



Romsley Parish Council Update

Winter / Spring
2016

Contact the Parish Council

If you would like to contact the Council on any matter please contact

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Proud to be
supporting
Romsley
and its
community

Dear Romsley Resident,

Welcome to the second edition of the Romsley Parish Council newsletter. Since the last edition we have been working hard representing the residents of Romsley and we have many important matters to update you on in this newsletter.

Of particular importance is the new pipe line that Severn Trent is intending to build through the Parish which is known as the Birmingham Resilience Project. I would ask that you urgently read the article on **page 2** to familiarize yourselves with this issue and the impact it may have. We have also been dealing with the persistent and ongoing rumors surrounding changes to the catchment area for Haybridge High School that would prevent Romsley children attending in the future. **These rumors are not true** and the article on **page 7** provides more detail on how we have worked with Haybridge School to address this.

Moving on to Council matters I'm very pleased to inform you that in line with our election pledges the new Parish Council website has now gone live at romsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk we hope you will find it a useful way to access information about the Council and the wider Parish, please let us know what you think. We have now adopted "the general power of competence" which gives us more powers to make decisions and deliver services at the Parish level. We have also completed the preparation and adoption of the formal standing orders which govern how the Parish Council operates and these are now available for you to look at on the website. During the past 6 months we have devoted a lot of time to looking at the budgetary requirements of the Council and analyzing how much money we require to fulfill our legal obligations. We have had to make some difficult choices but, in line with our election promises to be open and transparent about all matters involving your money, we have included a comprehensive breakdown of our budgets for the next 4 years starting on **page 4**.

Recently I have received many complaints from residents about dog fouling as we seem to have a particular problem at the moment with dog faeces on the pavements. I know that the vast majority of dog owners will always clean up after their pets and I would ask that everybody who owns a dog, shows the same respect to the wider community. On an associated issue, I know there are many rumours going round that the dog-mess bins are being removed. As with most rumours, this is mostly incorrect but with a small element of truth at its centre. Bromsgrove Council are no longer supplying dedicated dog-mess bins but residents can now use normal litter bins. None of the existing bins are being removed until they break, after which they will be replaced with a normal bin. Due to local residents' complaints one dog-mess bin has been removed at the bottom of Eastleigh Drive. Going forward, the Parish Council has budgeted for two additional bins per year which cost approximately £300 each. We will be prioritising areas with persistent litter or dog fouling problems such as the gullies by the school.

I would also like to take this opportunity to let you know about a very important project for our community that we are starting this month and that we need your support with. The council is about to start developing the Romsley Parish Plan which will describe the type of Parish we want to live in, the types of services we want in place and what types of development we want to permit in the future. Parish Plans are used by planning authorities and enquiries to ascertain the desires of a community. Given the growing threat to our Parish and its greenbelt from the expansion of Birmingham and Dudley to meet their housing needs, it is vital that we start working on this document and ensure it fully captures the views of the community. In the next few months we will be issuing a Parish questionnaire to all residents, but as a first step we are holding a public consultation meeting on **Saturday 27th February at the Scout Centre from 10am to 4pm**. Please read the article on **page 8** for more information about this vital project.

Finally, I would like to pass on our congratulations to Shirley Wheatley who has recently been made President of the Hagley and District Girl Guides Association. Shirley has been associated with Guiding for nearly 50 years, helping young people to excel and experience many new things. On behalf of our community I would like to thank her for all that she has done to support our young people.

I look forward to seeing you around the Parish in the next few months.

Kind Regards

Richard Arrowsmith

Romsley Parish Council Chairperson

BLOORE & KING
SALES & LETTINGS

The Severn Trent - Birmingham Resilience Project

Severn Trent Water are currently planning a major engineering project called the Birmingham Resilience Project, that will create a new pipe line between the River Severn at Lickhill near Stourport and the Frankley Water Works near Birmingham. The project will cost circa £250 million and take 3 years to complete and full details can be found at

<https://www.stwater.co.uk/my-supplies/live-updates/investing-in-local-improvements/birmingham-resilience-project/>. The route of the pipeline will take it through the south of the Parish and a significant engineering installation; called a Break Pressure Tank (BPT) is to be located at the top of Pound Lane, close to the Bromsgrove Road.

