



*Hampton-in-Arden*

Annual Report

2014/15

*Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council*

## **Introduction by the Chair.**

Welcome to the annual report detailing work carried out by the Parish Council during the last year.

With parish council elections taking place in May I would like, on behalf of the village, to thank the councillors who have served the parish during the last 4 years. It has become an increasingly demanding job, which is unpaid, so thank you all. Following a governance review by SMBC we have been allocated an additional 2 councillors bringing the total to 9, I believe that the election will result in a strong team which will be able to guide the village through the challenges that face us.

During 2014 the composition of the council changed with the resignation of Alison Rolf following her election to Solihull Council. We would like to wish Alison good luck in this new and challenging role and thank her for her contribution to the work of this council over several years. Particularly for chairing the communication group during the time in which the website and newsletter were established. We are grateful to Cat Sellars for taking over as chair of the Communication Group; Cat has already got the parish council onto Facebook, so watch this space!

The vacant post was advertised and we received applications from 5 excellent candidates wishing to be co-opted. We would like to have found a position for each applicant, however, following careful consideration David Sandells was appointed. David lives in the village with his young family and brings specialist knowledge of aeronautical issues which will be of considerable benefit to the village.

At the Annual Meeting on May 14th internal elections resulted in Gill Lewis being reappointed as chair supported by Mike Blomer as vice chair. Many thanks also to Julie Richardson, our parish clerk, who manages the business of the parish in a quietly efficient manner offering firm support of myself and other councillors when needed.

During the last year many in the village have been seriously disturbed by the noise of southerly departing aircraft. Following outcry from communities close to the route the parish council was instrumental in organising a petition which was presented to Parliament by our M P. As a result of this, and other pressure, the airport now acknowledge the trial of routes 5 and 6 to have been a public relations disaster and it appears that they are looking at amendments to routings which might, in part, replicate the Hampton Turn.

The other issue that upset very many residents this year was the proposal by Network Rail to fell almost all trees along the railway embankment. It took from November 2013, when the parish council were approached by a contractor about to start the work, until August 2014 to get a meeting with Network Rail to try and reduce then scale of the planned work and to consider mitigation. With the presentation of the arboriculturalist's report it became apparent that the trees were considered to be unsafe and sadly were doomed. Residents were able to get assurances concerning the work schedule, which has been less disturbing than anticipated, and we were provided with 12 semi mature trees and 3 big sacks of daffodils to plant at the Recreation Ground. It was very depressing to see the trees go and the landscape at the heart of the village has certainly changed, driving along Old Station Road is very bleak. The real issue is that maintenance had been ignored for so many years and

large trees were allowed to grow where they should never have been, I hope the promise of an ongoing maintenance schedule is honoured.

We continue to press Network Rail and London Midland for urgent improvement to access at the train station and there is at last some hope of minor funding to keep the bridge open during the day. We have been exploring several routes to press for a major scheme to improve accessibility but have been told that a lift would be needed to each platform at a cost of £2 million; we will continue to bring pressure to bear.

Spurred on by our success at being named 'Best Village' in the Solihull Neighbourhood in Bloom' competition 2013 we again entered in 2014 and were pleased to receive 'The Most Engaged Village' award. The 2013 and 2014 prize money has been combined and we are very grateful to the gardening club for purchasing and planting 2 flowering cherry trees at the Diddington Lane junction. Thanks also to the gardeners for keeping the village planters looking lovely throughout the year.

During the last year we have been fortunate to receive grant funding allowing us to provide a beautiful play area for the under 7's at the Recreation Ground, this largely due to several years of determined fund raising by John Doidge. We have also provided a new noticeboard in the bus stop by Engine Mews and are currently applying for grant funding for 2 outside table tennis tables at the Recreation Ground.

The parish council have been actively engaging with any possible housing developments in the village to ensure that the maximum number of affordable homes are provided for village people. Sadly we have been thwarted in this aim because the SMBC Local Plan was challenged by developers and the criteria changed, we will continue these efforts. On a positive note we did manage to get a local letting policy adopted for community housing and 3 of the new houses in Peel Close have priority for people with a village connection who are on the housing list.

