

Milwich



Parish Plan



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Introduction

At the end of 2008 it was considered that a collective vision for the future management and development of our parish was required. As a result, the Milwich Action Committee (MAC) was formed with the objective of producing a Milwich Parish Plan. Every household was notified of the plan and additional volunteers were invited. The Parish Council (PC) was represented on the MAC by two Councillors. Funding was obtained from a number of sources, especially the Big Lottery Fund “Awards for All”.

With the help of the Community Council of Staffordshire, questionnaires were developed to obtain the views of everyone within the parish. In summer 2009 MAC members personally delivered the survey to every household. Two questionnaires were delivered: one for the household and one to be completed by each person 16 or over, the Individual Survey.

At the time, 160 occupied properties received the survey documents, questionnaires were collected from 126 households, an excellent 79% return. A total of 238 Individual surveys were returned corresponding to 92% of the notified population.¹

The results were analysed and the comments correlated. These were then reviewed and verified and a summary produced.

In November 2009 a public Open Morning was held; the summary results were presented and additional feedback requested. This meeting was well attended and included support from District and County Councillors, Cllr. Doug Davis and Cllr. Ian Parry. A number of additional residents volunteered to assist with further stages of the analysis work leading to the production of the Parish Plan.

Subsequently, a number of topic workgroups were established, each produced a report. These were amalgamated into a document for the Parish Council to reference when discussing the future of the parish.

This Parish Plan is a summary of the above mentioned documents. Ownership of the Plan rests with the Parish Council; they have adopted the Plan² and have overall responsibility for its implementation. It is expected that additional working groups will be formed to progress aspects of the Plan. The Milwich Action Committee will continue in the short term to assist with some of these actions.

Milwich Action Committee

It is clear from the responses that residents consider our parish and village is a lovely rural area and a beauty spot of the county. The rural nature must be maintained and enhanced; any developments must be sympathetic to the existing heritage.

¹ Throughout this document all calculations resulting in a percentage are based on the number of respondents to the questionnaire unless otherwise indicated.

² At the PC meetings on 19th May and 16th June 2010.

Parish Environment

The most valued aspect of the parish is its rural nature. 90% of respondents were satisfied with the appearance of the parish although it was felt that Milwich could benefit from the planting of trees and bulbs which would add some colour to the

surroundings. Street lighting was generally perceived as adequate, although there were some problem areas noted. 67% supported Milwich entering the Best Kept Village competition.



Survey Findings

- 42% indicated more pavements were required, in particular on the B5027 and between the village and Green Lea School.
- Public Footpaths and Bridleways are fairly well used; however 33% of respondents felt they were not adequately maintained. Comments mostly concerned overgrown and badly maintained stiles and footpaths.
- The Playground in the centre of Milwich requires significant improvement and better maintenance.
- 30% considered fly-tipping to be a problem.
- 82% felt enough was being done to encourage Wildlife in and around the parish although some improvements could be made.
- Nearly half of respondents were not aware of the facility for fishing at Brick Kiln Pits, which is free to parishioners.



Before



Before



After



After

Actions Points

- Continue to work with the relevant authorities to improve pavement provision (where possible) including exploring the possibility of a surfaced path to Green Lea School.
- Continue to work closely with the relevant authorities to address fly-tipping issues.
- Promote and maintain footpaths and Bridleways.³
- Form a volunteer group to maintain footpaths in conjunction with the County Council.
- A workgroup to be established to draw up proposals to put to Stafford Borough Council regarding the improvement of the Playground.
- Work with Milwich Produce Guild and other interested parties to explore the planting of more bulbs and trees within the parish.
- Investigate the formation of a Milwich Wildlife Group.
- Consider entering the Best Kept Village competition in future years.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will endeavour to maintain and enhance, where appropriate, the cultural and environmental value of the parish.



³ As a result of the survey and actions by MAC, a new bridge, ten new stiles and several stile refurbishments have already been completed together with work to prevent further erosion of the banks of Milwich Brook.