On the right is the only picture of the BPT that has been made available to us and frustratingly no more detailed pictures have been provided to residents. It is difficult to gauge the scale of this facility but we understand it is over 6 metres high and is highly industrial in appearance. It has both high security lighting and fencing surrounding it. During its operation it will be visited frequently by heavy goods vehicles and residents are still awaiting clear information on noise, traffic and other pollution impacts.



The Parish Council recognise the importance of the project to the resilience of the region, however, given the scale of the works to be undertaken there will be significant disruption to our Parish for several years. (The picture of the construction approach below is from Severn Trent's own planning application and the scale and impact of this type of construction can be seen below). We are also concerned that the BPT design sets an unacceptable precedence for building design within our Greenbelt area.

To date the Parish Council has met with representatives of Severn Trent, with the residents of Day House Bank (who are most likely to be affected by the construction work) and also with the local planning authorities and the District and County Councillors to ensure they understand the views of the community. On behalf of residents the Parish Council have raised several concerns with Severn Trent and have asked for assurances and commitments about several aspects of the project. These include:

- The control and minimisation of construction traffic through the Parish.
- Assurances that disruption, noise and pollution resulting from both construction and operation are minimised.
- Concerns about the size and scale of the Break Pressure Tank and its supporting infrastructure that is proposed for Putney Lane and to ensure that its design is appropriate to the rural environment and does not affect residents unduly.
- That Severn Trent fully recognises and then fulfils its obligations to reinstate the environment after the works are completed. (This issue is of particular concern given the significant number of outstanding defects such as the Park car park surface as well the quality of the pavement and grass verge on St Kenelm's Road following Severn Trent's engineering works in 2012.) To this end we have asked Severn Trent to correct these historic problems thereby demonstrating their commitment to our community. However, we have not yet received a response to this request.
- That Severn Trent makes a lasting contribution to our community as a way of compensating us for the disruption. We have suggested Severn Trent pay for proper traffic calming along Day House Bank and remodel the junction between Day House Bank and the Bromsgrove Road to compensate those most heavily affected by the works. We have also suggested that Severn Trent contribute to a project at St Kenelm's School to refurbish its facilities and update its classrooms, as well as supporting the Parish Council with installing a proper crossing in front of the school.



Unfortunately, at this time the Parish Council does not believe that residents' concerns have been properly acknowledged or that we have the assurances the community requires. We are also particularly concerned that the consultation undertaken by Severn Trent to date has not been sufficient to allow people to raise concerns before planning permission is given. Though we acknowledge that two exhibitions were undertaken and a number of leaflets sent, critical information about the size and design of the Break Pressure Tank, as well as the impact on our community of the pipe construction, has not been openly presented. We have invited Severn Trent to a Parish Council hosted public meeting on the **14th March at 7pm at St Kenelm's School**. However, at the time of writing we are still awaiting a response from Severn Trent as to whether they will attend and face your questions; please check the Parish Council website for updates.

Severn Trent have now submitted their planning proposal to Bromsgrove Council (**Planning Application 16/0085**). We are asking all residents to urgently look at these submissions at <http://appuview.bromsgrove.gov.uk/online-applications/> and register any concerns you have. Given that the planning submission contains more than 200 documents and given our desire to hold our public meeting with Severn Trent before responding formally to this planning request, we have asked Bromsgrove District Council for an extension to the closing date for comments. However, at the time of writing the closing date for comments remains the **25th February**. Finally, we have placed copies of key documents from Severn Trent's planning submission as well as copies of our recent correspondence to Severn Trent on the Parish Council website.

Romsley Parish Council Financial update

One of the most challenging areas we have had to deal with in the past year has been to identify the budget requirements for the Parish over the coming 4 years. As with any public authority our starting point was our legal duties and the level of funding required to fulfill these **statutory responsibilities** as well as to maintain the community assets we are responsible for. In addition to these statutory responsibilities we have then had to calculate the cost of any additional or **discretionary services** that the Parish Council wishes to provide which we believe brings additional benefits to our community.