The parish council continue to oppose HS2 and are represented in a number of groups to achieve the best mitigation measures if it goes ahead. On December 11th 2014 two councillors and two trustees of the Hampton Society travelled to London to present our petitions to the Parliamentary HS2 Select Committee detailing a list of our major concerns. We were well received and since that time HS2 have come back to us with proposed amendments to the bill concerning the railway as it passes through the village. We continue to try and mitigate the impact of HS2 on our village which would be exacerbated by the loss of green belt consequent on both the UK Central 'Hub' proposal and the Motorway service Station at Catherine de Barnes which we have therefore opposed.

Neighbourhood Watch continues in some areas of the village and it is reassuring to receive emails from the police with warnings of any unusual activity. It would be great if the whole village was included, if you want to form a group where you live please contact Julie.

For the last couple of years the parish council and a community representative have been attending quarterly liaison meetings with representatives of the quarries at Cornetts End Lane. Through this committee we have had signs posted reminding Quarry traffic that it is prohibited from using the village roads and it is generally felt that this has helped reduce HGV traffic. It is a constant battle for the quarry operators

to monitor traffic and apply fines for transgression of planning conditions, we will continue to try and improve the situation. Unfortunately our application for a blanket ban on HGV traffic did not score highly enough to receive funding from SMBC.

After 18 months of disturbance and uncertainty Severn Trent Water have almost completed the water main replacement for Marsh Lane and High Street, a few connections remain opposite the Village Stores. The project to replace all the water mains in the village has proved so problematic that the remainder of the work has been abandoned and we are told is no longer in the forward plan. We were all relieved that Marsh Lane could eventually be resurfaced.

In the autumn we commissioned a professional survey of all the trees on parish council land to provide a maintenance plan which would ensure public safety. The immediately necessary work on some dead trees adjacent to Shadowbrook Lane has been completed and we will formulate a schedule for on-going work.

We are very grateful to the conservation group who work throughout the year to tend the Spinney and wild flower meadow. Also to SMBC Neighbourhood Team who have helped with pathway maintenance and chainsaw skills. Together with the new lake area, woodland and arboretum provided by the Fentham Trust this is a fabulous facility enjoyed by many walkers and dogs each day.

A new committee has taken over organization of the Hampton Festival which will take place on July 4th and 5th. Although it will broadly follow the previous format it is hoped to make a feature of the classic car show and will be combined with the tennis club finals and children's sports day on the Saturday afternoon. A new band will play with village children on Saturday evening going on to play music from across the decades well into the evening.

Finally, I would like to thank the many people who give their time in various ways to the many community organisations that flourish in Hampton-in-Arden, making the village such a great place in which to live.

**Gill Lewis  
Chair.**

### **Your Council**

The Parish Council for 2014-15 was as follows:

<b>Councillor Dr Gill Lewis</b>	69 Meriden Road, B92 0BS	443517
<b>Councillor Mike Blomer MBE</b>	19 High Street, B92 0AE	443370
<b>Councillor Clive Bowen</b>	23 Lapwing Drive, B92 0BQ	443935
<b>Councillor Cat Sellars</b>	19 Meadow Drive, B92 0BD	442491
<b>Councillor John Doidge</b>	20 Diddington Lane, B920BZ	443579
<b>Councillor Malcolm James</b>	61 Meadow Drive, B92 0BD	443710
<b>Councillor Alison Rolf</b>	(Resigned July 2014)	
<b>Councillor David Sandells</b>	(Co-opted September 2014)	
	39 Old Station Road, B92 0HA	446291

Clerk to the Parish Council:

**Julie Richardson** [clerk@hamptoninarden.org.uk](mailto:clerk@hamptoninarden.org.uk)

The Parish Office, Marsh Lane, Hampton-in-Arden, B92 0AH. 442017

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th May 2014, the following officers were elected;-

Chair	Councillor Gill Lewis
Vice Chair	Councillor Mike Blomer

**The following sub-committees and representatives were appointed:**

(The Chair and Vice-Chair are ex-officio members of all committees).

