

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2015

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 19 May 2014 Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2014/2015, and Councillor Mrs Burton was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

At May 2014 Wrightington Parish Councillors were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mr J Clinch	16 Clifton Crescent, Wigan.
Mr I McRae	11 Rookery Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan.
Mr P Gartside	2 Chisnall Avenue, Wrightington.
Mrs A Kay	5 Skull House Lane, Appley Bridge.

MOSSY LEA

Mrs Judith Burton	2 Courage Low Lane, Wrightington.
Mr Frank Hodgkinson	Acrefield House, 17A Broadhurst Lane, Wrightington.
Mr F Johnson	351 Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington.

The Parish Council began the year with 7 members. In June 2014 Councillor McRae resigned. The vacancies were advertised following which Councillor Gartside took up the vacant Mossy Lea Ward Councillor seat and, in September 2014, the Parish Council appointed Mrs Jen Patterson to the vacant Appley Bridge Ward Councillors post. In October 2014, after considering a number of applications, the Parish Council appointed Mr Greg Horrobin to the remaining Appley Bridge Ward Councillors post with effect from the November Parish Council Meeting. The Parish Council now had its full quota of 8 Parish Councillors. In December 2014 Councillor Mrs Patterson resigned from the Parish Council as a result of her appointment as a West Lancashire Council Borough Councillor and the Parish Council ended the year with 7 Parish Councillors. The Clerk has attended a number of Liaison Meetings with West Lancashire Borough Council Officers and other Clerk's to assist with various issues arising during the course of the year and also attended the LCC Parish & Town Council conference at Burnley Town Hall. Councillors have attended briefing sessions, Councillors Code of Conduct Training, open days, public consultations and site meetings to address issues which arise in the Parish as required. During the year the Parish Council suggested that LALC Area Committee work more closely as a body and be more proactive rather than just being a forum for discussions. The Area Committee seemed to take these points on board and now appear to be achieving more as a result. Councillors continue to receive information, documents, agendas and minutes electronically to save on postage costs. The Chairman was once again nominated to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party. Councillor Clinch, the Parish Council representative on the Peter Lathom Charity, was re-appointed for a further term of office and subsequently reported that the money allocated for Wrightington this year would again be divided equally between Appley Bridge and Mossy Lea Pensioners Groups. Councillor Johnson now takes delivery of The Champion which he then leaves in the village hall at Mossy Lea for visitors to pick up as they wish. The Parish Council and Councillors continued to work throughout the year with Borough Councillor Mrs Baybutt, Borough Councillor Mrs Evans and County Councillor Fillis.

3. FINANCE & PROCEDURE

All advisory, informative and procedural documentation used by the Parish Council was reviewed, amended and approved as required during the course of the year and formally adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. Following a detailed Budget Meeting where the effects of the

Council Tax calculations were discussed and the fact that Concurrent Contributions from West Lancs. BC would remain unchanged from last year, it was determined that the Parish Income requirement for 2014/15 was £12,000.00. Taking account of the fact that West Lancs. BC would be passing on to the Parish Council the grant of £714.00 from Central Government to address the shortfall created by the new Council Tax Calculations, the Parish Council precepted upon West Lancs. BC for the sum of £11,286.00 for the financial year 2014/2015. Concurrent Contributions of £3311.00 were also received. 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 2014 were audited by BDO Stoy Hayward with the only matter arising being a £1 difference in reconciliation totals caused by rounding up/rounding down of figures. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2015 will be approved at the May Parish Council Meeting. At the beginning of the year the Parish Council website was taken over by a new web co-ordinator who has been systematically updating the web content as it arises and will continue to administer the site in the future.

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.

74 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 53 applications last year.)

Examples of controversial planning applications related to the following:

The Council objected to a proposed new dwelling between 321 and 325 Mossy Lea Road as this would result in an overdevelopment of the land and would result in a change of status of the land from agricultural land in the Green Belt. The application was refused.

The Council strongly objected to a retrospective application for a change of use from an agricultural barn to an office, storage and entertainment venue at Swift House Farm, Bentley Lane, Heskin, as it would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The application was refused by Chorley Council.

The Parish Council had no objections in principle to the planning application submitted to Wigan Planning Officers for phase II development of an additional 38 dwellings at Heron's Wharf however, their serious concerns with regard to the adequacy and highway safety implications of the access remain. The Parish Council still firmly believe that LCC, as the highway authority responsible for where the access/egress to the site is located, should have been consulted on the adequacy of the site-lines, highway safety and implications of the access to this development. Instead, Wigan Council granted planning permission for Phase II without any input from LCC.

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 access all planning applications by logging onto the West Lancashire Borough Council website. 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, Borough 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.

The Parish Council has made Donations during the course of the year including Appley Bridge Pensioners Social Club and Crossroads Care in the North West and has nominated Pesto at the Dicconson Arms for the West Lancs. BC design award.