To add further challenge, there has been significant cuts to both District and County Councils' budgets, with many reduced by more than 30% since 2010 and further reductions of more than 30% planned for the next 5 years. These cuts are having a significant impact on our community with reductions in many areas that directly affect us such as highways & pavement maintenance, Policing, traffic calming, pavement cleansing, winter gritting, litter picking, bus services and maintaining hedgerows to name but a few. As a Parish Council we are meeting with the District and County Councils to challenge them to maintain the services we require. However, the scale of cutbacks is so large at District and County levels that we are now faced with making the difficult choice to replace or supplement these services at a Parish level so that we ensure Romsley remains a pleasant place to live.

Sadly, we have now concluded that at the current levels of Parish Council funding we cannot meet either our statutory responsibilities or provide additional discretionary services. We have identified a significant backlog of maintenance that has been building across the Parish for several years which we are legally obliged to resolve. In addition, we have identified a number of areas which we feel it is necessary to supplement in the light of reduced District and County council services. We also want to start to deliver a number of the manifesto commitments that received such wide support during the May 2016 election.

To help resolve this funding shortfall we have identified a number of additional revenue streams that we will establish in the coming years. This includes sponsorship, ensuring that community events are financially self sustaining and by applying for additional grants from third party organisations for our larger projects. As well as trying to increase revenue streams we have also taken the difficult decision to increase the Parish Council precept by **£28.53*** a year (an additional **£2.85*** per month over 10 monthly installments) which will bring the total precept in Romsley to **£70.67** for a band D property. Given that our current precept is so artificially low this modest real money increase of £2.85* a month or £28.53* a year equates to a percentage increase of 68%. Of course no increase is welcome and we have not taken this decision lightly, but we are convinced that it is absolutely necessary to meet our legal obligations. In addition, and as we committed to you at the May 2015 election, we will always provide you with full transparency around how we spend your money. As such you can find comprehensive details of our forecast budget on pages 4, 5 and 6.

This increase also needs to be seen in sharp contrast with the **Council Tax positions of the County and District Councils**. Based on our current understanding we estimate that the band D Council Tax will rise from **£1584.55** to around **£1675** in 2016/17. This is a real cash increase of over **£90** that equates to a percentage rise of around **6%**. Therefore against the total council tax bill of **£1675** for a band D property, the Parish Council Precept of **£70.67** will represent only **4%** of the total, but is the only part of your Council tax bill that is guaranteed to be spent in Romsley on our community.

To this end the most significant new spend for the Parish Council will be the introduction of a **Parish Maintenance Contractor** to provide 850 hours of community services. This person will undertake a wide range of maintenance activities that will start to address the maintenance backlog we face as well as overcoming the shortfall in services no longer being provided from County and District Councils. We believe that this will improve the look and feel of the Parish which in turn will support the desirability of Romsley as a place to live and thereby protect and improve the value of our houses. We also believe that there are direct benefits to community safety from having a permanent and uniformed person working daily in our community who can help keep an eye on things, report concerns directly to the Police and hopefully deter anti-social behavior. The Maintenance Contractor will start in the summer of 2016 and we will be advertising the position on the Parish Council website in late spring. Ideally this person will live within the Parish and will be able to demonstrate experience across a wide range of relevant skills. This is a bold and progressive decision which represents a significant investment of our money so we will monitor the success closely and will be glad to take feedback from the community.

The Maintenance Backlog

Many examples of this backlog can be found in our most valuable asset, the park. For example, much of the vegetation has been allowed to become overgrown over a period of several years, this has caused the water course to become blocked, the lighting columns to be undermined and it blocked sight lines in to the park which contributed to the anti-social behaviour we encountered last year. Though we ordered the vegetation to be cut back in the summer much of it has become woody and needs to be properly replaced. In addition the drainage ditch now requires full refurbishment. A number of overhanging trees need professional removal and the lighting columns reinstalled.