Planning Sub Committee:	Councillor J Doidge (Chair) Councillor C Sellars
Maintenance Committee:	Councillor M James (Chair) Councillor C. Bowen
Communications Working Group: (Including Youth Affairs)	Councillor A Rolf (Chair) Councillor C Bowen
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group:	Councillor M Blomer (Chair) Councillor J Doidge Councillor C Sellars
Remembrance Day	Councillor Bowen
HS2	Councillor G Lewis Councillor J Doidge

**Appointments to other bodies:**

Footpaths and Rights of Way Representative:	Councillor G. Lewis
Airport Consultation	Councillor C. Bowen
Solihull Area Committee WALC	Councillor G Lewis Councillor A Rolf
Conservation Advisory	Councillor M Blomer
Police Consultation	Councillor M James
Rural Partnership Forum:	Councillor G. Lewis

**The Parish Council also appoint trustees to:**

The Charity of George Fentham:	Mrs C Eley Dr M Shalley
The Hampton-in-Arden Recreational Trust:	Mr G Hollway

**Meetings:**

During the year 7 meetings of the full Council were held and attendance was as follows:

Councillor M Blomer	6
Councillor C. Bowen	7
Councillor M James	7
Councillor Dr G Lewis	7
Councillor A. Rolf (resigned July 2014)	3
Councillor J Doidge	6
Councillor C Sellars	6
Councillor D Sandells (co-opted Sept 2014)	3

## **Finance.**

Parish Councils are required by law to appoint an internal auditor to verify the accounts, asset register, insurances and financial controls. From the report of our internal auditor a summary report is submitted for external examination by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

The un-audited accounts for the year 2014/15 are presented in this report. The precept is the major form by which the Parish Council raises funds to carry out its work during the year.

To balance estimated expenditure in the coming year, 2015/16, and to compensate for a reduction in the Council Tax Support Grant the precept has been raised by 2% which is an increase per Category D band household of 55 pence, to approximately £28.08.

## **Notes for Unaudited Accounts 2014/15:**

### **Actual Income/Expenditure**

#### **Income.**

Other income received included contributions towards the Under 7s Play Area, and donations towards benches in the village.

#### **Expenditure.**

Other expenditure is the payment for the Under 7s Play Area.

Office Expenses includes replacing the office computer.

Sundries include legal costs regarding rights of way at Catherine de Barnes Common and attendance at the Parliamentary Select Committee.

### **Reserves as at 31 March 2015.**

#### **General Fund.**

	£
Opening Balance 01/04/2014	62,417.99
Plus contribution to reserves 2014/2015	5,000.00
Less payments over receipts 2014/2015	1,560.56
<b>Total Reserves.</b>	<b>65,857.43</b>

The excess payments over receipts in 2014/15 is due to the contribution by the Parish Council of approximately £3,000 to the Under 7's Play Area.

These reserves are held in the Parish Council bank accounts, £20,000 of it being in a fixed term account to achieve a higher rate of interest.

The reserve fund is established year on year to allow for future, predicted, major expenditure such as resurfacing the car park and replacing play equipment and, additionally, any unforeseen financial liability.

<b>Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council</b>			
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
	<b>Budget 2014/15</b>	<b>Actual(Est) 2014/15</b>	<b>Budget 2015/16</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Precept	25423.00	25423.00	26326.00
Sports Club Rental	2760.00	2760.00	2760.00
Recreation Trust Rental	500.00	500.00	500.00
Allotment Rental	90.00	85.00	90.00
Scout and Guide Headquarters Rental	50.00	50.00	50.00
Bank Interest	200.00	171.37	193.00
Other Income	300.00	254.60	300.00
Other – Donations towards benches		852.33	
Other – Donations to Under 7's Play Area		21100.00	
VAT refund from Customs and Excise		7045.62	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>29323.00</b>	<b>58,241.92</b>	<b>30219.00</b>
	<b>Budget 2014/15</b>	<b>Actual(Est) 2014/15</b>	<b>Budget 2015/16</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Section 137 Expenditure	0	0	0
Grass Cutting Parish Land	4500.00	3402.40	4500.00
Grass Cutting Catherine de Barnes Common	250.00	00.00	250.00
Grass Cutting Church Yard	1080.00	1080.00	1080.00
Parish owned land Maintenance	6000.00	5610.21	6000.00
Clerk's salary and expenses	5433.00	5417.00	5634.00
Donations and subscriptions	660.00	556.00	660.00
Office Expenses	1500.00	1762.51	1500.00
Web site	500.00	477.98	500.00
Insurance	1600.00	1452.67	1600.00
Parish Newsletter	1500.00	1532.05	1600.00
Sundries	250.00	887.51	350.00
Audit and Legal Fees	350.00	200.00	350.00
Room Hire	300.00	296.00	300.00
Training	400.00	87.00	400.00
Neighbourhood Plan	0.00	47.11	495.00
Transfer to Allocated Reserves	5000.00	5000.00	5000.00
Other – Under 7's Play Area		24988.72	
VAT paid out		7005.32	
Excess payments over receipts (Due to Parish Council contribution to the Under 7's Play Area)		(1560.56)	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>29323.00</b>	<b>58,241.92</b>	<b>30219.00</b>