Housing and Development

The results of the questionnaires provide essential statistical support for the Borough Council and Parish Council in planning for the future development of the parish. Analysis of the questionnaires indicates that, while there is no overwhelming support for any substantial development within the parish, there is strong evidence of positive local need for specific types of accommodation on a very limited scale.

The general opinion is that Milwich is a very desirable place to live but that more needs to be done to accommodate families and individuals as their needs change with time, so that they can remain in the parish without having to move elsewhere. This must be achieved without destroying the essential character of the village and surrounding area.

There appears to be a requirement for a wider variety of properties, currently these are mainly detached houses and barn conversions. This suggests a limited local need for low-cost smaller properties to suit

young couples wanting starter homes, including some to rent or purchase on a shared ownership basis. At the other end of the scale there is a need for retirement bungalows for older couples wishing to downsize from larger detached houses, leaving those properties available for others wishing to move up the property ladder.



Survey Findings

- Nearly one third of respondents (73) did not want new housing development in the parish over the next 20 years.
- The number favouring a review of the Residential Development Boundary (RDB), following further consultation, was 111; those not wanting a review was 43.

There was support for:

- “continuing the strategy adopted in previous years for barn conversions and limited building within the boundary”.⁴
- “the development of smaller more affordable houses, or housing association properties, for our children or younger families”.
- “the development of retirement homes in the parish, to enable residents to down size when they retire”. 96 respondents expressed a need for retirement homes to allow for downsizing. This raises further issues with transport, accessibility of shops and medical facilities etc. (covered in a different section of the report).
- One third of the respondents (78) wished to see new houses built during the next 20 years, to bring new people into the community.
- The survey provided evidence that people had left the parish due to lack of affordable or suitable housing. In part this is caused by high local property prices but also it suggests that the variety of existing properties is too narrow.
- Over 1 in 4 of families responding indicated a need for some or all of the family to find alternative accommodation within the next five years. Nearly everyone in this group said that they would like to stay in the parish if they could find suitable property. When asked what type of property was required, 75% opted for outright purchase, with just a small number favouring rented, and only a very small minority looking for shared ownership.
- There is need for greater variety of new properties, whether new-build or conversions, to provide a small number of flats, some 2/3 bedroom inexpensive homes for young couples and moderately sized bungalows for couples currently living in larger detached homes, whose families have moved out.

⁴ This policy has provided 10 new dwellings (new-build and barn conversions) in the parish during the last ten years.

Action Points

- Inform Stafford Borough Council that Milwich parishioners do not want large-scale development in Milwich but do support a review of the RDB on the basis that any new site should be limited to a small number of units. The overall emphasis needs to be on preservation of Milwich, much as it is today, whilst allowing for some growth to take place.
- Continue strategy adopted in previous years for barn conversions and limited building within the boundary at a similar overall rate.
- The PC will undertake to initiate a review of the RDB (involving further consultation with the residents) in order to maintain the controlled growth of Milwich over the next 20 years.
- Review the future housing needs of the parish.



Residential Development Boundary



Policy Statement

- Substantial development will not be supported in the parish, however local needs will be viewed sympathetically; any development will need to be in keeping with the local character. The Parish Council will continue to work with the relevant bodies to represent the parishioners' views.
- The RDB should be retained and kept under review.
- Any new development should take into account local needs.



Traffic

Traffic through the parish is a major area of concern for many of the residents. It is widely acknowledged that our road networks are rural; we do have the B5027 running through the village. 63% of respondents believe speeding to be a problem and that weight restrictions should be imposed across the parish. Concerns were also raised about the size of vehicles and that they are overweight for our roads.

