

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2011

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 17 May 2010 Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2010/2011, and Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

Councillors for this Parish at May 2010 were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mr C Taylor	13 Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge, Wrightington.
Mr J Clinch	16 Clifton Crescent, Wigan
Mr I McRae	11 Rookery Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan
Miss N Malivoire	21 Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge, Wrightington

MOSSY LEA

Mrs Judith Burton	2 Courage Low Lane, Wrightington.
Mr Frank Hodgkinson	19 Broadhurst Lane, Wrightington.
Mrs A Rees	Quarry Bank Barn, Hillhouse Fold Lane, Wrightington.
Mrs L Penketh	Woodlands, Moss Lane, Wrightington.

The Parish Council began the year with 8 Members however, during the course of the year 3 casual vacancies arose. Two of these vacancies, Councillors Mrs Penketh and Miss Malivoire, occurred as a result of continuous absence from Parish Council Meetings and business throughout 6 consecutive months whilst the third vacancy followed the resignation of Councillor Mrs Rees due to personal commitments. Notices were posted following the loss of Councillor Mrs Penketh and from the applications received Mr Frank Johnson, Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington, was appointed for the remainder of the year. As the remaining vacancies arose within 6 months of the recently held elections it was deemed un-necessary to fill the vacancies. Following the recent elections the Parish Council now has 5 members as Councillor Taylor did not wish to stand as a Parish Councillor. The Parish Council therefore took the decision to request that Mr Taylor continue as the Parish Councils web co-ordinator, renewing, updating and improving the website as he has done for the past few years. It was agreed that an honorarium would be payable for the retention of his services and Mr Taylor was happy to continue with this work which is essential in what is now an electronic age. The Clerk has attended a number of Liaison Meetings with West Lancashire District Council Officers and other Clerk's to assist with various issues arising during the course of the year and also attended the LALC Annual Conference at Leyland and the LCC Parish & Town Council conference at County Hall. Councillors also attend consultations and site meetings to address issues which arise in the Parish as required. The Chairman was once again nominated to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

3. FINANCE & PROCEDURE

The Parish Council precepted upon West Lancashire Borough Council for the sum of £6373.50 (an increase of 5% on the previous year) for the financial year 2010/2011 and received Concurrent Contributions of £4730.00 (the same as the previous year). Changes in the way the Parish Council Finances are handled, implemented in 2003, continue to ensure that financial matters function efficiently and effectively. The Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March 2010 were audited by BDO Stoy Hayward, with Wrightington Parish Council accounts being selected as one of the random 5% of Councils who had to go through a more intensive audit process to ensure full compliance with all financial and procedural matters. The minor issue arising from the audit has now been addressed. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2011 is attached. During the course of the year Standing Orders were amended to reflect the current position with regard to mobile telephones at Parish Council Meetings.

4. PLANNING

The Parish Council is notified of all planning applications within the Parish and is able to submit comments, observations and objections when necessary. The Parish Council however, has no power of direction or decision making in these matters.

54 Planning Applications have been dealt with by the Parish Council during the year, some of which were controversial and involved discussions with the Parishioners to ascertain their views, prior to the Parish Council making their observations. (In comparison to 51 applications last year.)

The Borough Council do not have to notify neighbours when a planning application is submitted to them, therefore in cases where adjoining occupiers, or others affected by applications, become aware of proposed developments it is always advisable to submit observations and objections directly. Parish Councillors and members of the public can now access all planning applications by logging onto the West Lancashire Borough Council website, and from the Home Page navigating to, "view and comment on, planning applications". By inputting the planning application number, address of the property or type of planning application and approximate location or date, the application details, maps, plans and associated documents can be viewed and comments, objections and observations submitted online.

5. PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITY

The Parish Council is the first tier in the democratic structure of Local Government. The Council can also act as a pressure group putting forward the views of residents on topics affecting the area. The following are some of the areas in which Wrightington Parish Council have been involved during the past year:

The Parish Council once again produced their Annual Newsletter distribution being undertaken by Councillors, the Clerk, District Councillors and other volunteers in the Parish. The Council would like to thank all those who volunteered for their assistance with delivery and hope that they can rely on their support again this year.

Following a successful request for assistance towards the purchase of a Parish Council Notice Board to serve the residents in the Appley Lane South area of the Parish, County Councillor Otter attended a Parish Council Meeting and presented the Parish Council with a cheque for £250.00.

The Parish Council continued their work towards establishing a comprehensive training plan for Councillors and the Clerk and have recently approved and adopted the Parish Council Training Policy. This document will be issued to all Councillors and it is hoped that training will cover planning, budgets, procedures, code of conduct, equality and diversity, information technology and first aid – such training to be delivered in the village halls where appropriate.

Following notification that, for the first time in the Parishes history, the Annual Walking Day procession would not be taking place due to the imposition of strict Policing policies and procedures with regard to road closures and policing of parades, the Parish Council began detailed enquiries and investigations to ensure that the Parish Council arranged Remembrance Day Parade could still go ahead. It was finally ascertained that the Parish Council needed to apply to West Lancs. BC for a road closure order. Having sufficient time to do this, the necessary arrangements were made and the road closure order issued. As a result the Remembrance Day Parade progressed as normal and was once again a well organised and well attended service.