## **Maintenance Committee.**

The Maintenance Committee is responsible for the management of all property under the Parish Council's control, and works with other partners who share interests in the appearance and management of the village and its environs. The committee comprises members of the Parish Council together with representatives from the George Fentham Charity, the Parochial Church Council, the Governors of George Fentham School, the Scouts & Guides Supporters Association, the Hampton-in-Arden Sports Club, Hampton-in-Arden Recreational Trust, Catherine-de-Barnes Residents Association, Solihull MBC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator and an Independent Co-optee.

The Maintenance Committee is responsible for overseeing grounds maintenance within the village whether on parish council land as in the case of the recreation ground, the common and village green, on occupied land as in the case of the school field, play area and allotments, on grounds where a financial contribution is made as in the case of the churchyard or on those areas in the control of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) where the quality of workmanship and level of maintenance impact on the appearance and well-being of the village.

Contractors are regularly engaged to carry out routine work on behalf of the parish council.

The removal of all the trees by Railtrack along the railway embankment, has resulted in a completely different visual impact in the area along the boundary with the Recreation Ground. Your Parish Council initiated a tree planting day to compensate for this and we would thank all those that helped us plant for the future. We would also like to thank David Grimshaw and the Conservation Group for their help in supervising the planting and especially for their regular maintenance of the Spinney, which is looking really good at the moment.

By far, the largest item of capital expenditure that the Parish Council has to consider, is re-surfacing of the Recreation Ground car park. It is now ten years since this was done and thankfully it has lasted well, although we are beginning to see some wear, we hope that it will be a few more before it needs doing again. We have recently had an estimate for re-surfacing to ensure that the reserves we put into a car-park sinking fund each year seem adequate to pay for this.

We would like to thank everyone who turned out to help with the annual village tidy-up during the summer; the response was much better this time and it was good to see people taking pride in the appearance of our village environment.

**Malcolm James.**

## **Communications Working Group**

The Communication Group continues to ensure that the Parish is kept up to date with all that the Parish Council is working on and are trying to achieve. Information is communicated through the website, the quarterly newsletter, the telephone box information point and most recently, through Facebook. The website continues to be updated regularly to ensure that the information contained therein is as up to date as possible and is helpful to those in the village and beyond.



We hope that you continue to enjoy the newsletter that is delivered by hand to every home in the Parish. We are always keen to hear from Parishioners and would love to hear from you if there are any particular topics that you would like to see covered in future newsletters. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Cllr Clive Bowen who has edited and organised the newsletter from its beginnings and whose hard work has made it as successful as it is. Cllr Bowen is stepping down this year and I hope that we can continue to deliver a Newsletter that is as informative and of the same high quality.

We keep the telephone box filled with leaflets of interest and are delighted that the telephone box continues to have a use in the village, giving a focal point for information.

The Consultation Survey completed in 2014 in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan highlighted that there is a gap in the village facilities for older children and young adults. We are working to address this issue (we are investigating the possibility of a Youth Club) and we continue to build on previous years' work by the Communication Group on youth issues. If you have any ideas for facilities for older children and young adults in the village we would welcome any suggestions or ideas put forward. However, we are pleased that the Youth Bus continues to be enjoyed by a variety of ages of children within the village.