Survey Findings

- 52% of respondents would like to see additional speed restrictions introduced. The B5027 was highlighted as the problem road for most speeding traffic.
- Respondents suggested additional speed restrictions in the following locations; Sandon Lane, Garshall Green Lane, Potmans Lane, The Allways and Wallbrook Lane.
- A number of suggestions were made to address speeding traffic.
- 64% of respondents considered that there were major danger spots on the roads in the parish.
- 56% of the respondents had been aware of the Community Speedwatch scheme and 1 in 5 of the respondents are prepared to assist in a new Speedwatch program.
- 63% of respondents would support weight restrictions on the B5027 and other highways in the parish.
- Between 55% and 58% of respondents were happy with the condition of the verges and roads.
- 16% believe that there is a parking problem in the parish.



Action Points

- Investigate the introduction of traffic calming measures to encourage drivers to respect the speed limit and/or the introduction of a lower speed limit.
- Introduction of weight restrictions on selected roads across the parish.
- Reintroduce the Speedwatch Programme.

Policy Statement

- There is a need to manage traffic in a way that is appropriate to the road function, situation and local needs.⁵
- The Parish Council is committed to working with the County Highways regarding the concerns raised by parishioners through the questionnaires, to seek resolution on the main issues of speeding and weight restrictions, as well as the poor/dangerous condition of some roads.
- An approach should be developed that enables road users to respect any speed limits and weight restrictions that may be relevant across the parish.

⁵ This is particularly important for rural roads, as nationally 58% of road deaths occur on rural roads. In Staffordshire 69% of road deaths occur on our rural network. (Dfpub 01/2006).

Transport

The majority of respondents (95%) have access to a private motor vehicle and a small percentage of respondents experience transport difficulties in getting to or from Milwich to other places. The bus service is rated poor by those who use it.

Survey Findings

- 25 respondents (11%) experience transport difficulties to or from Milwich to other places. Those who use the bus service rated the route, frequency of timetable, reliability and cost as being poor.
- Between 41% and 48% of respondents would use the bus service if it was more reliable, had better timetabling or a more frequent service at the weekend.
- Comments reflected that people in the parish still had to get into Milwich village to use the bus service and that the routes provided are limited and do not serve Stafford or Uttoxeter directly. The timetable made it difficult to use the bus service for GP/dentist and other appointments or for commuting purposes.
- If a voluntary transport scheme were to exist in Milwich 35 respondents (17%) would use it and 28 respondents (14%) would be prepared to help provide this service.

Action Points

- Explore use of combined transport scheme utilising school buses.
- Consider using sponsored transport to enable parishioners' access to major facilities.
- Investigate the possibility of working with local companies e.g. supermarkets for the provision of transport to shops.
- Investigate the introduction of a Voluntary Transport scheme.
- Establish a working group to review all the above action points.

Policy Statement

- An integrated policy for the provision of public transport within the parish is required, which should reach outlying parts of the parish and provide links to railway stations at commuter times.
- The Parish Council will work with service providers to improve provision of transport services to all parts of the parish.



Quality of Services

The Quality of Services were all rated Average to Good with the exception of Mobile Telephone coverage and the Internet which were Poor to Average.

54 out of 126 households responded that they wanted mains gas and 50 were prepared to pay to have it installed.



Survey Findings

Although most Services were rated well the following main issues were raised in the comments received:

- Electricity: Some interrupted supply.
- Water: Poor quality and bad taste to Mains water.
- Sewerage: A wish for some households to be connected.
- Telephones: Mobile phone coverage in the Village is a problem.
- Internet: Speed of Broadband and connectivity is a problem.
- Heating Fuels: High Cost and lack of choice in particular with LPG fuel.
- Postal Service: Some criticism of current service.
- Refuse Collection: a problem at times of bad weather.
- Recycling: Waste food recycling was raised as an issue.
- Mains Gas connection would be preferred by 54 households.

Action Points

- As Milwich is a small village in a difficult terrain, coverage for mobile phones is bad. A solution would only come from the providers deciding to improve their coverage. Parishioners concerns need to be communicated to the service providers. A survey of existing mobile phone coverage will be completed and network providers contacted to discuss the problem and establish future plans.
- The speed of broadband needs to be reviewed to establish if improvements are possible. A working group should establish the current situation regarding broadband speed and report back on what could be done.
- The information regarding Quality of Services should be communicated to the responsible providers.⁶
- Gas could be connected but only if the responsible body decides it is viable.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will support work with service providers to improve provision of services to all parts of the parish.