The parking area also requires work. The vegetation has not been looked after and needs replacing, the pot-holes need filling and a new load of surfacing material is required to prevent more pot holes occurring in the future. Also, the fencing surrounding the parking area has not been routinely maintained and has become rotten and unsafe, sadly it means we now have to replace all the fencing in the next 3 years as opposed to repairing a few sections each year and thereby spreading the cost.

The play area is another example where we have a significant backlog of problems. The equipment will need to be repainted in the next 4 years and to ensure our children are safe the surface must be covered with 300mm of appropriate material which in our park is wood. However, natural settlement and wastage means that a new load of wood chips at £900 per load is required each year to ensure we maintain the 300mm optimal depth across the full play area whilst ensuring the top layer is clean and sufficiently loose. This maintenance regime has not been adhered to in recent years. During the summer of 2015 an emergency load was installed to ensure we maintained the bare minimum standard, however, going forward we will require a further 6 loads to return us to the 300mm level we require followed by one load a year thereafter.

(* for a band D property)

Area	Num	Activity	Actual 2016/17	Planned 2017/18**	Planned 2018/19**
Asset maintenance	1	Parish wide vegetation control (Includes grass cutting & planting)	£7,200	£7,200	£7,200
	2	Lengths-man duties	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
	3	Dog and litter bin emptying	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
	4	Parish Maintenance Contractor	£9,600	£9,600	£9,600
	5	Maintenance consumables (including licences and training)	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
	6	Play area wood chips - renew to required depth	£2,700	£2,700	£0
	7	Play area wood chips - annual replacement	£0	£0	£900
	8	Existing play equipment repaint	£0	£0	£0
	9	Park car-park surface renewal	£0	£0	£2,500
	10	Park car-park birds-mouth fencing replacement	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
	11	Park entry gate replacement	£0	£0	£0
	12	Litter bins, dog waste bins, grit bins and benches	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Community	13	Christmas tree	£100	£100	£100
	14	Community safety	£750	£750	£750
	15	Annual business forum	£100	£100	£100
	16	Environment protection activities	£750	£750	£750
	17	War memorial / flag pole	£0	£0	£0
	18	Improved Park facilities	£0	£0	£0
	19	Community support grant fund	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
	20	Young persons grant fund	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
	21	Youth Parish Council	£250	£250	£250
Highways	22	Simple traffic calming - across the Parish	£2,500	£1,500	£1,500
	23	Complex traffic calming - electronic signs that display car registration	£0	£0	£0
	24	Complex traffic calming - physical road & pavement changes on Day House Bank	£0	£0	£0
	25	School crossing	£0	£0	£0
	26	Shop parking layout changes	£0	£0	£0
Planning	27	Parish, neighbourhood and environmental plan development	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
	28	Planning consultancy reserves to respond to B'ham / Dudley housing expansion	£0	£3,000	£5,000
Events	29	Romstock	£0	£0	£0
	30	Queens Birthday celebration	£500	£0	£0
	31	Other community events	£0	£0	£0
Statutory	32	Operating costs	£17,045	£16,704	£16,370
		Total spending	£52,995	£54,154	£56,520
Revenue (not precept)	33	Revenue from events	£1,000	£1,000	£1,250
	34	Events sponsorship	£500	£750	£750
	35	Newsletter sponsorship	£400	£400	£400
	36	Website sponsorship	£200	£200	£200
	37	Planned other sponsorship	£50	£100	£100
	38	Lengths-man grant	£1,100	£1,100	£1,100
	39	Resilience grant	£0	£0	£0
	40	Allotment revenues	£250	£250	£250
	41	Bank interest	TBC	TBC	TBC
	42	Other 3rd party grants	£1,000	TBC	TBC
	43	From reserves	£0	£0	£0
	44	Estimated VAT refund	TBC	TBC	TBC
		Total revenue (before precept)	£4,500	£3,800	£4,050
		% increase on previous year	207.00	6.50	6.58
Held Reserves	45	General reserve (Council contingency)	£11,913	£13,000	£14,000
	46	Specific reserve - (Events cash flow)	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000
	47	Specific reserve - (Birmingham / Dudley housing expansion response)	£6,000	£9,000	£14,000
	48	Long term liabilities	£1,587	£1,587	£1,587
		Precept requested	£48,495	£50,354	£52,470
		Council tax support grant (from District Council)	£1,724	£1,782	£1,859
		Actual precept	£46,771	£48,572	£50,611
		% increase on previous year	68.00	3.85	4.20