Our most recent achievement has been the launch of the Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council Facebook page. We hope that this will provide another platform to communicate information to Parishioners including posting regular updates on important issues, details about village services and reminders for local events.

**Cat Sellars.**

## **High Speed 2.**

Throughout the year the Parish Council continued its campaign to secure mitigation that will minimise the effect of the proposed high speed rail on the village and its environment.

In spring 2014 the Government deposited the HS2 'Hybrid Bill' in Parliament containing full details of its proposals and associated construction works. We presented a petition to the Commons Select Committee on the issues upon which we were seeking mitigation and addressed the Select Committee at a meeting on 11th December, jointly presenting with the Hampton Society. We were warmly received, the Chair Robert Syms MP commenting on our 'formidable performance'-and were invited to go back to the Committee should any matters remain unresolved.

We were pleased to receive early notice from HS2 that the proposed embankment across the Blythe valley which caused much concern about increased flooding and which included an unsightly tunnel bridge over Meriden Road, will be replaced by an open viaduct. We are however still in discussion about the future of Diddington Lane-whether open to through traffic as requested by Packington Estates, or closed, except for access, as initially agreed. Both of these issues will need to be included in amendments to the Hybrid Bill, and a separate process of petitioning to the Select Committee will be required in the summer or autumn. We will continue to press through Solihull Council, HS2 and the Select Committee a satisfactory outcome for residents re the Diddington Lane issue, as well as resolution of the other issues

regarding haulage routes, work camps, spoil heaps and impacts of the environment and ecology.

Following the completion of the Commons Select Committee process, probably in autumn 2015, the Hybrid Bill would then need to be heard in the Lords –a process which would no doubt begin in 2016.

The Parish Council also responded to the latest consultation on compensation –now called ‘HS2 Property Schemes’. One additional measure announced was a Homeowner Payment Zone with cash compensation of up to £22,500 for those homes within 300 metres of the line. Anyone affected should have received a letter in January from HS2. This scheme is in addition to the compensatory payments already in place for those living within 120 metres of the line or those outside this area who may have a ‘need to sell’ and find their home blighted by HS2 plans. Details of this and the latest plans are available from the Government website at [www.hs2.gov.uk](http://www.hs2.gov.uk).

**John Doidge**

### **Planning Sub Committee**

The Parish Council receives notice of all planning applications affecting the village so that it may comment on all matters of concern or support. We work closely with the Hampton Society and Catherine de Barnes Residents Association in order to reflect balanced opinion.

In the autumn plans for a new M42 Motorway Services Area at the crossing of the Solihull Road were announced with a consultation event held in Catherine de Barnes. The Parish Council and Catherine de Barnes Residents Association have objected on Green Belt grounds, loss of ancient woodland and traffic safety issues. We shall rigorously oppose should a formal planning application appear. Solihull Council also opposes this development.

At the same time Solihull Council announced plans for a ‘Garden City’ around the proposed HS2 Interchange station site at Bickenhill, part of the ‘UK Central’ development of the NEC, Airport and land along the M42 corridor. 2000 homes and an expansion of Birmingham Business Park would be built on the triangle of Green Belt land between the A45, A446 and the M42. The Parish Council is opposing this major incursion into the Green Belt and is concerned at the inevitable impact on local roads, road junctions and traffic flows through the village.

Farmland and Green Belt along Catherine-de-Barnes lane continues to be threatened with development and residents will have seen the Birmingham Dogs Home development. However, we were successful in opposing three applications for Burial Grounds, and a Dog Day Care facility although the Burial Ground application has now been resubmitted for 3,500 plots. In Hampton we were pleased to finally secure agreement on redevelopment of the Ring of Bells (Volvo) garage site with 8 family- size homes and gained some protection for residents in Belle Vue Terrace affected by the development of the site. We were not able to prevent approval for a rabbit boarding and rescue centre on Green Belt land at Diddington Lane and upon which a restrictive covenant exists preventing the use of the house for commercial or business use. However, discussions continue at the time of writing to determine conditions which Solihull Council will apply to this development.