⁶ MAC will contact the individual service providers including gas to convey all the issues that have been raised by the questionnaire.

Education

The survey indicates that 13% of the population fall within the 0-16 age bracket. A very high percentage of the respondents (95%) are happy with the schooling facilities in the area. The majority of comments relating to Green Lea School are positive, and the school enjoys the active support of the community.

More Adult Education Courses would appear to be popular.

Survey Findings

- A number of respondents were concerned as to the small size of Green Lea, and the fact that it is unable to provide before and after school care. The survey clearly indicates that there is a need for enhanced facilities to make Green Lea more attractive to all parishioners.
- Demand for Education in Computing and Gardening rank highest in the survey, but demand exists for courses in Photography and Keep Fit.

Action Points

- Work with the LEA and Green Lea School to discuss any plans for Pre/Post School care and gain an understanding of Government Policy in this regard.
- Investigate availability of new courses, and seek to analyse the popularity of existing provision. Endeavour to provide new courses where demand exists.
- Develop a Marketing Plan to promote existing and potentially new courses using the Parish Magazine etc.
- Establish who could assist in providing computing courses.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will actively promote and support Green Lea School.
- The Parish Council will promote and support lifelong learning opportunities for parishioners with a focus on provision within the existing facilities of the parish.



Leisure and Recreation

The survey found that the leisure and recreational facilities for most groups were reasonably well catered for (>63%) However, only 37% of respondents felt that teenagers were adequately catered for.

On average, around 50% of the respondents were aware of the various local activities, the Pub Activities and the Church Activities being the most popular. Positive comments were made regarding the new Youth Club.

Survey Findings

- The survey indicated a lack of awareness of facilities and events available to the parishioners in Milwich.
- A high number of comments and suggestions were made (61) to the questions in this section, together with the results from the questions, the main concerns and issues can be summarised as:
 - Lack of activities for teenagers
 - Village Play Area needs improvement
 - No area for ball games (football, cricket etc)
 - Lack of Keep Fit Classes or Sports Clubs
 - Many would like to see greater use of the village hall.



Action Points

- Produce a consolidated list of activities and publish via Mail/Parish Website (see Social and Community below).
- Promote community sporting events.
- Investigate promotion of Keep Fit Classes.
- Investigate the provision of additional leisure and recreation facilities.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will promote the use of and enhance, where possible, the leisure and recreational facilities within the parish.



Social and Community

This section had a good response to all questions. The majority of people feel they get sufficient information about the parish. The Compass magazine clearly forms the major source of information, followed by word of mouth. There is a high usage of the Internet and Broadband. There is a positive wish for a parish website. The Church remains important for the parish.

Survey Findings

- The results show that the existing Notice Board is not successful as a method of communicating information and this needs to be improved. However, only 20% wished for additional Notice Boards.
- The use of the Internet is high but the speed of this service is an issue. This was also highlighted in the Quality of Services Section.
- 75% of respondents felt there should be a parish website.
- All Saints Church is recognised as important, both as a building and for major life events such as Christenings, Weddings, Funerals and the main Christian holidays. There are suggestions and comments on improvements and additional use. The information and results from the questionnaire have been passed to the Parochial Church Council.