Planned 2019/20**	Legal obligation to provide?	Notes
£7,200	Yes	Across Parish, Park and allotments (includes dangerous tree removal)
£2,000	Yes	To focus on Highways, pavement and drainage maintenance across Parish
£2,000	Yes	
£9,600	Partial	850 hours of maintenance activities across Parish to make up for reduction in District & County services
£1,500	Partial	Includes dog fouling, litter and replacement park signs
£0	Yes	6 loads required @ £900 (split over years 1 and 2)
£900	Yes	1 load per year @ £900
£500	Partial	Specialist equipment required if we use epoxy paint
£2,500	Partial	Pursue Severn Trent (load cost £3500 to £4000 +VAT) plus instamac for pot holes.
£0	Partial	Material cost per metre - £31.50 plastic, £20 wood plus labour costs - 125 metres required
£3,000		Pursue Severn Trent for compensation.
£1,500	Partial	Approx £300 each (2 litter/dog waste bins, 1 new grit/salt bin, 1 replacement & 1 new bench)
£100		
£750	Partial	Park ASB & drug prevention and Neighbourhood watch & Park CCTV * if anti-social behaviour continues
£100		
£750	Partial	Litter picking, wild tree planting, habitat management, wild orchid management,
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means *
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means *
£1,500		
£1,000		
£250		
£1,500		Physical signs, children's speed awareness, wheelie bin stickers etc
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means (£12000 per sign) solar power required
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means (est.£350K plus)
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means (est. £75K)
£0		To be funded by 3rd party grant or other means (est. £45K to £60K)
£1,000	Partial	Critical to respond to Birmingham / Dudley expansion
£5,000		Reserves to provided consultancy to respond to Birmingham/ Dudley house building programme and threat to green belt
£0		To be self funded from revenues from year commencing 2016/17onwards
£0		
£0		To be self funded from revenues from year commencing 2016/17onwards *
£16,043	Yes	Includes audit, safety inspections, insurances, facilities hire, HR costs, utilities, office & communications
£58,693		
£1,500		
£750		
£400		
£200		
£200		
£1,100		
£0		
£250		
TBC		To be paid into general reserves
TBC		Secured £1000 from County Council for family seating around the park play area
£0		
TBC		To be paid into general reserves
£4,400		
8.64		
£15,000		Those lines in purple show budget lines that are fulfilling the election manifesto commitments made by Romsley Together candidates in the Parish Council elections May 2016.
£6,000		
£19,000		
£1,587		
£54,293		* Dependent on community consultation via Parish planning exercise
£1,968		** All figures in these columns utilise 2016 / 2017 prices
£52,325		
3.39		

2016/17 - Breakdown of critical budget lines

Parish wide vegetation control (lines 1): There has been a noticeable decline in the frequency of vegetation control across the Parish. In the last 12 months the Parish Council has received more correspondence and complaints about this than any other matter. The problems are occurring across the Parish affecting the park, the village gullies and many locations in the wider Parish. Lack of attention to this is creating a nuisance for residents and a number of safety and anti-social behavior issues are. By creating a specific budget and an associated vegetation control plan we will be able to introduce cyclical vegetation control in which we visit known areas before they become a problem. This budget line will also pay for the removal of a number of dangerous trees to prevent any future damage and will provide money for the replanting of appropriate flowers and plants to improve the environment we live in.