POLICING

PC Beverley Lodge and PCSO Dave Benson remain responsible for Policing Wrightington, Parbold, Hilldale, Bispham, Dalton, Newburgh, and sometimes beyond when the need requires.

PCSO Benson and PC Lodge attend Parish Council Meetings when on duty, reporting crime figures and following up Police matters as required. PACT issues can now be raised at the Coffee Mornings held at Mossy Lea Village Hall which PC Lodge also regularly attends to meet residents, pass on information and advice, and to collect details of PACT issues requiring attention.

A road closure was obtained and Policing put in place to enable Remembrance Day plans to proceed as in previous years.

VILLAGE HALLS

Fire detection and security at the village halls is monitored and checked annually and all electrical equipment has been PAT tested. Christmas Trees were again erected at both Village Halls and both Village Halls were again used in May for the Local Council elections.

The Parish Council has been informed this month that their bid for £1700 towards the total cost of £2551.50, for relocating galvanised fences plus associated ironwork to support the provision of planters at both village halls to improve the aesthetics on the exterior of both village halls, for the community and for village hall users, has been successful and once the terms and conditions are agreed the project can proceed.

The Parish Council submitted a successful bid for £450 to the Parish Champion for a financial contribution towards the purchase of 2 defibrillators, one for each village hall. This, added to the successful bids of £450 by each village hall committee to the County Councillor, gave a total of £1350 towards the approx. £2000 total cost of 2 defibrillators + secure cabinets for them to be stored in and 'break glass to access the key' boxes. The defibrillators have been purchased and will be installed at each village hall shortly following which training courses will be arranged for Councillors and village hall users wishing to familiarise themselves with their use.

APPLEY BRIDGE

Following the successful Capital Bid to West Lancs. BC, the Parish Council will be erecting a fence at the edge of the grass to prevent damage by vehicles. The Parish Council has recently been informed that approx. £270 CIL money, generated from development, is available to the Parish Council for improvements associated with the infrastructure in the Parish. It was subsequently confirmed that West Lancs. BC consider white-lining the car park at this village hall would satisfy the criteria and would therefore be suitable expenditure from the CIL money received. Trees and bushes have been pruned and thinned out which has made a considerable difference to the condition of the grassed area as it now benefits from more light and hence better growing conditions. 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 for various meetings and classes including jujitsu, the Women's Institute, yoga classes, exercise classes and the Pensioners Association.

MOSSY LEA

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 Police and the Fire Service who regularly attend. A Christmas Fair was held in late November, which was well attended and an enjoyable afternoon. Hot-pot Supper and Sing-a-longs are also held. The hall continues to be used for children's parties, Yoga classes, Craft classes and by the Church of God. Following an unsuccessful bid to VIP for a contribution towards a New Notice Board at the village hall the caretaker refurbished the existing Notice Board by sanding and staining and replacing the self-healing interior with metal at a cost of approx. £200 compared to the £1000 quoted for a new one. Following the success of a Capital Bid to West Lancs. BC, the new kitchen units were fitted making better use of the space and allowing easier access to the water stop-tap and the gas meter. After Christmas, and following submission of a scheme for additional play equipment on the playing field adjacent to the village hall from s106 monies accumulated from development in the Parish, a zip-wire and basket swing was installed on the play area. These items have proved very popular with children, parents and Parish Councillors. A new lease was negotiated with the Borough Council effective from 2014 and the Parish Council are now considering re-opening discussions to extend the village hall by squaring off the building which would provide a bigger hall and an extended chair store which could then be used as a dedicated computer room where the computers could be set up permanently. Councillor Johnson liaised with Mr Ainscough for assistance towards replacing the faded and worn family plaque on the outside of the building. Mr Ainscough's builder attended and is making the necessary arrangements to replace the plaque with something more substantial.

Work to increase the income potential of both Village Halls remains on-going. 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, Toogood Lane and Broadhurst Lane.

Following the tenants successful bid for funding to the Estates Management Team to create additional parking at the front of the flats facing Mossy Lea Road, the provision of 8 parking spaces at the front of blocks 1-4 and 5-8 Mossfields went ahead in January 2015 with the existing car park being re-measured and re-marked so that all tenants of Mossfields were provided with a numbered parking space either on the car park or at the front of their property. Problems still remain as homeowners on Mossfields appear to be using the visitor car parking spaces or, have been given permission by some tenants to use their space if they do not own a car. West Lancs. BC has suggested that the practice of allowing others to park on tenants spaces will cause problems now, and in the future, and is not helpful when trying to solve parking problems. West Lancs. BC has suggested that it is up to the tenants to police parking issues however, they are finding it difficult to confront those who abuse the parking situation, as they have no authority over the land and have to continue to live here.

Councillor Johnson has had communications on several occasions during the year with representatives of Tunley Church in the hope of making progress with pruning and thinning out of some of the trees and bushes on their land adjacent to Chisnall Avenue. Some work has been undertaken however, until the leaves are on the trees, it is difficult to say what improvement residents will see.

