

SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017/18

As always, your Parish Council has experienced a mixture of delight and frustration in the past year. Fortunately, just living in our beautiful parish constantly refreshes the delight, while frustration is – in the main – transient.

Community activities are a source of satisfaction to the Parish Council and we hope you too. The “Womble” Litter Picks in October 2017 and March 2018 – very ably organised and managed by Mrs Catherine Armstrong – proved both popular and successful, though frankly we wish that they were rather less successful, as littering remains an issue on roadside verges. Both picks attracted around 30 volunteers of all ages, plus Chip, a dog of distinctly uncertain bloodline. More “Wombles” will undoubtedly be held. Watch for flyers or check the Parish Council’s Facebook page. Yes, we are in the 21st century, despite dodgy broadband, of which more later.

The solidity of our community activities was rightly reflected by an award to Mrs Armstrong for Community Action in MHDC’s 2017 Community Awards Scheme. In addition the Unity Brewhouse (now known as the Hop Shed) received an award in the Business & Community Section. We salute Hani and Sarah Saleh’s efforts. The parish council has match-funded the purchase of a dummy defibrillator for training purposes and continue to support the Good Neighbour Scheme, both these activities being ably led by Cllr Anne Lewis.

Our Remembrance Service on November 11th at the memorial site in the Old Quarry, Longley Green is now an established diary fixture. Over 30 people attended last year. Thank you to Rev Anne Potter for conducting the service and making Suckley Church such a living force in the parish, and to local residents Peter Hibbert who played the Last Post and Mike Baldwin for his work keeping the memorial site in excellent order. Plans are in hand for a special Service on 11th November 2018 to mark the centenary of the First World War’s armistice.

Our Footpaths Leader, Helen Philpotts, keeps a stern eye on our rights of way. We need more volunteers to walk the footpaths and report any problems to Helen or the parish clerk. There was an incident last year when a group of runners marked a trail through the Parish with sawdust contaminated with broken glass and screws. Action was taken immediately, with the group apologising for the mistake and cleaning up their contaminants. Thanks to Helen’s efforts a number of latchpoles have been fitted to bridleway gates, along with landowners fitting stiles/gates and clearing footpath blockages as necessary.

The new play equipment at the Playing Fields is in regular use by children from both the immediate community and Suckley School. A new junior football group are now using the pitch regularly, and are themselves putting work to help upgrade the pavilion and surrounding areas. My thanks to Councillor Carol Luton for managing the playing fields so competently and to Cllr John Green for reviewing all the council’s facilities weekly, sun, rain or snow.

Alas, some things your Parish Council cannot manage on its own. Fly-tipping at the playing fields is infrequent, but does occur. Likewise, Highways problems featured quite significantly

during the year. Possibly only divine intervention can solve these items, but we must deal with bodies who move in almost equally mysterious ways, not least Worcs County Council's Highways department.

New signage will be placed along Stocks Road to highlight its narrowness and work will also occur in Knightwick parish to improve the quantity and quality of the Knightwick Road's passing places. WCC Highways have also agreed to resurface Church Lane down to the Playing Fields, although there are still drainage problems to be resolved prior to the resurfacing taking place. Trying to pin down a date for action with Highways on this and other matters is akin to nailing blancmange. Junction safety at White House Cross Roads remains a serious concern. Despite our best efforts, WCC Highways still hold the view that the junction is well signed, with only one collision reported in the last 3 years. We do not want a fatal accident to occur to prove our case.

I have personally taken Highways to task on several occasions for totally confusing and in some cases incorrect diversion/road closed signage when the various utility companies or WCC's own contractors were operating in the area. Some of the diversion routes took traffic round Bromyard and beyond or were completely contradictory. I regret that this remains an issue.

A major concern of residents was, and is, traffic and speeding along the Knightwick Road. Our newest councillor, Darran Findlater, has produced rather startling data regarding speeding patterns. We hope that West Mercia Police will take notice and appropriate action, though we are well aware of the severe constraints on their resources. Happily our overall crime rate remains astonishingly low compared even to other rural parishes. Long may it stay that way.