POLICING

PC Hackney and PCSO Benson are responsible for Policing Wrightington, together with Parbold, Hilldale, Bispham, Dalton and Newburgh however, recent information on Police cuts and restructuring may result in this policing area increasing. It has been confirmed that funding to ensure the continued provision of the services of PCSO's has been secured for a further 12 months after which this will once again be reviewed. PC Hackney has recently returned to full duties following a lengthy period of sickness however, in his absence PCSO Benson has continued to Police this large geographical area admirably and to the best of his ability. Due to the fall in numbers attending PACT Meetings the decision was taken to cease these and for Police and PACT issues to be raised at the now regular Coffee Mornings held at Mossy Lea Village Hall. PCSO Benson attends to meet residents, pass on information and advice, and to collect details of PACT issues requiring attention. This initiative appears to be working well in these early stages.

VILLAGE HALLS

Fire detection and security at the village halls is monitored and checked annually and all electrical equipment has been PAT tested and new hot water boilers have been installed in both village halls (thanks to Appley Bridge Pensioners who contributed to the cost of the boiler at Appley Bridge Village Hall as a result of a successful funding application – the hot water boiler at Mossy Lea Village Hall will form part of the successful Capital Bid to West Lancs. BC). Christmas Trees were again erected at both Village Halls. Village Hall hire agreements have been re-drafted and updated during the course of the year the terms of which are now applicable and operative. The Parish Council are currently investigating the cost of purchase and installation of flag poles at both Village Halls. Both Village Halls were once again used recently for the Local Council elections.

APPLEY BRIDGE

Investigations are continuing for the work required to remove the false ceilings in the main hall and in the kitchen to reveal the roof trusses. The Parish Council still believe that this will make a huge difference to the interior of the building resulting in a room much more in-keeping with the historical and heritage value of this community facility. A secure room has been created in the Village Hall for archiving and storage of Parish Council paperwork and associated items. Marking of car park spaces on the village hall car park has been placed on hold until the outcome of the recent submission of a Capital Bid to West Lancs. BC for an access improvement scheme, removing the flag path on the approach to the village hall and replacing it with tarmac tied into the existing car park surface, is known. Insurance issues arising during the course of the year were dealt with by the insurance company. The results were noted with disappointment by the Parish Council. A number of constructive Village Hall Committee Meetings have taken place during the course of the year and issues arising have been dealt with in due course. The Village Hall continues to be used on a regular basis by various organisations however, the Parish Council have had cause to point out to users that if the Village Hall or the Village Hall car park are deemed unfit for use for any reason, they should cancel their classes or meetings and report the facts to the Parish Council immediately.

Following receipt of information from the LAG group the Parish Council submitted an expression of interest in applying for Rural Development Programme for England funding to improve and enhance the village hall. Having successfully got through the expression of interest stage the Parish Council were invited to submit an application for funding. At the January 2011 Parish Council Meeting the Clerk reported that this funding bid had been approved by the Lancashire West Local Action Group Executive (LAG) and the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA), acting as a delegated delivery body for the Rural Payments Agency under the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), partly funded through the European Agricultural fund for rural development and through funding provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The Clerk reported that this has been a detailed, lengthy and complicated application process and from the applications received, filtered down to 18 considered, only 5 had been approved. The Clerk had to attend a Project Management Course before work could commence. The improvement work is now well underway with the toilets having been replaced and tiled, and a disabled toilet and grab rails installed together with associated building work required. The small meeting room has now been finished and painted and new office furniture purchased and installed. New appliances have been purchased for the kitchen and the contractor has been instructed to commence painting as soon as possible. New crockery, cutlery, pots and pans, new signage and sanitary fittings will be purchased shortly. Once complete the village hall will have been completely refurbished and will be a much enhanced and improved facility available for a variety of uses, thus making it more marketable and increasing its income potential. Funding secured from the successful 2010/11 capital bid to West Lancs. BC to enhance IT and hospitality facilities at the village halls (including the installation of hearing loops), has been carried over into the 2011/12 financial year thereby allowing the Parish Council to accumulate a fund balance to pay for the work involved in the LAG bid, as this must be paid for first and subsequently claimed back. As a result of this fact a number of projects have been put on hold for the moment however, once complete, projects on hold will be re-initiated and completed. Coffee Mornings held regularly at the village hall and supported by the Parish Council, are now extremely well attended and continue to raise funds for Cancer Research UK. The Parish Council continue to fully support this village amenity by allowing the use of the village hall free of charge and residents can obtain information and advice from other outside organisations such as Help Direct, the Fire Service and West Lancs. Carers Assoc. who regularly attend. In addition to this fund-raising, a Parish Walk was arranged on 28 December 2010 by a resident in the Parish, again raising money for Cancer Research UK. The Parish Council supported this event by giving access to the village hall where refreshments were available at the end of this rather wet, but very enjoyable, event. The Parish Council have recently submitted an insurance claim following a theft of lead from the Village Hall roof. The lead was recovered however, the vandal responsible for the considerable damage which resulted was not apprehended. The Village Hall Committee submitted a bid to County Councillor Evans for the purchase of tablecloths for use at the Coffee Mornings and similar functions in the Village Hall. This bid was successful and the Village Hall Committee would like to thank County Councillor Evans for the £100 granted for this purchase. The Village Hall was also opened by the Parish Council, with staff from the Census office attending, to provide assistance with completion of census forms.

