

Statement to Residents

The Wikipedia definition of a Parish Council is:

“A parish council is a civil local authority found in England and is the lowest tier of local government. It is an elected corporate body, has variable tax raising powers, and it carries out beneficial public activities in a geographical area known as a civil parish”. A Parish Council should not be confused with a Parochial Church Council.

Due to a lack of interest by residents there has been no parish council election for some years and the few interested residents nominated have been elected or re-elected without a contest.

It is important to note that the membership of the Parish Council is made up of 12 unpaid volunteers who each give a considerable amount of their free time to help all residents of both villages. Councillors attend regular public meetings throughout the year that residents are both encouraged and welcome to attend. The Parish Office is also open and accessible to residents in order that queries, or concerns, can be raised in between those meetings.

The Parish Council is aware of inflammatory posts that have recently appeared on the Hampton in Arden and Catherine de Barnes Residents Facebook page. The Parish Council will not enter into heated disputes with residents via Facebook as we do not feel it is productive. Councillors are happy to be contacted either directly or via our Parish Clerk and will always do everything within our limited powers to help and support residents.

The Parish Council is an amazing resource one that, as a Parish, we are incredibly lucky to have. Councillors regularly attend meetings with various parties in order to hold others to account and to represent residents. At present, along with the day to day running of the Parish Council, Councillors are heavily involved in meetings related to: -

- ✓ the neighbourhood plan;
- ✓ the proposed new Motorway Services Area;
- ✓ HS2;
- ✓ Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee
- ✓ Pedestrian and Road Safety;
- ✓ Speed Watch and Street Watch;
- ✓ planning issues to include the proposed redevelopment of the Sports Club;
- ✓ street cleaning, lighting and maintenance;
- ✓ maintaining the Recreation Ground and Spinney;
- ✓ maintaining the school field, play equipment and allotments;
- ✓ annual Remembrance Sunday parade;
- ✓ annual Christmas tree light switch on preparations and event;
- ✓ Tree Preservation Orders;

- ✓ Liaising with Solihull MBC on planned traffic controls to ensure they are kept to a minimum, particularly keeping a watch and reporting Utilities imposing emergency traffic restrictions to ensure these are kept at a minimum; and
- ✓ Liaising with Skanska on the M42 Junction 6 Improvement Works in Hampton and Catherine de Barnes.

The Parish Council has done everything in its power regarding the works being undertaken by National Highways regarding the Junction 6 Improvement Scheme and has worked with Solihull MBC and our Ward Councillors in order to do everything we can to support residents. It was as a result of these conversations that signs were put in place to state that “*business open as usual*” and would remain in place whilst road closures and works are in place. It was also as a result of Councillors meetings that a village meeting was held via Zoom with Skanska where residents could directly address him with their concerns. The Parish Council is aware that Skanska subsequently sent teams to meet with local business to further discuss how they could help. We do appreciate and share your frustrations regarding the series of road closures and works being undertaken.

To clarify, the Parish Council has not been contacted by local businesses seeking our support on this issue. However, that does not mean that we have done nothing in the background. Meetings have been ongoing with Skanska, National Highways and SMBC Highways, the most recent being held last week with Ward Councillors. The Parish Council has been notified by Solihull MBC that grants have been given to all local businesses during this financial year in addition to business rate reductions. However, despite that, ongoing conversations are being held with Solihull MBC whereby Councillors are requesting that the impact upon local businesses be revisited given that disruption to the village is due to continue beyond this financial year.

We reiterate that the Parish Council will always do everything within its power to help and support residents. We stress that residents are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings and the Parish Clerk, Julie Barnes, is always happy to welcome you into the office to listen to your concerns and will ensure these are brought to the attention of all of your Parish Councillors.

We are a very busy team of volunteers working to help and support the residents of the villages of Hampton in Arden and Catherine de Barnes.

Please do take a look at our Facebook page, our website (www.hamptoninarden.org.uk) or contact Julie Barnes via email: clerk@hamptoninarden.org.uk should you need any further information.