

Since May 2024, the council has done much to improve its running and administration. Debra stepped down as Clerk last May but helped us to recruit and welcome our new clerk, Helen Billington who started with the council in September 2024. Debra kindly agreed to act and continue as the council's IT consultant on a pro bono basis and has since helped the Clerk with email issues and improving our council website.

In August 2024, Cllr Webber and I leafleted all the 72 homes in the parish with an update on the proposed solar farm developments at Astley Gorse and Sole End plus ideas on what we might want to achieve in the coming years. There was mention of a community orchard, renovating the Duke of Suffolk monument and of the parish council getting more involved with local groups and events, namely the village's two Open Weekends in June and September. This newsletter was produced with the help from our former clerk, Debra.

The two Open Weekends last year went well and raised over £3000 for the church. Councillors helped on an individual basis at the church or with the kitchen or helping with setting up and taking down of tables and chairs. In March 2025 the chair and Cllr Proctor met with other community groups volunteers at the Reading Room to discuss how we could "share the load" of organising the Open Weekends this year – there was no formal list of tasks or timeline produced but much agreement and good will. It was a positive first step in establishing more community cooperation between established community groups in the parish, namely St Mary's Church and the parish council.

The Duke of Suffolk monument has been put on hold for now. The Arbury Estate informed the council that, due to a proposed Severn Trent pipeline from Meriden to Kingsbury, which will pass under the field where the monument is situated, there was an opportunity to ask the company to provide some sort of renovation help for the monument as part of their pipeline construction in the coming months.

The Solar Farms are still not here. There has been work at the Astley Gorse site as National Grid have started to lay cabling at the entrance to the fields on Nuthurst Lane. This has caused some disruption to traffic which has been a welcome relief for residents as the speed of some road users is still a concern. The Sole End Farm site has no apparent construction on it as yet. Astley Gorse will provide NO community funding; the Sole End Farm site company will provide some community funding once electricity is being produced from the site.

The new dog bin will be now sited at the end of the large brick wall by the gate to the castle grounds on Castle Drive (thanks to the Estate for clearing the ivy from the wall).

We continue to have a fly tipping problem (like most parish councils in North Warwickshire) and we are grateful to the Streetscape team for clearing these quickly on our behalf. Potholes continue to be an issue but have been dealt with promptly despite the quality not being as good as we would like for our roads.

Today I'm stepping down as both chair and parish councillor after 3 years. I thank everyone for their kindness, support and enthusiasm for the minutiae of parish council meetings over the past 3 years. I wish you all every success for the future.

Mick Spicer