Parish Maintenance Contractor (lines 4 and 5): Local Authority budgets have been reduced by more than 30% since 2010 and this is having a significant impact on routine maintenance activities in the Parish. Many parts of the Village and Parish are looking shabby, with litter lying in hedgerows, signs going uncleaned, gullies going ungritted in winter and pavements not being cleaned. Many items of street furniture such as lights, posts and barriers are damaged or require painting. This affects everyone as a scruffy, unkempt Romsley is a less pleasant place to live and it will have a detrimental effect on our house prices (just a 1% reduction in house prices equates to a cost to our community of £1.5million pounds). To help overcome these issues the Parish Council has decided to employ a Parish Maintenance Contractor who will be a dedicated resource to improve the ambience of our village. The Parish Maintenance Contractor will undertake at least 20 hours of work each week and will be in a high visibility uniform so you can see where they are at any one time. This continuous uniformed presence in the Parish will be a visible deterrent to anti social behavior and any criminality (such as the low level drug dealing in the Park). We hope that it will help to address the reductions in Police funding and the consequential reduction in Police presence in the Parish.

Litter Bins, dog waste bins, winter grit bins and benches (line 12): We have identified several locations that would benefit from new or replacement street furniture. The normal cost of these items is around £300 and we have budgeted for 5 items per year. For 2016/17 we have secured £1000 of additional funding from the County Council to pay for improved family seating in the play area. The Parish Council is currently exploring the use of street furniture made from recycled plastic that is formed and coloured to look Brown. This is good for the environment but also reduces long-term maintenance costs as they do not rot and they do not need repainting.

Community Support Grant & Young Person's Grant funds (Lines 19 and 20): As promised in the 2015 Election the Parish Council has created two specific funds to provide small grants to people or organisations within our Parish that will provide wider benefits to our community. The Parish Council has historically considered and funded requests from the community but this had been done on an ad-hoc basis. We have now established a specific procedure with an application form that is available on the website. Through this process people or organisations asking for grants must demonstrate the benefits to the community and this will be open for scrutiny on the website.

Highways (lines 22 to 26): At several locations across the Parish we are blighted by traffic problems. These range from speeding and the absence of a school crossing to significant parking problems outside the shops. The Parish Council has opened a dialogue with the County Council on options for resolving these which is progressing and we have obtained some high level estimates for the associated cost. Unfortunately, there is no money available in the County Council for sorting these problems and the costs involved are mostly beyond the means of the Parish Council precept other than simple traffic calming. As such we are seeking other revenue streams to fund these and until these are secured we will not commit to any work, therefore they are showing as zero funded lines in the budget.

Planning (lines 27, 28 and 47): This will provide the Parish with the appropriate Parish, Neighborhood and Environmental Plans that will describe to District and County councils the types of services and the levels of development we want to see in our community. These documents are also of critical importance to any form of public or planning hearing that will oversee any submissions around the expansion of Birmingham and Dudley housing into our Parish and its greenbelt. In addition we are trying to build up a contingency reserve that we can use to pay for professional planning advice & representation to ensure the interest of Romsley's community is properly represented when Birmingham / Dudley expansion is tabled. As guidance the cost of this support to Hagley and Clent around the Cara Homes development was more than £20,000.

Events (lines 29, 30, 31 and 46): Community events are an important focal point for residents and remain very popular. In 2015 Romstock covered its costs and did not require any additional grant from the Parish Council. Going forward the Parish Council is committed to providing a variety of events that appeal across the community. This includes Romstock but we are looking at additional options in consultation with the community. However, in the future we want all events to be self financing and, where possible, to make a positive contribution to our finances. As such we have not included any events related budgets other than for a one off grant in 2016/17 to help celebrate the Queen's Birthday and the 150th anniversary of our Parish. An events reserve of £6000 has been built up from previous Romstocks and we will retain it at this level to provide a cash flow and to cover unforeseen contingencies.

Statutory duties (line 32): This line covers the statutory duties and operational costs of the Parish Council and includes the cost of our annual audit of accounts, our insurances, the cost of utilities bills, the cost of facilities and administration. These lines also include the human resource costs of the Council. We are committed to reducing these costs by 2% per annum over the next 4 years.

Revenue (lines 33 to 44): The Parish Council is working hard to identify additional revenue that will reduce the burden on the Parish precept. We have already introduced sponsorship for this newsletter and are looking to offer other sponsorship opportunities for events and services. Our intention is to generate £4,650 of additional revenue in 2016/17 which will represent a 207% increase compared to 2015/16. The Parish Council has also started applying for grants from third party organisations to fund improvements to our facilities such as the Park and we have already been successful in securing £1,000 from the County Councillor to improve seating for families around the play area.

