

Romsley Parish Council Chairpersons Statement for annual meeting May 2017. ***(Speaking notes)***

As I look back on the past year I do so with mixed emotions. I am proud of the work the Parish Council has undertaken to support both the community and the environment we live in, but I remain frustrated over our dependency on 3rd parties that limit our ability to resolve some of the most pressing issues facing Romsley and its residents.

Community events are an important way of celebrating the area that we live in and reinforcing our responsibilities to each other. Romstock 2016 was an enormous success seeing record numbers of attendees which was achieved without any Parish Council subsidy and a small profit returned to community good causes. The team is working hard to ensure Romstock 2017 is equally successful.

Last autumn we organised an outdoor movie night in support of St Kenelm's School. Over 170 people of all ages enjoyed the latest version of Disney's Jungle Book with more than £400 contributed to school resources and we are looking to run a similar event this coming September. We also organised a sponsored walk through which the children raised £370 pounds for BBC children in need.

I am also pleased that we have been able to progress our plans for re-establishing the tradition of Celebrating St Kenelms day which has been a unique part of Romsley heritage and I look forward to enjoying the last night of the proms music and fireworks on July 15th

Improving the physical area in which we live remains an important focus for the Parish Council. During the past year we were successful in applying for a number of grants to pay for new facilities. We were successful applying for a grant of £8000 from the Tesco's to install a small outdoor gym and safety surface. We also received a £1000 grant from Rachel Jenkins, the former County Councillor, for the purchase and installation of family picnic tables.

During the past 12 months we have started to address a backlog of maintenance issues within our Parish. We have removed or reshaped several trees that were impacting residents and we have started to address the dog fouling issues through signage and the roll out of bag dispensers. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Nigel Williamson, along with his colleague Steve Tromans for their hard work during the last 12 months painting and repairing street furniture, picking litter and managing vegetation as well as many other tasks that are making Romsley better.

It is also with great pleasure that we have finally been able to start the refurbishment of the telephone Kiosk in St Kenelms road. It has taken a lot of effort with BT to get the project to restore this great British icon moving forwards, however once the community defibrillator is installed I am pleased it will once more play an important role in our community

The Park is the largest and most important public asset in our care and during the past year we have undertaken a wide range of improvements. Perhaps most notable was the work undertaken to resurface the carpark, repair fencing and replace the entrance gate. These areas were originally damaged in 2012 by Severn Trent contractors during their installation of storm drainage on St Kenelms Road and the Parish Council were successful in securing rectification from Severn Trent to an estimated value of £15000.

We have also continued our work to remove the drug dealing problem from the park and I remain determined to remove this problem from our community. We have installed a security gate to prevent dealing occurring in the hidden part of the carpark and we have agreed with the Police a limited CCTV solution to provide intelligence to them. I am also pleased by our response to the spike in burglaries that has occurred in the Parish. Working with the Police we have identified the benefits of deploying to the entire community, free of charge, Smart water forensic marking kits which will take place this summer and will involve Police and Parish Councillors in the mass distribution.

The work with the Police has shown the effectiveness of public bodies working collaboratively together for the common good. However as I said in my opening lines I am frustrated by our reliance on other levels of local authority to address issues facing our residents. Particularly frustrating is the lack of movement around the road improvements especially with regard to a response to the Parish Council proposals for improving the parking and traffic problems at the shops as well as introducing a crossing at the school with associated traffic calming. Both of these matters are critical for our Parish and whilst we have seen a number of the defects we have reported addressed, I remain concerned over the lack of engagement on these big issues. We look forward to working with our new County Councillor to help get them sorted.

Planning controls remain a challenging issue for all our residents and once more sit outside the authority of the Parish Council. During the planning process for the Birmingham resilience project, the District Council planning committee should be commended for their interest and support of the Parish Council and community in its work to modify the proposals. However our community's own voice remains relatively weak, a situation exasperated by the current absence of a Parish and Neighbourhood plan that truly reflects our communities needs and desires. The preparation of these documents and the levels of consultation required presents a significant challenge for the Parish Council. However this remains a priority area for us to address and I'm pleased that the important parish questionnaire is now ready for distribution in June. I ask all residents to participate in it.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to everyone who has supported the Parish Council and myself during the last 12 months. Ruth Mullett the Parish Clerk plays a really important role undertaking much of the day to day work on our community's behalf also the Parish Councillors put huge effort in to the community which is entirely voluntary, these efforts are always in addition to their professional work and family responsibilities, I thank them all.

I would especially like to offer my thanks to Jayne Holloway who has decided to step down as a Parish Councillor. Jayne has many commitments but she has always worked hard to protect the interests of residents and has made an important contribution to the future of Romsley through her work around the Severn Trent Birmingham resilience project.

I would like to thank the Co-op and their staff for the very generous support that have provided to us in recent months as well as Hillside ladies for their support on the community defibrillator.

Finally I would like to offer special thanks to residents Lois Swift, Nigel Stead and Mike Buckley who, through exceptional effort, hard work and determination with Severn Trent and Bromsgrove District Council, succeeded in getting several significant changes to the design of the Birmingham Resilience Project which will reduce its impact on our community in the years to come and truly demonstrates that together we are stronger.

Richard Arrowsmith
Chairperson
Romsley Parish Council