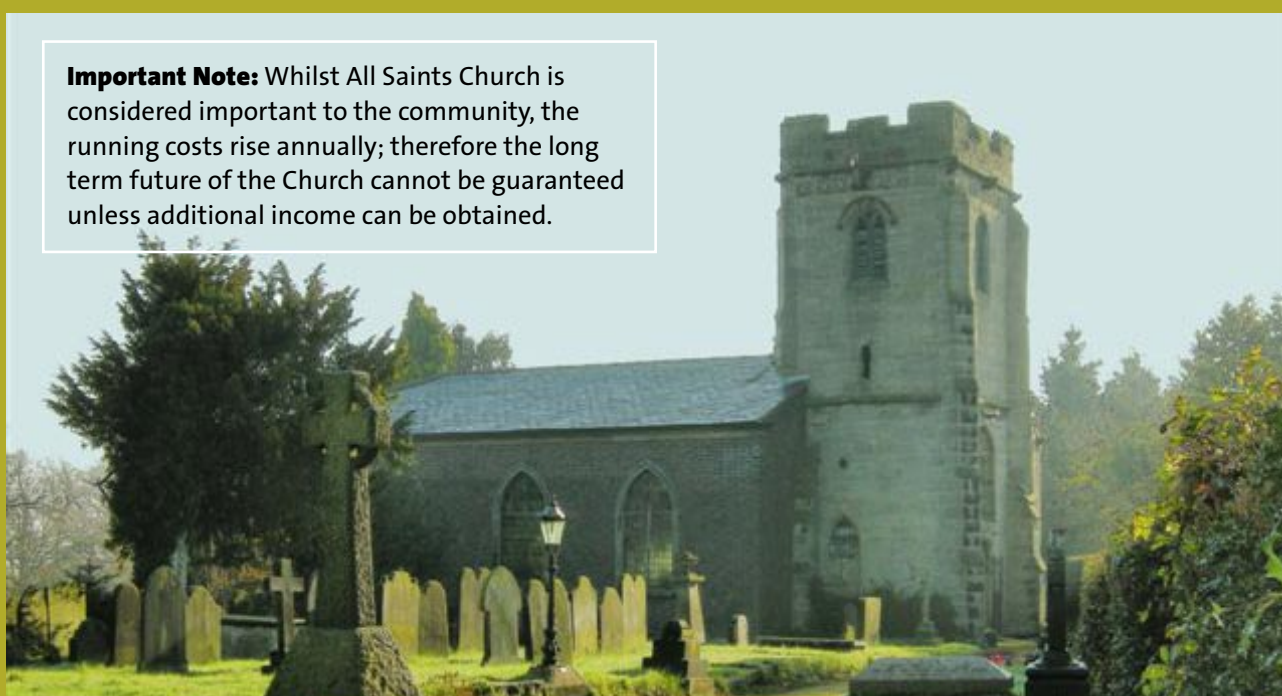
Action Points

- Improve communication from the Parish Council.
- The existing Notice Board could be improved and its location/lighting should be reviewed.⁷
- Established a Parish Website and maintain it regularly.⁸
- The Parochial Church Council to study ways in which the wishes of parishioners could be recognised and whether additional uses for the Church can be found.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will develop and promote a range of communication media to ensure that the community is well informed on matters and issues of interest.
- All Saints Parochial Church Council have developed a Mission Plan directed to serve the village and surrounding hamlets in social and prayerful interaction. We continue to look for opportunities to develop our young people within worship outreach and our interaction with them. We respect the traditions of the Anglican and Methodist partnership whilst looking at new styles of worship.

Important Note: Whilst All Saints Church is considered important to the community, the running costs rise annually; therefore the long term future of the Church cannot be guaranteed unless additional income can be obtained.



⁷ This information has already been reported to the Parish Council in Jan 2010 for review.

