**TYSOE PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S REPORT MAY 2022**

This report covers the Parish Council’s activities in the year to 31st March, 2022 and also the plans for the year to 31st March, 2023.

The Council was pleased and relieved to return to “normality” after the difficulties of life under Covid lock-down. The return to face-to-face meetings was very welcome after having struggled with virtual meetings on Zoom. I would like to thank Councillors and residents for their forbearance during these difficult times.

In September, 2021, our Clerk, Beverley Thorpe resigned to pursue a full-time career elsewhere. I would like to register my sincere thanks to Beverley for the sterling work she did in first climbing a very steep learning curve without any previous clerking experience and then going on to provide excellent service to the Council.

We were very fortunate to recruit a new Clerk to take office immediately following Beverley’s departure. Charmaine Swift took over the Clerk’s reins in September, again with no previous experience of the job. She has also climbed the same learning curve and has picked up where Beverley left off. My thanks to Charmaine for her support to both the Council and me.

One of the main calls on the Council’s time is planning. We review all planning applications submitted from residents of the parish in order to decide whether we should support the application or not. Our decision is given to the planning authority, Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC), who take our views into consideration along with the views of all other stakeholders. In the year to 31st March 2022 we reviewed 31 applications and I would like to thank Cllrs Millward, Littlewood and Tongue for their diligence in helping the Council reach our decision on each application.

One of the most far reaching applications that we have received in a generation is for a development of 31 houses in land off Sandpits Road. This application, submitted by Cameron Homes, if granted permission by SDC will provide 11 affordable homes of various tenures in a landscaped setting alongside 20 market homes. After much discussion with SDC and the applicant and consultation with residents the Council have supported the application subject to a number of conditions. The application is awaiting final determination by SDC at the time of writing.

In late January, 2022 the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Tysoe parish was finally put to a referendum and was supported by 404 of the 438 residents who voted. This 46% turnout and 92% majority provides a ringing endorsement of the Plan. This project was started in 2013 and absorbed thousands of man-hours of volunteers’ time. I would like to sincerely thank all of those involved for their time and support. The parish now has a binding Plan against which all planning applications will be reviewed. The NDP also enshrines the aspects of the village that residents value most highly; among them are the rural nature of the village, the views and footpaths, the natural flora and fauna and the various valuable historic assets that we are fortunate enough to enjoy.

Over the last year the Council has supported the development and encouragement of natural habitats around the village. This initiative, instigated by Tysoe resident Professor Rosemary Collier, will enhance the village landscape and natural environment to the benefit of all residents.

The Council has recently decided to incorporate the Tysoe Heritage Research Group as a working group of the Council. This group is carrying out valuable research into the history and story of Tysoe through the ages and will be presenting its findings to residents from time to time.

Other, ongoing projects that the Council is undertaking include:

* Street lighting – we are reviewing all street lights in the village with a view top rationalising them where possible and renewing non-functioning lights. Our aim is to reduce the cost of lighting (electricity costs us over £2,500 per annum) whilst not compromising the safety of both pedestrians and motorists. We have an annual budget of £7,000 for the replacement or removal of lighting so this project will span a number of years.
* Parking/Traffic Management – it is inevitable that parking will be a problem in a village like Tysoe. Our aim is to find a solution whereby more cars can be accommodated off the thoroughfare and off the village verges. Again, this will be a project that will span a number of years. A specific action that we will implement in the current year is the installation of a reserve to prevent parked vehicles from compromising easy access to the GP surgery and the installation of a dropped kerb to provide better pedestrian and wheelchair access across the road.

During February, 2022 a traffic survey was carried out at various points around the village. This indicated that whilst there was not a significant speeding problem there was a high peak of through traffic at certain times during the day. The Council will maintain a watching brief on this to ensure that the increasing car population in the village does not give rise to safety issues.

* Ongoing maintenance of the children’s play equipment – the equipment is inspected on a regular basis and repairs and general maintenance carried out as required. We have recently sanctioned repairs of over £2,000 to keep the equipment in good order.
* Maintenance of the war memorials – the memorials are in relatively poor condition and in need of renovation. Following a recent inspection the Council has sanctioned spending over £7,000 in order to carry out the much needed work. We are seeking grants to contribute towards this work.
* Platinum Jubilee celebrations – the Council is co-ordinating a number of activities to celebrate the Jubilee in conjunction with a number of other village institutions. A budget of £5,000 has been created to fund these activities including the planting of a commemorative tree on the recreation ground in late September 2022.
* Ongoing maintenance of village infrastructure and green spaces – the Council carries out regular maintenance including the mowing of verges and playing fields. This maintenance costs over £7,000 per year and accounts for a significant proportion of our ongoing budget. The mowing contract is regularly reviewed to ensure that residents get value for money.
* Affordable Housing – the Council is pursuing the potential opportunity to utilise the site of the now closed Methodist Church to build a small development of affordable homes to partially satisfy the need already registered in the village. We will be following this up with a degree of urgency in the coming months.

After very careful review the Council decided to set the parish precept for the year to 31st March, 2023 (i.e. the amount charged to parish residents as part of their annual Council Tax charge) at £34,345, an increase of £71 on the precept for 2021/22. The precept represents an annual charge of £61.06 for a Band D property in Tysoe. This is below the average for SDC of £66.08. Essentially we have kept the precept unchanged in a hostile cost environment.

In May 2021 after a long illness we sadly lost Cllr Chris Williams, our ward member for Warwickshire County Council. Chris had served his ward with enthusiasm, skill and dedication for many years and is greatly missed. At a by-election Cllr Chris Mills was elected to the ward and the Council welcomes his advice and support.

Cllr John Feilding continues to serve as ward member for SDC and, again, his advice and support is valued by the Council.

Finally I would like to give my sincere thanks to all Councillors and to our Clerk for their tireless contribution to the work of the Council and the support I have enjoyed from them. The time that they give so freely is much appreciated.

We value views and input from parish residents and invite all residents to attend our meetings which take place in the village hall (Reading Room while the hall is out of action) at 7.15pm on the second Monday of each month.

Cllr David Roache

Chair, Tysoe Parish Council