There are other challenges to be met. Our cost of "doing business" continues to escalate faster than general inflation and each year brings new legislation with which we must comply on threat of fines or worse, but no means of paying for it, apart from passing those costs on to you via the Parish Precept. We will continue to try to keep increases to no more than the rate of inflation.

Broadband and mobile phone availability remain poor overall in Suckley. This may seem trivial to current residents, but it certainly will not be to future ones, so we must use all the resources at our disposal to improve matters. Those include our District Councillors, Sarah Rouse and Tony Warburton. Their help in the past 12 months has been invaluable, not least in planning matters which loomed large in 2017 and likely will do again this year. Our sincere thanks to them and to our County Councillor, Paul Tuthill for their contributions to our parish's well-being.

I acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of all eight of my parish council colleagues, some of whose work I have already highlighted. All serve voluntarily and several have done so for many years. I am humbled by their dedication. Of course, there is also a tenth person without whom this council simply would not function: our clerk, Mrs Diana Taylor. She is a source of great strength and resourcefulness to the council and to me in particular. Thank you to her, to my fellow councillors and, of course, to all of you for being part of the community that is Suckley.

PETER WHATLEY
Chairman – Suckley Parish Council

SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCILLORS – 2017/18

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chairman: | Mr Peter Whatley | Tel: 01886 884126 |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr John Green | Tel: 01886 884412 |
| | Mrs Pearl Griffiths | Tel: 01886 884354 |
| | Mrs Liz Devenish | Tel: 01886 884787 |
| | Mrs Carol Luton | Tel: 01886 884558 |
| | Mr Walter Huband | Tel: 01886 884379 |
| | Mr Darran Findlater | Tel: 01886 884431 |
| | Dr Anne Lewis | Tel: 01886 884552 |
| | Mrs Victoria Bradley | Tel: 01886 884001 |
| Clerk: | Mrs Diana Taylor, 9, Lambourne Avenue, Malvern Link, Worcs WR14 1NL Tel: 01684 569430 E-mail: dtaylorsuckleyclerk@gmail.com | |
| District Councillors: | Ms Sarah Rouse | Tel: 01886 833653 |
| | Mr Anthony Warburton | Tel: 01886 832753 |
| County Councillor: | Mr Paul Tuthill | Tel: 01886 832309 |

Nine Parish Councillors are allocated to serve the Parish of Suckley. The Councillors all offer their services on a voluntary basis and work to protect, sustain and promote the Parish in all its aspects. Suckley Parish Council is a lively active Council with the needs of the Parish always at the top of their Agenda. They meet bi-monthly. The Parish Council believes in open government and although their meetings are formal, any parishioner is welcome to come along to listen. There is a special time before the main business of the meeting commences for any of the electorate of Suckley to make a short presentation to the Council on any item on the Agenda. Please ring any of the Councillors above or the Clerk if you need any further information.

SUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Balance sheet at 31 March 2018
(internally audited)

| GENERAL FUND | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Income | 39,034.70 | 16,142.00 |
| Expenditure | <u>35,784.26</u> | <u>15,550.59</u> |
| Balance | 3,250.44 | 591.41 |
| Balance b/fwd | <u>22,248.49</u> | <u>25,498.93</u> |
| Cash Register | 25,498.93 | 26,090.34 |
| Unpresented cheques | <u>778.80</u> | <u>396.00</u> |
| Bank Balance | 26,277.73* | 26,486.34* |
| Acc No 2449761 | <u>1.00</u> | <u>1.00</u> |
| | 26,278.73 | 26,487.34 |

*Includes £2K ringfenced for Flood Scheme maintenance

| PLAYING FIELD FUND | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Income | 2,146.81 | 960.00 |
| Expenditure | <u>19,617.29</u> | <u>3,605.74</u> |
| Balance | - 17,470.48 | - 2,645.74 |
| Balance b/fwd | <u>21,732.06</u> | <u>4,261.58</u> |
| Cash Register | 4,261.58 | 1,615.84 |
| Unpresented cheques | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> |
| Bank Balance | 4,261.58 | 1,615.84 |