



Romsley Parish Council Update July 2015

From from the Chair - Richard Arrowsmith, Parish Council Chairperson

Dear Romsley Resident

It is my great privilege to be able to write to you in this first edition of Romsley Parish Council update. On behalf of all the elected Parish Councillors I would like to say a big thank you to everyone in the Parish for the tremendous support you gave us in the recent elections. All of us recognise the trust you have placed in us and we will do all that we can to provide an effective, visible and representative Parish Council for everyone.

Since the election we have been very busy. We have started to review several areas of Council business and have identified several changes that will improve effectiveness and increase visibility. There are several items in this update that provide more detail on these initiatives.

There has also been another very successful Romstock and on page 2 you can find an update on the 2015 event as well as what we intend to do in the future. Much of the success of the event is dependent on the hard work of many people from across the Parish and I would like to thank everyone who helped out on the day. I would also like to give special mention to Councillor David Powell who worked tirelessly in the final 3 weeks to bring it all together. Additionally I would like to thank John Price, Sue Hemmings and Amy Cooper for their work on the 2015 event and also their work to establish the success of the event in previous years.

On a personal note, over the last 8 weeks I have received lots of positive feedback from across the community. However, I have also talked to several people who have made it clear that they had been upset with a number of the questions raised in the leaflets distributed by the Romsley Together candidates during the election campaign. On behalf of myself and the other Romsley Together candidates we would like to make it clear that it was never our intention to personally criticize or upset anyone during the campaign. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the previous members of the Council for the role they have played in our community. Elected office at any level is a difficult but vital part of our society and we should always acknowledge anyone who is willing to try and make a positive difference to our community. I fully recognise the foundation they have given us and look forward to building on this through increasing the effectiveness and visibility of Romsley Parish Council in the years to come.

Regarding another personal matter you may be aware that traditionally the Council Chairperson receives a bursary payment each year which supports the Chair in undertaking their role. However I have decided that for my tenure as Chair I will be donating this annual payment to good causes in the Parish. This year I have chosen to support Romsley Pre-School Nursery with £150 of resources.

Finally, I would like to thank Bloore & King estate agents who have sponsored this edition of Romsley Parish Council Update. Through their kind support we are able to produce this newsletter without any cost to the Romsley Parish taxpayer.

May I wish you all the best for a good summer and I hope you all get chance to enjoy some of the fabulous countryside we have around our Parish. You could follow one of the many walks we have, such as the new Penny Fields Walk which we are opening on July 18th, details of which you can find on page 3.

Kind regards
Richard

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Proud to be supporting Romsley
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Romstock 2015

The early morning downpours subsided to ensure over 1200 people enjoyed another fantastic afternoon at Romstock. The Bands and facilities this year were extremely popular and thanks to our fantastic group of volunteers, the day went very smoothly, - a very big thank you to all of you for helping.

This was the first year that we have utilised social media for Romstock and it was a great success, with over 250 people interacting with us before, during and after the event on Facebook and Twitter. We have been sharing some great photos and videos and these will be also be shared on our new website.

We are currently undertaking a review of this year's event and already thinking ahead to Romstock 2016 (maybe with a special theme to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday). The Parish Council is setting up an events working party that will oversee the planning of Romstock in future years and will also explore the feasibility of running other types of event within the Parish, as well as exploring the possibility of attracting sponsorship to support with the costs.

We will keep everyone updated on the progress of the events working party through the Website and newsletter and you can also follow us on Facebook (search Romstock) and Twitter (@RomsleyRomstock)

Finally, if you would like to be involved with the events working party, would be interested in sponsoring one of our future community events or would like to volunteer to help out at a future event - please contact the Clerk to the Council who will pass your details on to Councillor David Powell who will be chairing the events working party.



A new neighborhood watch

Romsley had a successful Neighborhood Watch (NHW) scheme running for many years and the Parish Council would like to get it up and running again.

NHW is a partnership which involves the police, community safety departments and local residents who all work together to make their neighbourhoods better places to live. It aims to help people protect themselves and their property and reduce the fear of crime by giving advice on home security, promoting vigilance in spotting and reporting suspicious incidents and fostering greater community spirit.

The Parish Council will look to support the costs of this scheme and will provide a dedicated page on the Council website for information on home and personal safety and any anti-crime initiatives affecting the Parish.

We will need a number of volunteers to help support this important initiative in our community, if you are interested in helping please contact the Clerk to the Council who will pass your details on to Councillor Lesley Gray.

New Parish Council Website

One of our priority areas is to strengthen the transparency and visibility of the Parish Council. To this end we have started working on a new website (www.romsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk) which we hope to launch in late October.

