

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at The Pavilion, Meriden Sports Park.**

**Present:** Cllr Hughes (Chair), Cllr Woollard, Cllr Eggar, Cllr Eburne, Cllr Campbell, Cllr Finch, Cllr Johal and Cllr Wild.

**Clerk:** J. McDougall.

**Public Attendees:** 24 members of the public.

Min No.	Item	Action
<p><b>01/24 (A)</b> 01/24.1 (A)</p>	<p><b>Chairs Report 2023 - 2024</b></p> <p>If you were to sum up the last year in one word it would be change. Taking the time to reflect back is something we often forget to do in a world where events can often get the better of us and we end up not appreciating just how far we have come.</p> <p><b><u>New Faces</u></b></p> <p>This Municipal Year saw new Councillors elected and Co-opted, and I am proud to say that we are now at a full complement of eight Councillors, which has not been the case over the last few years. We have come together as a relatively new team and have made great strides towards achieving our goal of making Meriden an even better place to live, visit and work within. Whilst Councillors are often the most visible element of the Parish Council, we could not carry out our role without being supported by our Clerk and Deputy Clerk. This year we have welcomed Jenny as the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and she has settled into her role phenomenally well and has been invaluable in making sure that the Council remains compliant, financially sound and up to date with events happening within the Borough, region and nationally. We also have welcomed Hayli who joined us as the Clerk, moving to Deputy Clerk later in the year, but will sadly be leaving us shortly to take on a new opportunity at another Parish Council. Hayli's time with us has been marked with some of our biggest successes; the biggest ever Picnic in the Park, our most well attended Parish Assembly, inducting a new Council following elections and taking the helm from our previous Clerk with the excellent service we deliver not being impacted. We wish Hayli every success and thank her for her contribution to our village.</p> <p>On the Councillors front, we welcomed Cllrs Campbell, Wild, Johal and Finch this year and I also want to recognise their contributions in their first year as Councillors. They have become invaluable members of the team and I look forward to continuing to work with them over the next few years. Whilst they are not strictly new faces, Cllrs Woollard, Eburne and Eggar also were re-elected to their roles, and they have been a great help in welcoming our new Councillors and leading on some of the big projects we have delivered.</p> <p><b><u>Council Update</u></b></p> <p>Building on the above, there have been some big changes internally to some of the ways we do things here at the Parish Council. This year we have launched a brand-new website, making it easier than ever to access information about our village, your Council and various other pieces of information. The website looks great, and we hope you have had the chance to visit it. A special shout out to Cllr Eburne and Hayli for getting this over the line so quickly.</p> <p>We have also taken a comprehensive look at our budget and as a consequence the contracts we have as a Parish Council. This has identified some money which we are working to re-invest into the village through a bigger and better picnic in the park, the website mentioned above, significant works to the allotment site,</p>	

Signed: Cllr Eburne

Dated: 20 May 2024

purchasing Christmas lights for the village and much more. At the forefront of our mind was the continued pressures that we all face as a result of the increase in the cost of living. That is why Council unanimously passed a 0% increase to the precept this year. Although this is a small amount, we hope that it will make an impact over the next 12 months to all.

As also mentioned above, we are well underway in delivering the biggest project we have undertaken as a Council, certainly in the time that I have served as a Councillor – improving the Parish Council’s allotment site. We have worked to improve the general maintenance of the site, increased the number of plots available to increase the number of residents that can access this valuable resource, planning to deliver accessible plots for those with limited mobility as well as looking at increasing the biodiversity of the site. As a result of this work, there are plots available to rent and if you are interested, I would encourage you to contact our Clerk for more details.

### **The Next 12 Months**

Having looked back at the last 12 months it is only right to look forward and provide you with a glimpse of some of the work we hope to deliver. We have recruited a new Deputy Clerk who will start later in the summer to support the Clerk and Councillors on the various projects we have planned. We hope you will welcome our newest team member to our community as you have done with Hayli and Jenny.

We were a little late in our announcement this year, but that's because we've been working as hard as ever, to bring you the BIGGEST and BEST Picnic in the Park to Date! This year, on the 8th of June 2024, we'll be bringing to the fold; everything from previous years, plus more. Including the likes of, a Bigger and Better Stage, Alcoholic Bars, Children’s Fairground Rides, More Musical Acts, More Stallholders and Retail Vendors as well as an Extended Event Run Time (12:00pm - 8:00pm). We’ve also made the decision to host this year's event on Saturday, giving you and yours the time to enjoy the day without rushing home to get the kids to bed before school on the Monday! The event will also raise money for SSAFA and we chose this charity as a few days before the event will see the nation mark 80 Years since D-Day. We will be commemorating that day by lighting Flambeaux’s on the green and all are welcome to join us in marking the moment and remembering those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. I want to thank our contractors Precious Events for the preparation work that has been going on behind the scenes. I look forward to seeing you all there.

I also hope that this year will see the transfer of the freehold to the Sports Park from Solihull Council to the Parish Council. We are also in early talks with the Sports Park Company with regard to bringing the operational delivery of the site within the Parish Council, we hope to have this complete by the next financial year. It would be remiss of me to also not thank the Directors for all of their work in making the Sports Park as fantastic as it is over the last 12 months, as ever.

### **Conclusion**

I also want to thank all those in the village that have given their time to support our residents, from those who support our village’s Warm Hub to those who give their time to litter pick our roads. These people often aren’t visible and can never be thanked enough – please know the Council appreciates all you do!

I hope not to be in the ‘Chair’ for the next Municipal Year, however, I have thoroughly enjoyed the role and representing our village. I have called Meriden home for the last 26 years and it has been a privilege to lead our Parish Council.

	<p>We are lucky to have a Council who frequently punches above its weight, a Council that is in all likelihood the youngest Parish Council in the Country, a Council that has a majority of female Councillors as well as all of its Officers being female. I want to pay a final tribute to Cllr Woollard who has been my Vice Chair over the last year and has supported me in my role, we are both now entering our 6<sup>th</sup> year as Councillors, and she has become a second to none colleague and friend.</p> <p>I hope the next 12 months is a healthy, happy and prosperous year for you all and I look forward to supporting the team and representing Meriden.</p>	
<p><b>02/24 (A)</b> 02/24.1 (A)</p>	<p><b>Questions</b> A resident requested paper copies of the Parish Council's monthly e-newsletter to be available for attendees of the Warm Hub as not all residents have access to a PC. The Parish Council confirmed this was possible.</p>	<p>Clerk to action</p>
<p><b>03/24 (A)</b> 03/24.1 (A)</p>	<p><b>Feedback Session from Residents</b> Residents provided a list of improvements they would like to take place in Meriden which included: Traffic calming Litter and fly-tipping removal A new Post Office Youth facilities Improved parking facilities Improved transport links to neighbouring areas Additional support for community groups Improvements to the village hall</p>	<p>The Parish Council will review the responses and consider actions where possible</p>