General Reserves (line 45): The Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) who provide guidance to Parish Councils recommend that reserves should be equal to 100% of the precept level. As things stand our general reserves are currently £11,913 or 25% of the 2016/17 precept amount. This is a significant shortfall and it will take us time to build the general reserves up to the best practice level. However, in the meantime, and though not ideal, we can fall back on the specific reserve accounts (lines 46 and 47) which are for Events and for Birmingham / Dudley expansion planning support in an emergency. From 2016/17 we are aiming to increase reserves by £1000 per annum from our VAT refunds and bank interest payments, we will also direct any in-year efficiencies towards the general reserve account.

Notice Board



Parish Council meetings - Monday evenings

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

- **Monday 14th March**
- **Monday 11th April**
- **Monday 9th May (AGM)**
- **Monday 13th June**
- **Monday 11th July**
- **Monday 12th September**

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.

Parish Council surgeries - Saturday mornings

We have received a lot of feedback from parishioners who want to talk to the Parish Council but can't attend the main council meetings because of family commitments that affect many of us on weekday evenings. To help overcome this problem we are going to start holding Parish Council surgeries on Saturday mornings between 10:00am and 12:30pm at the Romsley Scout Centre. These informal sessions will give the community more opportunities to meet with us. We will be holding two surgeries in 2016 on.

- **Saturday 23rd April**
- **Saturday 1st October**

If they prove successful we will look to increase the frequency of these in 2017. Improving links between our community and all our elected officials is a key objective of the Parish Council. So we have invited our District Councillors Margaret Sherry and Chris Allen-Jones to attend the first surgery in April. We will be inviting the County Councillor Rachel Jenkins to the October surgery.

Haybridge High School catchment area

During the past 6 months the Parish Council have worked hard to challenge the ongoing and persistent rumours that Haybridge High School was planning to remove Romsley from its catchment area. These rumours are completely untrue but have been highly damaging to our community.

Not only is this a source of great worry to the parents of prospective students, but it has also had a detrimental effect on house sales within the Parish and was raised as a significant concern by a number of estate agents at the Halesowen Chamber of Commerce. Through discussions with the estate agents that serve our area the "Haybridge effect" conservatively adds a 10% to 15% premium to house prices in our Parish and it can be argued that the cost to our community of these rumours could have exceeded £15million*.

The Parish Council has liaised directly with the school and the local estate agents to resolve this problem and I can categorically confirm that **Haybridge High School have no plans whatsoever to change the catchment area**. In fact, in recognition of the new houses being built in the area, Haybridge will be increasing its intake from 168 to 190 children the academic year 2016/17.

So that the estate agents can provide clear evidence to prospective buyers we asked Haybridge to place a statement on their website which clarifies this position; <http://www.haybridge.worcs.sch.uk/lower-apply.html>. A link to which is available on the Parish Council Website. In addition St Kenelm's School has also issued a letter from Haybridge School clarifying this position for its parents.

Sadly, some of these rumours continue to persist and we are working to identify their source. However, in the meantime if you encounter these rumours please challenge them and direct them to either the Haybridge or Parish Council websites.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in helping to resolve this vitally important issue for our community. In particular I would like to thank everyone at Haybridge School and especially Rowena Quinlan, the Admissions Officer, for all their understanding and support in this matter.

*(*Conservatively the Parish has approximately 600 houses with an average house price in the Parish of £250K which equates to £150million of total housing stock, 10% of this is the £15million quoted)*

Romstock 2016 and the Queens 90th Birthday Celebrations

We are very pleased to announce that Romstock 2016 will be on **Saturday June 11th**

This year will see the Queen reach her 90th birthday and Romstock is marking this event by holding "A Right Royal Romstock". Expect the usual fantastic line up with great music, food and stalls with celebrations going on from 12pm through to 9pm. We are even expecting a royal visit when Elvis "the King" Presley makes a very welcome return to the Romstock stage.

