

# APC Newsletter

## The Village Magazine - Feb '20 - rev A

A belated Happy New Year to all our Parishioners!

The start of a new year provides an opportunity to focus on new and existing challenges for the forthcoming year. For your Parish Council, one of the first priorities is to recruit a new Parish Clerk. As reported in last month's Village magazine, Tammy Williams has moved on to take up her new challenge working for The National Lottery. Councillors wish her every success in her new role.

The Parish Council has appointed Gill Lungley as Interim Clerk whilst the recruitment process takes place. Gill has been employed as Supporting Officer by the Parish Council over the last year so is very familiar with the Council's work and procedures. Gill is supported by Claire Mason in the Parish office so in the interim period 'normal service' is being maintained. Councillors are hoping to have a new Clerk appointed and in post by the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

The Parish Council continues to liaise closely with representatives of the Post Office on securing a new permanent home for our Post Office since its closure at the beginning of November last year. This has been a fluid situation involving third parties and the Council hopes there will be greater clarity within the next few months. In the meantime, the Parish Council is grateful for the regular Friday mobile PO services being available on the car park of The Sports & Social Club in the village centre. Our thanks also go to the Officers of The Sports & Social Club for their continued cooperation to host the mobile PO.

High on the Parish Council's priorities list are numerous items carried over from last year. The installation of new signs at The Wiggin is planned soon giving details of a 'dog exclusion' area related to the play and gym equipment location, as well as giving other useful advice to users. The Parish Council continues to work hard to promote better highway safety on the A441 through Hopwood and especially the need for a safer pedestrian crossing on this busy Birmingham arterial road leading to J2 of the M42. The continued assistance of County & District Councillor Charlie Hotham is appreciated on this subject. Slow progress is being made, but solutions and initiatives are being pursued. These same comments apply to improvements to Alvechurch Station car park. The Parish Council has had regular and purposeful meetings with all the main station stakeholders over the past year and some progress has been made. The County Council is leading on this and representatives of the Parish Council are closely monitoring developments. Again, it's hoped that some clarity on what is being proposed will be forthcoming soon.

Policies in the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan were instrumental in having a planning appeal dismissed by the Inspector for ten houses in Hopwood in December. The hard work put in by the Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is continually paying dividends with both planning applications and appeals.

It is that time of the year when the Council Tax is set by Bromsgrove District Council. As a result, it is also when the Parish Council seeks to agree its precept for the forthcoming year. Analysis of the services and provision of playing fields, playgrounds and community facilities throughout our Parish, and the responsibilities accompanying them compared to the precept levied over recent years, shows the Parish Council provides very 'good value for money'. However, in supporting worthwhile local initiatives, fixed expenditure and everyday maintenance costs has meant that reserves have had to be used to subsidise them. This is not sustainable in the long term and there's an obligation from Central Government for Parish Councils to hold reserves to cover a designated period. It is with this as a background that our Finance & Resources Committee will be deciding and making a recommendation to full Council on what our precept request will be, although it will still remain as a very small percentage of the Council Tax levied by Bromsgrove District Council.

Finally, many of you will have seen our new bespoke notice board outside the Parish Office in George Road. This was kindly made and donated by a Parishioner, see photo. We're all grateful for this.



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