Finally, the long awaited Inquiry into the Travellers site at Shadowbrook Lane which was re- scheduled for March has again been postponed with no further date yet known. Eviction notices were served in 2013 after the expiry of temporary permissions. The site is not included in Solihull’s Development Plan and is not on the approved list of Traveller and Gypsy sites.

**John Doidge**

## **Neighbourhood Plan**

Our Neighbourhood Plan, which must have the support of a majority of residents will influence decisions on planning applications and development in the Parish up to the year 2028 and is essential if we wish to retain the identity and character of our area.

It is pleasing to report that, over the past year, meaningful progress has been achieved in the preparation of our Plan. A detailed analysis of the questionnaires sent to all residents and businesses early last year was completed and the findings used to set the objectives and policies we, as a community, wish to see put in place. The policies set out in the Plan cover important matters such as housing, the local economy, transport, the environment and community matters. It must be said that many of the policies are aspirational and may be difficult to achieve but we must try if we want to continue to live in such a pleasant area. Understandably housing has emerged as a major topic especially affordable homes for young people and families and suitable homes for our older residents who wish to downsize. Major issues, including the bus service, station access, traffic, local services, broadband, Birmingham Airport, HS2 and UK Central and more are all addressed in the Plan.

The final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan is almost completed and we will shortly begin a six week "Statutory Consultation" period which will be the final opportunity for residents and others to make their comments before the Plan is submitted to Solihull Council for independent examination. We hope to achieve this by the autumn.

**Mike Blomer**

## **Remembrance Day Village Ceremony**

The 2014 Village Ceremony, with roads closed to traffic for the eighth year in succession, was successfully held on Sunday 9th November; we were accompanied by even more representatives from our local fire stations (Solihull and Bickenhill) as welcome guests. We were also pleased to welcome members from our armed services as well as on duty policemen; the latter doing a splendid job in helping to ensure the safe operation of this ceremony, as did the ever present Marshalls; A big thank you to them all, as well as to the Reverend Duncan Ballard and members of his Church.

**The next Remembrance Day Ceremony will be held on Sunday 8 November 2015.**

**Clive Bowen.**

## **Solihull Neighbourhoods in Bloom Competition 2014**

The Parish Council entered this competition in the 'Village Category' and were presented with an award for 'Most Engaged Village' ; the judges were most impressed with our continued involvement in so many village organisations, such as Hampton Society, George Fentham Trust, Sports Club, Scouts and Guides, the Church, Probus, WI, Gardening Club and so many more. The award consisted of a Certificate and a £50 Notcutts Voucher which we added to the £100 voucher from 2013 and in conjunction with the Gardening Club, we planted two flowering cherry trees on Solihull Council land in Meriden Road close to Lapwing Drive; A big thank you to all those involved !

**Clive Bowen.**

## **War Memorial**

Following on from the refurbishment of the War Memorial, completed in the Summer of 2013 (reported to you in our 2014 Annual Report), a more permanent solution is being sought in relation to its often damaged surrounding wall. Your Parish Council is now in discussion with the Highways Division of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in this respect. We shall report the outcome via both our website and Newsletter fairly shortly.

**Clive Bowen.**

## **Birmingham International Airport**

Residents all over the Parish have been expressing great concern at the nuisance caused by aircraft taking off from the newly extended runway which opened in May last year. Apparently it is not possible for departing aircraft to fly the original "Hampton Turn" and there has been a noticeable increase in noise from departing aircraft in both Hampton-in-Arden and Catherine de Barnes as well as in neighbouring communities.

Such was the strength of feeling resulting from aircraft noise and an apparent lack of public consultation by the airport company that a petition was raised and presented to Parliament by our MP which resulted in an Adjournment Debate in the House of Commons on 2nd February. The airport company subsequently completed trials of two possible routes in February claiming that the route known as Option 6 is the closest to the old Hampton Turn route that can be safely achieved. There have also been a number of technical issues with aircraft navigational systems which are still to be resolved. A final decision on the new route is expected to be made by the Civil Aviation Authority in September.

Your Parish Council has represented residents' interests on the Airspace Trial Stakeholder Group throughout the process and will continue to do so until the issue is resolved. The Council also sits on the Airport Consultative Committee which deals with other matters relating to the airport and its operations.

**Mike Blomer.**