

## Alvechurch Parish Council Newsletter Spring / Summer 2019

### **LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS**

The Parish Council congratulates all 3 independent candidates who were successful at recent local elections for Bromsgrove District Council.....Charlie Hotham (Barnet Green and Hopwood), Kate van der Plank (Alvechurch Village) and Annette English (Alvechurch South). It was a hard-fought campaign with some controversial comments on social media but the results were decisive and reflected 2 key issues. Poor representation by previous party-affiliated District Councillors who had failed to engage the local community and the decision by Bromsgrove District Council to give the Hearn report (on future regional housing needs) planning policy status, increasing the likelihood of significant housing developments on green belt in the Parish. The latter runs contrary to the Parish Neighbourhood Plan and it seems local people wanted their new District Councillors to fight for that Plan and against significant green belt loss.

The ballot for the Parish Council was uncontested as only 10 candidates stood for the 12 seats. APC welcomes new Parish Councillor Sue Baxter, who has a wealth of local Council experience. APC is currently looking to co-opt 2 local people to fill the remaining vacancies. Parish Chairman for the last 6 years, Andy Humphries, has stood down and is being replaced by Marc Worrall. Marc has been a Parish Councillor since 2015 and currently chairs the PC's Planning Committee.

### **PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES**

A planning appeal against the Bromsgrove DC decision to refuse permission for 3 houses in Ash Lane, Hopwood, was dismissed in April. The Planning inspector referred to our now-adopted Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan and specifically its policies on green belt protection, village envelopes, the meaning of infill and the provision of different sizes of housing. Parish Councillors were delighted with the Inspector's conclusions as he strongly endorsed both the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies. In May a second appeal, also in Ash Lane, centred on a planning application to develop a small caravan site on land south of Karenswood kennels. This site was also in the green belt, outside the Hopwood village envelope and on the unadopted part of Ash Lane, unsuitable for caravans and large vehicles.

Earlier in 2019 Bromsgrove DC and APC collaborated on a "public realm" audit of Alvechurch village centre. These audits look at the attractiveness of the centre, its businesses, parking facilities and general environment. Repair of bollards was one of many issues identified to be looked at as part of follow-on work from the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **MAINTAINING OUR PLAYING FIELDS**

**The Meadows / Wiggin** ....ROSPA PlaySafety conducted a full inspection on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Their overall conclusion was that "this public space is clearly well maintained and in generally good condition". Trees, paths, water hazards, surfacing materials and bridges were all inspected. Bolts on the goalposts need attention but all other elements are considered low risk and only need regular monitoring. In the light of social media comments in 2018, it may be helpful to mention a specific ROSPA finding. "The playground is unfenced. There is a risk of dogs gaining access to the playground. This is best managed with informative signage. The provision of fencing is not recommended as the high cost is not justified given the low risk". The Parish Council will now install new signs to encourage users to keep the playground area restricted to dogs on leads. The signs will stress the responsibilities of everyone using the playing fields. ROSPA has also carried out its routine annual inspection of all play equipment.

**Hopwood**....a working group of Councillors and local residents (the Hopwood "Mums") recently evaluated responses from 6 companies who had tendered for the new play facilities. Experience from previous projects (as at The Wiggin) helped greatly and a preferred contractor (Play and Leisure) was approved by the Parish Council on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The contractor has been informed and a detailed installation plan is being prepared. Weather permitting, the scheme is expected to be completed in July, in time for the school holidays. Lobbying of the County Council for a pedestrian crossing across the A441 in Hopwood continues so that local families can safely get to the Hopwood playing fields.

**Tree maintenance and pruning**...this was done at both The Meadows and Rowney Green in the Spring. This work is part of a rolling programme of Council tree surveys and safety work.

### **In brief....**

- At the end of April, the Parish Council successfully passed its 2019 independent audit. The report is available publicly but in summary Council finances are well managed and accounting controls are good.
- In May Cadent again had to remedy a gas leak in Swan Street. The repair work this time took around a week and there was good communications between all parties.
- No further progress has been reported by the County Council in determining the future of Alvechurch Library.
- The Parish Council has signed a new agreement with the West Mercia Community Payback company (formerly Probation) for future help maintaining the Wiggin playing fields.
- Parish Councillors met Alan Amos, County Councillor with overall responsibility for Highways, to discuss the safety of the A441 in Hopwood. The discussion included traffic volumes and speeds and the need for a pedestrian crossing.

You can contact the Parish Council on 0121 447 8016 or email [clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk). The minutes of recent PC meetings appear on our website [www.alvechurch.gov.uk](http://www.alvechurch.gov.uk) and you can find us on Facebook under Alvechurch Parish Council.