

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2016

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2015 Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2015/2016, and Councillor Mrs Burton was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

Following an uncontested election, at May 2015 Wrightington Parish Councillors were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mr J Clinch 16 Clifton Crescent, Wigan.

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.

Mr P Gartside 2 Chisnall Avenue, Wrightington.

The Parish Council began the year with 5 members. During the course of the year the Council received an application from Mr Christopher House and, following his attendance at the January, February and March 2015 Parish Council Meetings, Mr House was co-opted on to the Council with effect from the April Parish Council Meeting. The Parish Council is now made up of 6 Parish Councillors and 2 vacancies. 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. 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. 5 out of the 6 Parish Councillors now 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, reported that the money allocated for Wrightington this year would again be divided equally between Appley Bridge and Mossy Lea Pensioners Groups. Councillor Johnson continues to take 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 contested and uncontested election costs were discussed, together with the fact that Concurrent Contributions would remain the same, and the top-up grant from West Lancs. BC would be £888.00, it was determined that last year's Parish Income requirement should be increased by the maximum contested election costs of £1200.00 + a small percentage to allow for inflation on all utilities and other expenditure. Therefore, the Parish Requirement would be £12,680.00 – top up grant of £888.00. The Parish Council precepted upon West Lancs. BC for the sum of £11,792.00 for the 2015/16 financial year. 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 2015 were audited by BDO, with no matter arising. The Parish Council were notified that the staging date for the introduction of a Work Place Pension is early 2017. The Parish Council, having discussed the options available in detail, agreed to put in place the NEST (National

Employment Savings Trust) Pension Scheme, set up by the government for employers with few employees. Once the pension scheme is in place the Clerk will automatically be enrolled unless she chooses to opt out. The Council has taken all the action necessary throughout the course of the year to satisfy audit requirements prior to the submission of the end of year financial report to the external auditors and, following notification of changes, accepted that new Audit Arrangements will be in place from 2017. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2016 will be approved at the May Parish Council Meeting.

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.

47 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 74 applications last year.)

Examples of controversial planning applications related to the following:

2015/0223/FUL – Application for a 2 storey rear extension 16 Toogood Lane, Wrightington. The Parish Council objected to these proposals due to the severe impact they would have on the neighbours' property and, who was totally opposed to the proposals. The application was allowed.

2015/0626/SCR – Application for a screening opinion for a proposed solar development on land to the south east of the junction of Courage Low Lane and Tunley Lane. As this was not an actual planning application there was strictly speaking nothing to object to. However, the Parish Council urged West Lancs. BC planning officers to assess the long term health, nuisance, environmental and ecological implications of this type of application and, requested a full public consultation and an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to the submission of a planning application. The Parish Council wished it to be recorded that they were extremely concerned about the detrimental impact the proposals would have on the rural nature of the area, on the quality of life of neighbouring residents, on the loss of habitat for wildlife and, on the significant loss of agricultural land and alterations to the street scene at this prominent location.

A number of residents attended the July 2015 Parish Council Meeting to discuss LCC/2015/0088 – an application for a low temperature, pyrolysis plant to convert low worth waste plastic into diesel and gasoline at Appley Biomass to Energy Ltd Depot, West Quarry Railway Pad, Appley Bridge. Following lengthy discussions on this subject the Parish Council supported the public present by objecting strongly to these proposals. The Council believed the value, content, and results, of the Environmental Impact Assessment were significantly compromised and weakened by the fact that it had been undertaken by the agent for the project. No account was taken of the fact that the location of the proposed plant would be at one of the lowest parts of the village, at the base of the Douglas Valley. Whilst major factors such as temperature inversion, the prevailing southerly winds and the impact on the air quality for residents of the village had been completely ignored. To allow these proposals to go ahead in Appley Bridge would have a significant detrimental impact on quality of life. Air quality would be seriously compromised by the pollutants from the plant. A Health Impact Assessment should be undertaken by an independent body to determine the short and long term effects of the pollutants from the exhaust stack. An assessment of whether leakage of contaminants from the plant could pollute local watercourses or farmland should be undertaken. The impact of resultant carcinogenic compounds left once the plastic has been through the plant process also gave serious cause for concern. The site is located on, and adjacent to, contaminated land where methane levels are still being monitored and leakages of methane in the past have resulted in explosions and fires. Existing parking problems on Appley Lane North would be exacerbated. The Council believed that noise and odour produced would significantly impact on the residents and wildlife in Appley Bridge. The visual impact of the 17.5m stack and the distillation column were considered inappropriate. There would be a significant loss of visual amenity for both

