

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2013

As in previous years I looked back at what was in last year's report and noted some work that was in progress awaiting completion. One of these was following the completion of the new water main down the Highwood road last year there was the final two parts of the scheme from Robins End cottages down to Eastham Bridge and then up Featherbed Lane; both were completed during the past twelve months.

The Highwood road from Robins End corner up to the Bine Farm was completely re-tarmaced; a task that had been required for several decades due to the thin tarmac cover of the original road and eventually made essential after the laying of the new water main.

There has been, and continues to be, trouble with the old water main which Severn Trent seem unable to disconnect, one leak by The Old Farm has been pouring millions of gallons of water down an adjacent drain for months.

As last year we were fully prepared with grit around the parish and some grit was needed to assist Highwood residents to gain access to the gritted road. The New and Highwood roads which qualify as secondary gritting routes and on the odd occasions that there were icy days they were dealt with in good time. Unfortunately the gritting lorry got onto the soft waterlogged verge on the way up the Highwood bank and slid into the hedge above the old roadway. Two tractors failed to get it back onto the road and it was eventually winched out with the winch lorry digging two holes in the highway, yet to be repaired.

As reported last year the Lengthsman who we share with Knighton-on-Teme and Bayton has continued to prove very satisfactory. The cost of the Lengthsman continues to be met by a grant from Worcestershire County Council; this grant is still of course a part, if only a very small part, of the County Council's council tax bill and we consider it to be good value for money.

The parish is about to get access to high speed internet broadband with a company called Airband. A consortium committee of local internet savvy volunteers working in cooperation with Worcestershire County Council gained access to government funds to provide the service to our group of six adjacent parishes which have very poor broadband speeds. The Consortium was chaired by Nicholas Benbow from Lindridge and our own clerk Sue Burrows has been heavily involved right from the beginning. We owe a debt of gratitude to the entire Consortium Committee for their time and expenses given freely to this project. The Eastham Memorial Hall Committee made our hall available free of charge for meetings.

The Council dealt with several planning applications one of which on the Highwood proved highly contentious. The retrospective application for a mobile home on a two-acre wooded and grassland site with an existing agricultural barn provoked the necessity for a public meeting. Very strong local and technical objections led to the application being refused. The legal processes of appeal and enforcement are ongoing at present. Stables have been built without planning permission and the property is being used as a business, these are all matters as yet unresolved.

I would like to thank County Councillor Dr Ken Pollock and District Councillor Gill Farmer for continuing to give quick response to any requests for assistance. I am grateful to my fellow Councillors for their hard work and support over the past year. Finally I would like to thank Sue Burrows our Parish Clerk for her hard work on our behalf during the past year.

John Inge - Chairman of Eastham Parish Council