On Sunday 12th June we will also be holding a celebration of the Queen's birthday with a tea party in the park. A picnic with refreshments will be included in the admission price and we will be entertained by a local choir and a brass band. This will be a fabulous family event that will be a really memorable way of celebrating the Queen's birthday with the rest of the community.

Tickets for both events will go on sale in May and will be available at the Village Spa shop or on line. This year we will be introducing a significant discount for advanced sales as well as a family ticket that covers 2 adults and up to 3 children. We will be releasing details of the line up, as well as ticket prices, on the Parish Council website once all the arrangements for both days have been finalized which should hopefully be in early April.

This year we are looking to introduce sponsorship for Romstock to help cover costs. Traditionally Romstock has an attendance of over 1000 people and it always obtains good coverage in the local press. If you would like further details about this fabulous sponsorship and marketing opportunity for your company, whilst making a big contribution to your community, please contact **Ruth Mullett** (Clerk to the Council) on **01562 712050**.

Romsley Parish Plan – Your Parish, Your Say

- ❖ DO YOU WANT YOUR VOICE TO BE HEARD?
- ❖ IS CHANGE COMING TO THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT WE CHERISH?
- ❖ DO YOU VALUE YOUR VILLAGE LIFESTYLE AND WANT TO PROTECT IT?
 - ❖ DO YOU HAVE AN OPINION ON THE SERVICES & FACILITIES YOU WANT IN THE FUTURE?

A community-led Parish Plan is your chance to have a say in the issues that affect both the present and future of your community. Romsley does not, yet, have a plan in place.

WHAT IS A PARISH PLAN?

It is a detailed *survey of the Community*, carried out by the Community itself.

It sets out to identify what the Community *likes* as well as *what changes are desirable*.

The Parish Plan *represents the views of the Community*.

It establishes a '*Plan of Action*' for the Parish over the next 5 to 10 years.

WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

It *represents the views of the Community* and as such, it will provide Romsley with a very *influential document*, that the relevant authorities must take regard of.

It establishes a rationale for *local management*.

The content of a Parish Plan helps to *inform the relevant bodies* on community matters e.g. *service delivery; funding; development; planning consultation; land use; utilities*.

WHO DO WE NEED TO PRODUCE ONE?

We need members of the Community to volunteer, as much or as little time they can afford to assist in the process. *Do you have any time, specific interests or skills that you could offer?*

A Steering Group is needed, to drive the process. Whilst the Parish Council will be represented, it is very important that members of the Community are actively involved. *Are you interested? Can you help?*

HOW CAN YOU HAVE A SAY OR GET INVOLVED?

The Parish Council will be holding a public meeting on **Saturday February 27th 2016 at Romsley Scout Centre between 10am and 4pm**. This will offer you the opportunity to learn more about community- led Parish Plans and also to record any initial thoughts and comments you may have.

You may also have your say or get involved by contacting the Parish Council through the Clerk: Ruth Mullet at 167 Bromsgrove Road, Hunnington B62 0JU; Tel: 01562 712050; email: clerk@romsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk Please reference the Parish Plan in any enquiry.

Any issues raised at this early stage are very important, as they will help inform any future public consultation or questionnaire. Your attendance is vital and we would welcome your input.



Romsley Youth Council

- Are you aged between 10 and 18?
- Do you live in the Parish of Romsley?
- Are you passionate about your Parish and making it even better for the younger generation?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then we need you!

Romsley Parish Council is in the process of setting up a Youth Council to represent the views of our community's young people. You will be required to attend 1 meeting a month and will work with Parish Councilors and other community leaders to make a real difference to the future of your Parish.

If you are interested in becoming a Youth Parish Councilor contact **Ruth Mullett** at clerk@romsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk for an application form which you will need to complete and return to the Council by **Friday 11th March**.

New Parish Council Website is Live

We are pleased to announce that our new website is now fully operational. You can visit the site at romsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk where you will find lots of information about the Parish Council and the wider community.

On the site you will be able to access Council news, see minutes of our meetings, gain updates on key decisions as well as access information on our budgets and correspondence. We have also included an events diary and you can use the site to contact the Council and report matters of concern. Please have a look and let us know what you think.