local residents and anyone viewing Appley Bridge from the Parbold Hill direction. The Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan details all locations throughout Lancashire which have been identified for the processing of waste, this site is not included in the list. The plant it was proposed would be installed at this site does not hold an EU patent and has not been tested anywhere else in this country and, would therefore result in Appley Bridge, and West Lancashire, being used as a test site for experimental purposes. The Parish Council urged Planning Officers to take this application to Planning Committee and to arrange a site visit. The application was withdrawn

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 Wrightington Pensioners' Welfare Association.

Following nomination by the Parish Council Appley Bridge Village Hall was added to the West Lancs. BC list of locally important buildings together with Old Harrock Mill, Lathom's Charity Farm, Lake House and Appley Bridge War Memorial.

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.

The Police and the Parish Council came together in a joint initiative to arrange a Road Safety Poster Competition with both primary schools on Mossy Lea Road. PC Lodge collected the finished posters and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman chose the 3 winning entries from each school who will shortly receive book gift cards provided as prizes by the Parish Council. It is hoped that a similar poster competition can be arranged at All Saints School in Appley Bridge.

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 recently completed work on relocating galvanised fences, plus associated ironwork, to support the provision of planters at both village halls to improve the aesthetics of the exterior of both halls, for the community and for village hall users. Pre-planted planters will be attached to the metalwork shortly.

Defibrillators have recently been installed at each village hall and contact has been made with St John's Ambulance personnel who will provide training courses for Councillors, village hall users and anyone else wishing to familiarise themselves with their use. Baby Changing stations have also now been installed in the disabled toilets at both village halls. The Parish Council supported the West Lancs. BC initiative by purchasing and flying Armed Forces flags.

APPLEY BRIDGE

The Parish Council has confirmed that £227.72 CIL money received will be used to mark out parking spaces on the car park. Trees and bushes have been pruned, thinned and in some cases removed. All leaves, debris and detritus has been removed, gutters and gullies cleared and, a complete clean up of the grounds around the village hall has been undertaken. This work has made a significant difference and, will now be complemented by the floral planters which will shortly be attached to the metal railings. 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 and, since the beginning of the year a long term booking by Old Hall Brass Band has been secured.

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 the Police, the Fire Service and Age UK. 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, Boot Camp, for polling purposes, by the Church of God and, for Meetings and Training Events by outside bodies. The Clerk is now meeting and liaising with Lancashire Adult Learning with a view to running taster courses in computers, family history and art in June /July. It is hoped that interested attendees will then register for 10-12 weeks courses in these subjects which will commence in the new Academic Year, in September. During the course of the year the central heating boiler has been repaired, new taps new flushing mechanisms fitted in the toilets to reduce water consumption. Following receipt of further CIL of £2,234.31 the Clerk reported that, following enquiries, it had been confirmed that this money could be set aside and accrued for a short period of time, towards the possible extension of the village hall. Councillor Johnson liaised with Mr Ainscough regarding the replacement of the faded and worn family plaque on the outside of the building. Mr Ainscough's builder attended and the plaque has now been replaced with a granite one. Following a report by the Parish Council the wooden seat at the rear of the village hall was repaired by West Lancs. BC.

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.

Parking problems remain ongoing as home-owners on Mossfields continue to use visitor parking spaces or, continue to park on spaces whose numbers do not correspond with the property they occupy. West Lancs. BC has suggested that it is up to the tenants to police parking issues however, some are finding it difficult to confront those who abuse the parking situation.

