

# **Annual Reports**

## **Chairman's Report**

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support during this year. All of your Parish Councillors give their time voluntarily and do have the best interests of the residents of Wythall at heart. I would like to give particular thanks to my Committee Chairmen: Cllr Daren Bibbings, Chairman of Finance Policy and Resources; Cllr Diane Taylor, Chairman of Community Services; and Cllr Helen Cleaver Chairman of the Planning Committee.

There are three layers of local government that serve the residents of Wythall, with the Parish Council being the first layer and closest to the Community. All of the money that we raise through the Parish Council Tax is spent within Wythall, for the residents of Wythall. It is sometimes confusing for residents to know which Council is responsible for what service. Is it Wythall Parish, Bromsgrove District or Worcestershire County Council?

For example, the Parish Council has over 400 footway lights around the village which remain lit all night. The main highway lights are the responsibility of the County Council. Bromsgrove District Council is the Planning authority with responsibility for granting or refusing planning applications. The Parish Council is consulted on all applications within the Parish. These are discussed at our planning meetings where a decision is made on whether to object or not to any given application. Further details of the services that we do provide for our residents can be found in the Community Services Report and details on how they are funded are in the Finance Policy and Resources report.

One of the frustrations that we all have with local government is the length of time it takes to do things. We have been planning for several years to put some footway lighting along Tile House Lane to make it safer for pedestrians walking to and from Whitlocks End station. First we had to fund the project, but then proposed plans to extend the station car park meant that there could be an opportunity to get funding from that development which would have saved using Parish Council funds. These proposed developments are still on the horizon however the Parish Council felt that it could not wait any longer and I am pleased to say that an order has been placed to install two lights along Tilehouse Lane.

The Parish Council is very proud to be involved in Wythall's Dementia friendly journey. My vice chairman, Cllr Diane Taylor has put in a tremendous amount of effort with support from local volunteers including Dr Christine Whittaker to set up a Dementia Cafe at the Village Hall. This takes place on the third Wednesday of every month, between 2 and 4 pm. The team, with support from local employer Phoenix, are working on additional activities which will be announced soon.

In my report last year I mentioned the development of a Neighbourhood plan and the benefits of producing one - giving us the opportunity to shape the development in our area, prioritizing location and type of development and importantly what other services and infrastructure are needed. Bromsgrove District Council will shortly be consulting on the next version of its local plan. This will include a review of the Green Belt. We recognize that some of the Green Belt within Wythall is at a high risk of being lost to development. We are under threat of having to accommodate housing shortages in Birmingham as well as having to accommodate our own housing requirements. Neighbourhood plans are owned by the community not the Parish Council, their role is to lead the development of the plan. Although we have asked members of our community if they wish to be involved in the development of a neighbourhood plan for Wythall as yet there seems to be no appetite to get involved.

As always, members of the Parish Council express their thanks to Pat Harrison and Kerie Harris for the support that they give to the Council and residents of Wythall throughout the year. The Parish Council office is open every weekday between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm and although we are not responsible for repairing highway lights and pot holes, or for clearing rubbish from our footpaths and highways, Pat and Kerie will always pass on any of these concerns to the relevant authority.

**Councillor Mrs Sue Baxter**