Once fully completed Parish residents will be able to access all the Council's policies, meeting records, financial forecasts & accounts as well as key documents such as our Parish Plan and Parish Resilience Plan. People will be able to contact the Council directly to report issues and we will have the capability to hold online surveys that will allow us to better understand the views of the community.

As well as improving the effectiveness and visibility of the Parish Council, the website will help us comply with the demands of Central Government for the provision of on-line Government services.

The new website is also vital for helping us secure additional funding. Awarding bodies such as Central Government depts., the Big Lottery Fund or UK Sport use the information contained on Parish Council websites to validate bids as well as to confirm the professionalism and transparency of a Parish Council and thereby ensure any money awarded will be used appropriately.

While our new website is being built we have updated the existing site on Worcestershire.gov.uk – just google Romsley Parish Council to find it. Alternatively find Romsley Parish Council on Facebook and Twitter.

We recognise that not everyone in the community can access the Internet so we are exploring ways of making this information accessible to none internet connected households. We would welcome any thoughts and suggestions on how best to achieve this as well as any other comments you may have on the website and its contents. Please contact the Clerk to the Council in the first instance who will then pass your details on to Councillor David Powell who is leading this work.

Allotments Available

There are a number of plots available at the Parish allotments on Farley Lane. If you would be interested in renting one of these and would like more details please contact the Clerk to the Council.



Contact the Council

If you would like to contact the Council on any matter in the first instance please contact Ruth Mullett, Clerk to the Council
ruth.mullett@btconnect.com
or tel. 01562 712050

Launch of the Romsley Penny Fields circular walk Saturday 18th July at 10am

Start and finish at the small holding behind The Swallows Nest pub with parking available at The Swallows Nest car park.

Everyone is invited to join in the official launch of Romsley's Penny Fields circular walk. The specially signed walk is 2.25 miles long, with just three stiles and uses field paths and wooded tracks.

Following the walk, and to celebrate the opening, the Parish Council will be providing tea and cakes at St Kenelm's Church Hall, on the main road, to which all are welcome.

Families are especially welcomed on the walk and children will be able to participate in a nature trail and receive a small prize for successful completion.

Dogs are welcome too but under close control and on a lead please.

Community action forum for road safety

One of the most significant challenges we face in the coming months is to find solutions to the many road safety issues that we have in the Parish. These include the excessive speeds on Day House Bank and Dark Lane, the accident black spot at the Manchester Pub T-junction, the ongoing parking issues around the village shops and improving the crossing provisions and traffic calming near St Kenelm's Primary School.

The responsibility for resolving the majority of these matters sit with Worcestershire County Council who face ever growing pressure on their budgets and, to succeed, we will all have to display fortitude and perseverance. However it is well recognised that communities that demonstrate a strong and collective voice are more successful in achieving road safety improvements.

To this end the Parish Council is looking for volunteers to sit on a Community Action Forum for road safety. The membership will help represent the wider community and support the Parish Council in its attempts to improve road safety.

Through the forum we are looking to build on the successful work of fellow parishioners such as Steve Pitt who obtained hundreds of signatures on a petition that secured improvements to traffic calming signs around the school.

The Parish Council have already identified a number of additional improvements that can be made if we can secure additional resources such as electronic speed signs at more locations across the Parish, road layout changes and an initiative to issue and display 30MPH signs on our wheelie bins which show drivers from outside the Parish as well as County Council officials that as a community we are united in wanting to stop excessive speeding in our Parish.

If you would like to know more about the role of the forum, if you would like to volunteer to participate or if you would like to give us your thoughts and ideas for improving road safety in the Parish please contact the Clerk to the Council who will then pass your details on to Councillor Richard Arrowsmith who will be chairing the forum.

Daleswood Park / Farley Lane bus stop

The Parish Council received a request from the residents of Daleswood Park for official bus stops to be established on Farley Lane. Councillor Lesley Gray has met with a Worcestershire County Highways representative who has already made a temporary safe area to wait for a bus to Halesowen and safety officers are coming to assess the best places to site the stops. We will keep residents updated on the progress we are making with this issue.

Notice Board

Council meeting dates - Romsley Parish Council will be meeting on the following dates at St Kenelm's School.

- Monday 14th September
- Monday 12th October
- Monday 9th November
- Monday 14th December

The meetings are open to all residents and commence at 7:00pm. The meeting opens with a public forum in which any matters can be raised with the Council before moving on to the main council meeting. This is a good way of understanding the business of the Council and we would be glad to see you there.

Beaver Scout volunteers - Romsley St Kenelm's Scout group makes a tremendous contribution to our community and they are looking for volunteers to help with their Beaver Scouts who are aged from 6 to 7. If you are interested in helping out or becoming a leader, please contact Andy Shepherd on 01527 831811 or email romsleyscouts@hotmail.com

Patronal Festival with Flowers - On Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June the Patronal Festival with flowers will be taking place at St Kenelm's Church. The Church will be open from 10:30am to 5:00pm on Saturday and 11:00am to 6:00pm on Sunday. Tea, coffee and cakes will be available on both days between 2:00pm and 5:00pm.