Considerable disruption was again caused on the roads, and to local businesses, by the Ironman Event in July 2015. Many local businesses suffered significant losses on what is usually the busiest day of the week as road closures prevented customers accessing them. In addition to this there were several reports of foul language from participants and marshals and, rude comments and remarks made by participants. The Parish Council has stressed that if these problems are not addressed in the 2016 event they will have no alternative but to withdraw their support and request that an alternative route be found for the race which excludes the Parish of Wrightington.

Parking problems in Appley Bridge, on Appley Lane North, remain an issue, being commuters using the railway station. The Parish Council has been notified by LCC of proposals to put intermittent yellow lines on Appley Lane North to provide passing places for vehicles affected by commuter parking along this route. Consultation and implementation remains ongoing. Blocked gullies on Appley Lane North resulted in gardens being flooded during heavy rainfall over the winter months.

After more than 5 years discussing the possible upgrading of public footpath 21, Moss Lane to Mossy Lea Road, to a bridleway, LCC notified the Parish Council of their application to upgrade this route from public footpath to a bridleway. The Parish Council support his upgrade and submitted evidence forms to prove historical use to support the application. Following this stage, LCC posted notices on the route of the intention to upgrade the route to a bridleway and, the Parish Council then received a number of objections which they forwarded to LCC to be handled. The Parish Council has recently been informed that a makeshift stile constructed on, and obstructing, this route, has now been removed.

In January 2016 the Parish Council were notified of the withdrawal of subsidies by LCC for local bus services with effect from April 2016. The Parish Council commented on these proposals, stressing that the withdrawal of subsidies would lead to the withdrawal of services and would leave many rural areas with little or no means of accessing services, amenities or facilities outside the Parish. The Parish Council were totally opposed to the withdrawal of bus services, as this will ultimately lead to social exclusion and isolation for many people in rural Parishes

The Parish Council requested a review and reduction of speed limits on Moss Lane, Courage Low Lane and Toogood Lane. LCC consulted the Police, but these requests were not supported. During the course of the year the speed limit on Robin Hood Lane was reduced to 40mph.

The Council continued to object to the proposed diversion of public footpath No. 5, Boars Den, off Robin Hood Lane, to take the pond into the garden curtilage as this had always been visible to public footpath users. Objections also related to the height and type of fence erected, and the close proximity of the exit from the proposed new route to the junction with Robin Hood Lane. The applicant attended a Parish Council Meeting to discuss these matters in more detail and, following these discussions the Council agreed that they would withdraw their objections provided the applicant agreed to the following: i) that the existing 2m high fence be removed and replaced with a 1m high post and rail fence ii) that suitable signage is erected to warn footpath users of the dangerous of the road they approaching on exiting the new route iii) that the route is upgraded to a hard surface suitable for a multi-purpose use and iv) that a sign be erected to raise awareness of the ancient burial ground (Tumulus) which is visible from the footpath. The applicant agreed and the Parish Council await an invitation to inspect the work before the original route is stopped-up.

After almost a year of reporting, hazard makers have been erected at the edge of the carriageway on Carr House Lane. The Parish Council however feels that 2, flexible hazard markers, would not be adequate to stop a vehicle from leaving the carriageway and going into the ditch.

When consulted by West Lancs. BC, the Parish Council proposed that CIL money accrued by the Borough Council could be used to improve play and recreation facilities on the play area on Appley Lane South and, to improve drainage at the water logged Mossy Lea Playing Field.

The Parish Council continue to object to the obstruction of the lay-by on Hall Lane by the owners of 1 & 2 Coalgate Cottages who have erected builders fencing and placed large boulders and a very

large planted stone trough at the front of the properties but, which are obstructing access and egress from the lay-by by larger vehicles who are forced to back out onto Hall Lane. The Parish Council understand that this matter is with LCC who have instructed the homeowners that the boulders and trough should be removed as they do not have a licence to place them on the highway.

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
16 May 2016