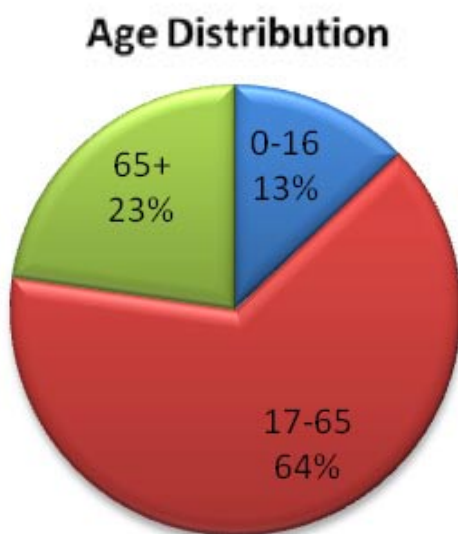
⁸ A parish website is under development, together with a management strategy. See www.milwich.com

Health and Social Care

Three quarters of the respondents don't know whether the needs of the elderly and disabled are catered for in Milwich. Less than 10% thought that their needs were met. There is considerable support for a GP's surgery to be held in the parish. The Ambulance and Fire Brigade were rated highly but satisfaction with the Police is not so good, especially on Speed of Response.

Survey Findings

- The needs for older and disabled people require more research in conjunction with all other areas of the plan (e.g. Housing and Development etc.).
- The provision of a GP surgery would be beneficial to some, but may not prove practical or viable as 4 separate GP practices support the parish.
- It would seem that the use of grid references for the location of properties by the Emergency Services is variable. Only half the householders know where to find the grid reference of their property.
- The 'Speed of Response' and the 'Quality of Service' provided by the Police falls below that of the other services. Most comments on the Emergency Services were related to the Police.
- A 'First Responder' scheme in the area is considered to be beneficial by three quarters of the respondents.



Action Points

- The needs of the older and disabled require further investigation, as to whether Milwich is providing sufficient support to these people. The survey indicates that 23% of the population is 65 or older. A working group should be set up to investigate the needs of older and disabled residents, quantify needs and establish what is required.
- Improve access to healthcare services within the parish. The above working group should also investigate the issues around the provision of bringing healthcare facilities to the village.
- Establish that Grid References are useful to and accepted by the Emergency Services. Provided that they are, re-issue these to all households.
- Investigate further the display of Grid References on properties.
- Advise the Emergency Services of the feedback received in the Survey. Discuss issues specifically with the local Police Contact (in conjunction with the Crime Awareness section).
- Investigate the provision of a First Responder Service. A First Aid Course at the Village Hall may be a possible first step.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will ensure that parishioners are satisfied with the level of service from the Emergency Services
- The Parish Council will ensure that health care provision meets the needs of the community.

Economy and Tourism

A high percentage of respondents answered every question in this section. There was a lot of support for a local shop and three quarters of the respondents buy from farmers markets. About half of the respondents think that more tourism should be encouraged.



Action Points

- The possibility of a regular produce sale such as those in local parishes should be investigated.
- Investigate the viability of a village shop.
- Possible funding for leaflets should be investigated before content could be considered. A workgroup should be established to further these issues.
- The various bodies which advise on agricultural diversification should be contacted for advice.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will actively encourage the development of the local economy and tourism.

Survey Findings

- A shop in Milwich would be well supported (96%); the question is, whether the population is sufficient for the maintenance of a viable shop.
- A local produce sale on a regular basis would be supported by 91% of respondents.
- There is a need for leaflets to describe walks around Milwich; this might also contain information detailing the history of the parish and its buildings.
- Agricultural businesses would like to diversify in some areas.



Crime Awareness

Summary

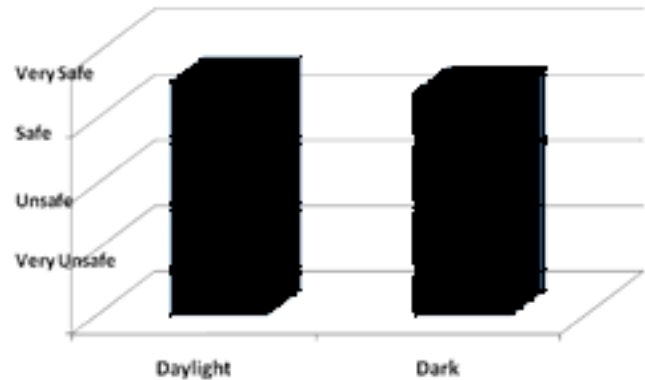
This section received a very high response in the questionnaire. In general it was good to see that people feel the parish is a Safe or Very Safe place to live. People feel slightly less safe after dark. There was a lot of support for establishing a new neighbourhood watch scheme.