St Kenelm's Home School Association - St Kenelm's Home School Association (HSA) makes a real difference to the lives of our school children by raising many thousands of pounds for school resources. If you would like to help support the HSA by volunteering some of your time or would be interested in supporting the work of the HSA through sponsorship or the donation of raffle prizes, please contact the Chair of the HSA Jayne Reynolds via St Kenelm's School office or e-mail stkenelmsschool-PTA@outlook.com

If you have any events or notices you would like to make the community aware of please contact the Clerk to the Council. The next update will be issued in November and cover the period up to April 2016.

Parish Council review of future policy and capability

In the coming years County and District Council services will come under increasing financial pressure, many services will change and some will be removed altogether. These financial pressures in combination with the ongoing move towards decentralised decision making will see significant changes in the landscape of local government with communities and voluntary groups expected to fulfill more responsibilities but in return receive more freedom to act. Given its community focus, the Parish Council should be heavily involved in leading and coordinating our community's response to these changes. It is important that we are properly able to meet this challenge so, over the next 12 months, we will be undertaking a programme of review to ensure we have the necessary policies and capabilities in place to represent and serve Romsley properly in this changed landscape. We have identified the following areas for immediate review and action.

Finance & Budgets - Effective financial control is at the heart of efficient government. We have already taken the decision to move from a paper based accounting system to a computer based approach which we will roll out in the next few months. This will give us stronger financial control and allow us to produce open and easy to understand accounts which we will share with everyone in the community. We will also establish a rolling 4 year budget forecast which is linked to the objectives and levels of service we have set in the Parish Plan. We will use this budget forecast to set precept levels, to justify funding from other tiers of Government and as supporting evidence when we bid for money from external funding bodies.

Standing orders and policies - The standing orders and policies define the way the Council operates, these must be robust, comprehensive and fit for purpose, they must also stand up to scrutiny from external bodies. We already have a number of suitable standing orders and policies in place which gives us a firm foundation for going forward. However there are several areas we need to strengthen and we intend to commence a systematic review in which we will compare ourselves with other Councils who are recognised to be high performing and successful. From this we can identify gaps and rectify them accordingly.

Parish plan - The absence of a Parish Plan is one of the most critical gaps that we currently face. This document describes the future we want for our Parish and covers many aspects such as Public Services, Utilities, Housing, Planning, Environment, Transport etc. A robust and community endorsed Parish Plan is a powerful document as it clearly represents the opinions of the community. It is widely used by funding bodies and planning authorities to determine the appropriateness of proposals. It is a critical gap that we must fill urgently and we will commence work on this as quickly as possible.

Community resilience plan - As a community we must always try to stand together but in times of crisis this is even more important. A Parish resilience plan will describe what we will do as a community during emergencies. It will identify the risks we may have to deal with and the probable impact they may cause such as severe and prolonged snow. It will also include details of the responses we expect from others such as the emergency services, utilities or County Council as well as those responses we can provide from within the Parish itself.

Council communications - Keeping people well informed about what your Parish Council is doing is vital to build trust and confidence. We are reviewing the communication channels that we have to find the most appropriate way of keeping residents informed. As described elsewhere we are developing a new website to act as a hub for our community, we have introduced this newsletter and will be refurbishing the notice boards so that everyone in the community can use them.

General power of competency - We are considering adopting "the general power of competency" as outlined in the 2011 Localism Act. This will give Romsley Parish Council the ability to step in and deliver a range of additional functions and services to our community if and when we can afford them.

Vacancy for Romsley Parish Councillor

There is one vacancy on Romsley Parish Council and this position will be filled by co-option at the meeting of the Council to be held on Monday 14th September 2015 at 7.00p.m. in St Kenelm's School, Bromsgrove Road.

Should more than one application be received, Councillors will decide the appointment by a vote, or series of votes, in order to obtain a majority decision.

To be considered, applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Be registered as a Local Government Elector for the Parish on the Current Electoral Register.
2. Has, during the whole of the previous 12 months, occupied as tenant or owner any land or other premises in the Parish.
3. Has had his/her principal or only place of work in the previous 12 months in the Parish of Romsley
4. Has resided either in the Parish or within 3 miles thereof during the previous 12 months.

Anyone wishing to be considered for co-option should contact the Clerk to the Council, in writing by email to: ruth.mullett@btconnect.com, or by telephone **01562 712050** to obtain an application form.

The closing date for applications will be **Friday 4th September 2015**.