The Parish Council would like to express its appreciation to the Voluntary Management Committees and the caretakers for all the work they do in maintaining the Village Halls.

HIGHWAYS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A number of litter picks have been requested throughout the year at various locations including Mossy Lea Road, Moss Lane, Hall Lane, Crow Orchard Lane, Courage Low Lane and Broadhurst Lane. The litter picks, although undertaken, are not always to the standard expected by the Parish Council and usually result in a further request being made. The Parish Council have also requested details of the road sweeping and gully emptying schedule from the Borough Council as the

frequency and adequacy of this service continues to give cause for concern as the scheduled cycles are still not adhered to and are often poorly undertaken.

Parking problems at Mossfields, Mossy Lea, are still prominent. Site meetings and discussions have taken place between the Parish Council and Borough Council officers to try to alleviate the parking problems however, progress is extremely slow with this matter. Issues of juvenile nuisance continue to be addressed by the Police. 'No Ball Games' signs have recently been erected on the grassed areas to deter the nuisance caused by this. Pot-holes on the car park have now been reported on a number of occasions and work is required to address this problem. Following numerous requests drop-kerbs have been installed to assist disabled and less able-bodied residents.

The agency agreement entered into between LCC and the Parish Council who took responsibility for amenity grass cutting at 4 specific locations in the Parish ceased with effect from 31 March 2011. This has not yet been replaced and grass verges in the Borough are now in need of drastic action. Following the launch of the LCC delegated services protocol towards the end of 2010 the Parish Council submitted an expression of interest in continuing this amenity grass cutting function in the Parish. The Parish Council has recently been informed however, that the responsibility for maintenance and cutting of grass verges in the Borough has now been delegated from LCC to West Lancs. BC, the Parish Council will be informing the Borough Council that they wish to continue with the agency agreement for maintenance of these amenity areas providing the requisite funding is forthcoming.

Discussions remain ongoing with a view to LCC transferring ownership and responsibility for the area of highway on Hall Lane, known as the Coalgate Depot, to the Parish Council once the highway has been stopped-up. The Parish Council appreciate that there will be ongoing maintenance costs involved with this transfer however, it is believed that this could be made into a pleasant amenity area in the Parish the benefits of which will outweigh the maintenance issues.

Following several years of discussions and negotiations, work finally commenced to repair, replace and refurbish the playing field and play equipment adjacent to Mossy Lea Village Hall. Much needed drainage work to address flooding problems in the area also formed part of the scheme at this site. Once the s106 funding had been secured together with an additional £15,000.00 from LCC for use on multi-generational equipment, consultation was commenced. Following the consultation process with residents in Mossy Lea, including schoolchildren, the responses received were assessed and collated to ascertain parish requirements for this site. From the information received a number of schemes were compiled and once the final scheme was chosen contractors were instructed to submit quotations for the work involved. The ultimate decision on provision at this site remained with West Lancs. BC, as owner of the playing field and play equipment. The work commenced in early April and is now almost complete. The play equipment is modern and appeals to all ages and the site looks very impressive. The total spend on the project was approximately £85,000.00 and the Parish Council are sure that residents will agree that this site is now a wonderful parish amenity area which is already in use by the young people living nearby.

The Council have recently been asked to assist residents of Chisnall Avenue with rodent problems. Enquiries have been made and investigations are under way to establish what can be done to assist.

Pot-holes in the parish are the subject of continual discussion at Parish Council Meetings following a second severe winter. The Parish Council continue in their attempts to address grass cutting and carriageway maintenance issues at the motorway roundabout. Flooding problems in the Parish have also given serious cause for concern. Flooding in the vicinity of Mossy Lea Village Hall resulted in flood warning signs being erected on several occasions over winter. It is hoped that work by LCC and West Lancs. BC has addressed these problems.

In more general terms the Parish Council discusses applications for definitive map modification orders and various public footpath issues in the Parish which arise during the course of the year. Each application or issue is discussed in detail and a decision made based on the merits and individual circumstances of the application or issue.

CONCLUSION

The Council has dealt with a considerable volume and variety of business during the past year including complaints from members of the public about various matters.

Any resident who requires help or advice on any problem affecting the area is welcome to bring it to the attention of the Parish Council either through a Parish Councillor, the Clerk to the Council or at Open Forum which is held at the beginning of each Parish Council Meeting.

Report from Mrs C A Cross
The Clerk to the Council
16 May 2011