

## Cotesbach Parish Council

### Chairman's report

Ed Hunt, May 2023

Thanks to the Councillors support over the past year, as well as our Clerk. Residents in the village continue to kindly contribute and help on Parish Council matters, including Claire Mellon as quarry liaison, and Gavin Bennett promoting biodiversity through the wildflower verge scheme, bird boxes and pond improvements.

There have been a number of local planning requests this year, including applications for 2 new houses within existing home boundaries. 1 was refused by the council, and an appeal later dismissed. The other was withdrawn. The Parish Council assessed both sites and objected based on reasons specific to each site. The District Council refused the application that remained on the basis of the loss of privacy for neighbouring buildings.

An application for "holiday lodges" at Moorbarns Lane was being considered for around 1/2 of the year. The Parish Council objected to the application amongst concerns that it would impact the landscape and lead to disturbance from the site if the short-term users were not controlled / managed correctly. Evidence from similar applications in the area from the same applicant would suggest they are ultimately to be used as a traveller's site, when there are sufficient traveller pitches allocated to Lutterworth. The District Council postponed a decision on the application because they were not comfortable adequate measures were in place to ensure safe road use along Moorbarns Lane.

Tarmac claimed to have removed their interest in progressing with their industrial along the A426. Looking closer, it seems that Harborough District's annual Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) identifies the site as "not fit for development" in the short to medium term, suggesting Tarmac would not likely gain support from the District Council for its development any time soon.

We continued to support Shawell Parish in their campaign for ensuring restoration of the quarry. We will continue to work with them and understand best how they can be supported going forward.

We invested in some more wildflower seed from small amounts of excess funds available, and attempted the wildflower verge near the church again. A channel along the verge was rotavated to improve seed success, although we are yet to see if it has been more successful.

We benefited from the Eight Parishes CIC fund to buy and position some bird boxes around the village, including Owl boxes. The Eight Parishes funds also supported the Churchyard's replacement fencing. Cotesbach's outstanding grant amount for the Eight Parishes fund finished at approximately £15,000.

Other Parish Council finances remained stable, although we are now spending all the precept each year, leaving no surplus each year. However, the Northfield Farm Solar array was commissioned at the end of 2022. This meant the Parish Council was paid the community fund of £32,500. Use of these funds has not yet been agreed, but there is an interest in using it support energy-related projects in the area.

The year finished with a slightly unexpected election for Parish Councillors, as we had 6 applicants for the 5 positions. We welcome Gavin Bennett, Annie Newton and Rob Morris. Margaret Wild and myself were also elected, but Raj Philippardos lost out by one vote. Many thanks to Raj for her efforts and time over the past 18 months. As a reminder, just because you're not a Councillor it doesn't mean you can't contribute to council activities.

We couldn't progress with the Neighborhood plan this year, as the funding for legal support to create the plan has been temporarily suspended, but we hope for this to be re-opened soon. Other ideas from the new Councillors for new projects in the village will be welcomed and hope the Parish Council can continue to serve our residents in its responsibilities.