Survey Findings

- Even though most people feel safe, the response to the question asking if anyone had been a victim of crime in the last 3 years was still 14% (at the time of the survey, Summer 2009). It is important that anything that can be done to reduce this is clearly worth pursuing. Comments received showed personal experience of and concern over theft and burglary.
- The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NHW) received high support both in the questionnaire and in the comments received.
- 66% of respondents do not know how to contact the Local Police/ Community Support Officer.

Perceived Safety of Respondents



Action Points

- A new Neighbourhood Watch Scheme could be reintroduced. A working group will investigate the feasibility of re-establishing a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- Parishioners could be better informed of current criminal activities and safe practice and tips for crime awareness. Some of these are already included in Compass. This information could be included on a web site.
- Contact details needs to be issued for Local Police and Community Support Officer.⁹

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will endeavour to ensure that residents in the parish feel safe and promote initiatives that underpin this.



⁹ The details will be issued with the Parish Plan

Government

A very high percentage of respondents (>95%) answered every question in this section. Awareness of local government contacts was varied; there was a better knowledge of Parish and Borough Councillors than County Councillor and MP. It is clear that the communication of local issues needs improvement. A high percentage knew that Parish Council meetings are open to the public but much fewer people have attended a meeting.



Survey Findings

- Parishioners have variable knowledge as to who are and how to contact their local government officers (Parish, Borough, County and National).
- Nearly half of the survey respondents do not know how the Parish Council spend their precept money.
- The Parish Council does not communicate its decisions well.

Action Points

- Publish a contact list to every household; this could also include a description of the responsibilities at each tier of local government.¹⁰
- Inform parishioners about the way the Parish Council budget is allocated.
- Parish Council improve distribution of information and provide a summary of how the precept is spent each year.

Policy Statement

- The Parish Council will, using appropriate communication media, ensure that the business of the Parish Council and relevant local government matters are drawn to the attention of parishioners.



¹⁰ A list of contacts will be circulated with the Parish Plan.

Acknowledgements

Milwich Action Committee

Andrew Adams
Peter Anthony (Treasurer)
John Babb
Mark Burton
Jennie Church
Kevin Collier
Cllr. Richard Devall (PC)
Philip Horton
Paul Ritson (Chairman)
Cllr. Ruth Wearing (PC)
Pat Wragg

Additional Assistance

Milwich with Fradswell Parish Council
All Saints Parochial Church Council
Chris Barlow
Shirley Broomfield
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Cllr. Doug Davis (Stafford Borough Council)
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- Stafford District Voluntary Services – Closing the Gap for Communities Fund
- Stafford District Group Development Fund
- Big Lottery Fund “Awards for All” programme



Photographs courtesy of MAC members

Further information on the work of the Milwich Action Committee can be obtained by e-mail to mac@milwich.com or from the Chairman on 01889 505472.

Front Cover: Painting “Milwich 2000” by the artist Anthony Forster. Reprinted courtesy of Hood and Broomfield Fine Art, Newcastle under Lyme.

New website: www.milwich.com

Working Groups and Action Plan

Working Groups

The following working groups have been identified and will be organised:

- Enhanced Leisure/Recreation Facilities and Playground Improvements
- Transport
- Broadband Performance
- Needs of older residents and healthcare
- Economy and Tourism
- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Action Plan

A full list of the actions listed on the previous pages has been prepared and will be monitored on a regular basis by the Parish Council and Milwich Action Committee.

Volunteers are required

Do you have an interest in one or more of these topics? If so why not offer to help? If you wish to participate in these working groups, please contact Milwich Action Committee by e-mail to milwich.parish.plan@hotmail.co.uk or by telephone to 01889 505472.

