they can to get the best possible outcome in all areas for local residents.

The Parish Council cannot make any planning decisions but it is a statutory consultee. This means that Solihull MBC must ask the Parish Council for its views on all planning applications made within the parish. The Parish Council has to give a response even if there are no comments, observations or objections. The Parish Council endeavours to put forward views that are in the best interests of all residents of the parish. This is particularly important for major developments such as Blythe Valley as it seeks to get the best possible deal for every-

one. The Borough Council has to read all comments on planning applications but does not necessarily act on them. The Parish Council is trying to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which has to be acceptable to a majority of residents, and if this is in place the Borough Council has to make decisions that do not conflict with this plan. More information on this later.

An important task of the Parish Council is to maintain the various pieces of land that it owns within the parish for example the recreation ground, the Mount and the fields off Saxon Wood Road. It is also ultimately responsible for the Village Hall and the part of the car park nearest to it (more on this later). The Parish Council applied for a grant to improve the recreation ground earlier this year via the Tesco "Bags of Help" scheme and was fortunate to obtain £10,000 from this scheme thanks in part to residents voting from a shortlist. So far a concrete table tennis table has been installed. Further improvements will follow soon.

Work has also taken place to improve the part of the car park adjacent to the Village Hall and to try to keep pedestrians safe on the approach to the recreation ground. A scheme has been introduced to try to keep the area in front of the shops clear of litter, by arranging

for a weekly litter pick. The beds in front of the shops have also been tidied and replanted. A grant from SMBC helped to pay for this. Shopkeepers and the Village Surgery contribute towards this.

In recent years the Parish Council worked to get the address of Cheswick Green Village altered so that it did not include Shirley as we are a distinct community separate from Shirley.

Whilst the development on Mount Dairy Farm is taking place members are trying to ensure that the developers follow the conditions of the planning consent and that the building site is safe at all times. The Parish Council has had to contact SMBC and the builders on a number of occasions over various issues that have occurred. If you find there is a problem, please contact the Parish Council and we will do what we can to resolve any issues.

The Parish Council organises the annual Christmas tree lights which are placed on the large tree by the shops and donations have been given to help with activities that benefit considerable numbers of residents of the parish for example "Party in the Park".

The Parish Council has had a tree planted on the Village Green in memory of the late Chris Noble

who gave many years of service to our parish. Also the "spine road" on the Mount Dairy Farm development is to be called Noble Way in recognition of Chris's work. The Parish Council has, via Alex Insley (one of our borough councillors), had a defibrillator donated for use by the community by West Midlands Ambulance Service. This will be installed outside the Village Hall as soon as practically possible.

## THE VILLAGE HALL

The Village Hall is held under charitable trust by the Parish Council. For many years the day to day management of the hall has been entrusted to the Village Hall Management Committee which is part of the Residents Association with a representative from the Parish Council. This committee has been responsible for the upkeep, hiring out and undertaking of general repairs. However, the current situation with the roof is a major expense and this is the responsibility of the Parish Council. Before repair work could take place it was necessary for the Parish Council to obtain competitive quotes, as the Parish Council must always ensure that it gets the best value for money and all expenses must be carefully monitored to enable an audit trail to be seen. Parish Council accounts are subject to close inspection by

auditors every year.

Work has now commenced on repairs to the roof along with some additional maintenance work. It is hoped that this will be completed within the next few weeks so that the hall can return to full use by the end of November (weather permitting). In the meantime, the small hall, toilets and kitchen remain in use.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

It has recently been shown that areas with a Neighbourhood Plan stand a better chance of having an influence on local planning decisions. Cheswick Green Parish was designated as an area for the development of such a plan in 2014. This has, by law, to be led by the Parish Council. Since the Parish Council began to endeavour to create a plan much has changed within our parish with planning permission being granted earlier than expected for the development on Mount Dairy Farm and also the current planning application for Blythe Valley. The Solihull Local Plan is currently being reviewed and any Neighbourhood Plan must fit within this plan. Therefore, it is very important that we develop our plan before the revised Solihull Plan is adopted.