Considerable disruption was caused on the roads and to local businesses by the Ironman Event in July 2014. Following numerous complaints during and after the 2014 event, changes have been

made to the route and it is hoped that the advance notifications which have already been sent out for the 2015 event, will allow the event organisers and business owners to work together to avoid similar significant disruption this year.

The rusty and damaged litter bin adjacent to the bus shelter in front of the Pensioners Hall has finally been replaced. The Council requested a green bin for use by Mossy Lea Bowling Club when cutting the bowling green. As this is considered commercial waste the request was unsuccessful.

Footways in Mossy Lea were all cut back, edged and slurry sealed during the course of the year. This work has significantly enhanced the footways in the Mossy Lea Ward.

Problems were experienced by horses and riders during the winter months when being passed by vehicles gritting the roads. Following complaints to LCC and visits by the Police to the depot on Moss Lane, the Parish Council were informed that drivers should, and will, be reminded that horses and riders must be given the same consideration as other road users and care must be taken when passing them.

The Parish Council objected to LCC proposals to limit the quantities of non-domestic household waste (inert waste) which can be taken to Household Waste Recycling Centres in the Borough with effect from 1 June 2015. The Parish Council believe this can only lead to an increase in fly tipping in the Borough, the cost of removal of which, will then be paid by the Borough Council.

The Parish Council has asked West Lancs. BC to assess the safety of play equipment at the playing fields on Appley Lane South until such times as sufficient s106 money has been accumulated and becomes available to enhance and improve this area.

Parking problems in Appley Bridge, on Appley Lane North and on Skull House Lane, remain an issue, the former being commuters using the railway station and the latter being parents of children at the dancing classes in the Methodist Church Hall. The Police have also been asked to speak to parents parking inconsiderately when dropping children off at St Joseph's School, Mossy Lea Road. In the interests of openness and transparency the Parish Council declined to hold a private Meeting with Ms Jayne Bradbury the representative of Escalibur Ltd, the Pension Fund responsible for a considerable amount of Green Belt Land in the Appley Bridge Ward of the Parish. In January 2015 Ms Jayne Bradbury attended the Parish Council Meeting to offer a solution to all the parking problems and highway safety issues in Appley Bridge. Ms Bradbury reported that she had been contacted by All Saints School to address parking problems on Finch Lane however, it has since been confirmed that the School do not want to work with Ms Bradbury on this matter. Ms Bradbury confirmed that Escalibur would cost schemes, determine whether any grants would be available to pay for the proposals and, if grant funding is inadequate Escalibur may look at developing some of their land to fund the proposals. It very quickly became apparent that the solutions proposed by Ms Bradbury could only come to fruition if some of the Green Belt land Escalibur Ltd are responsible for in Appley Bridge was sacrificed for development. Ms Bradbury tried to convince residents of Appley Bridge and the Parish Council, at both the Parish Council Meeting and at a recent residents meeting called anonymously by Ms Bradbury, that all the parking problems being experienced in Appley Bridge caused by rail commuters and parents whose children attend All Saints School on Finch Lane, together with highway safety problems associated with the Appley Lane North/Hall Lane and Appley Lane North/Skull House Lane junctions, could be solved by putting in place the planned proposals drawn up following the surveys she has undertaken and subsequent reports compiled from the statistical analysis completed. Some residents were taken in by Ms Bradbury until it was revealed that none of the proposals could possibly be put in place unless Escalibur Ltd were granted planning permission to develop some of the Green Belt land they are responsible for. Both the Parish Council and the residents of Appley Bridge remained firm in their views and are totally opposed to the development of any Green Belt land in Appley Bridge and feel that alternative solutions should be sought to alleviate parking and highway safety issues in Appley Bridge.

The Parish Council continued to press for progress with the upgrading of public right of way, No.21, Moss Lane to Mossy Lea Road, from a public footpath to a bridleway. After approximately 5 years of fighting for this the Parish Council were asked by LCC to submit an application for a definitive map modification order. The Parish Council were extremely disappointed with this suggestion and relayed this fact to LCC following which, the Parish Council were notified of, and asked for their support with, an application for upgrading from public footpath to a bridleway by LCC. The Parish Council support his upgrade completely and continue to collect, and submit, evidence forms to prove historical use to support the application.

At the February 2015 Parish Council Meeting a considerable number of residents were present to object to the removal of the 638/639 bus service through Appley Bridge with effect from 15 April 2015. Following communications on this subject it transpired that an alternative service will replace the 638/639 and most of the route will be serviced by the proposed new service.

Pot-holes in the parish are the subject of continual discussion at Parish Council Meetings whilst footway sweeping and gully emptying remain a major concern in the Parish. More attention is required as there is no continuity in either the road sweeping or gully emptying schedules.

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
18 May 2015