

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2012

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2011 Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2011/2012, and Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

Following the Elections Councillors for this Parish at May 2011 were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mr J Clinch 16 Clifton Crescent, Wigan

Mr I McRae 11 Rookery Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan

MOSSY LEA

Mrs Judith Burton 2 Courage Low Lane, Wrightington.

Mr Frank Hodgkinson 19 Broadhurst Lane, Wrightington.

Mr F Johnson 351 Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington.

Following the Parish Council Elections the Parish Council began the year with 5 members. The vacancies were advertised following which, in September 2011 the Parish Council appointed Mr David Page MBE to one of the vacant Appley Bridge Ward Councillors posts with effect from the November Parish Council Meeting, whilst at the November Parish Council Meeting Mrs Davina Hanlon was appointed to the remaining Appley Bridge Ward Councillors post with effect from December 2011. In April 2012 however, Councillor Page tendered his resignation. 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 LALC Annual Conference at Leyland and the LCC Parish & Town Council conference at County Hall. Councillors have attended briefing sessions, open days, public consultations and site meetings to address issues which arise in the Parish as required. Councillors agreed to accept information, documents, agenda and minutes electronically to save on rising postage costs. 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 £6600.00 (an increase of 3.5% on the previous year) for the financial year 2011/2012 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 2011 were audited by BDO Stoy Hayward with no matters arising. 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 formerly adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2012 is attached.

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.

57 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 54 applications last year.)

Examples of controversial planning applications related to the following: An outlines application for the regeneration of site incorporating residential units (on land and on water) hotel, restaurant, boathouse, car park and new community centre at East Quarry, Appley Bridge, was the subject of strong objections and concerns. The Parish Council agreed that the proposals submitted were very different from those contained within the original consultation event. The Parish Council objected as the development resulted in an over-development of the site, they objected to the proposed waiver of the affordable housing provision and waiving the signing of the s106 agreement. The Parish Council felt that there was inadequate evidence to support or substantiate the development. The Parish Council were subsequently notified of a Tree Preservation Order on trees forming part of these proposals, adjacent to the Community Centre.

A large public attendance at the December Meeting resulted in very strong objections to the proposals to erect 2 10kw wind turbines at Raby Fold Farm, Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington. The Parish Council and residents strongly objected to the proposals on a number of grounds including the following amongst others:- inappropriate development in the Green Belt, significant adverse impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt, the residents, community and Parish as a whole. The scale, appearance and visual impact of the structures would have a severe detrimental impact on the skyline and rural nature of the area and would be out of keeping with the street scene. These proposals would ruin the existing beautiful landscape of Wrightington, described by West Lancashire Borough Council as an Area of Landscape History of County Importance, rather than resulting in a better place to live. They would also contravene Borough Council policies which advise that proposals should avoid uncharacteristic or visually intrusive development, should avoid interference with long distance views from high points accessible to the public and should avoid the introduction of tall columnar constructions. The Council further believed that a full Health Impact Assessment should be conducted to assess the health and wellbeing implications associated with the noise, vibration and flicker/strobe effects produced by the wind turbines. A site specific Noise Survey should be undertaken as research indicates that the noise produced by wind turbines is constant, monotonous and, as well as being heard when in close proximity to the turbines, also carries some considerable distance and would therefore affect many of the homes and residents on Church Lane and Mossy Lea Road, as well as further afield.

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, 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.

POLICING

PCSO Benson remains solely responsible for Policing Wrightington, together with Parbold, Hilldale, Bispham, Dalton, Newburgh and sometimes beyond, when the need requires. PCSO Benson has continued to Police this large geographical area admirably and to the best of his ability. PACT issues can now be raised at the regular Coffee Mornings held at Mossy Lea Village Hall which 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.

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. Village Hall hire agreements have been updated during the course of the year the terms of which are now applicable and operative. The Parish Council installed flag poles holders at both Village Halls and it is anticipated that flags will be flown to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Armed Forces Day, and Remembrance Day. Village Halls were again used recently for the Local Council elections.

APPLEY BRIDGE

Investigations are continuing into the possible removal of the false ceilings in the main hall and in the kitchen to reveal the roof trusses. The Parish Council 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. Work involved in the successful 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 was completed this year. The Parish Council has submitted a bid to West Lancs. BC annual Capital Bids for funding towards the stripping and re-sealing of the wooden floor in the main hall the outcome of which has been delayed. Further applications have recently been submitted to Villages in Partnership and to County Councillor Ms Evans to assist with the removal of the existing false ceiling in the kitchen and replacement with a more modern ceiling together with associated electrical and re-decoration work. The Parish Council await the outcome of the applications. Considerable repair work was required to the central heating system this year. 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 including dancing class, the Women's Institute and the Pensioners Association.

MOSSY LEA

Following the successful LAG Bid, with the completion of the work involved the village hall has been completely refurbished and is now a much enhanced and improved facility available for a variety of uses, thus making it more marketable and increasing its income potential. Work forming part of the successful funding secured from the 2010/11 capital bid to West Lancs. BC to enhance IT and hospitality facilities at the village halls (including the installation of hearing loops), was also completed this year. 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. Since the start of the Coffee Mornings two years ago, together with other fund raising events organised by the Cancer Research UK Wrightington & Wigan Group of Friends and with the support of the Parish Council, including a Hot-pot Supper and Sing-a-long which proved very popular and is likely to be repeated, in excess of £14,000 has so far been raised. The Parish Council also allowed free use of the village hall for a Halloween Party to raise funds for the Corey Ashcroft Appeal. A Christmas Fair was held in late November, this was quite well attended and an enjoyable afternoon which is likely to become an Annual Event. The Village Hall is now quite well used with 2 different Yoga Classes, a Zumba class, a Zumba Fitness Class, a Pilates Class together with a significant increase in children's and young adults' birthday parties. It was disappointing however to note that some unreported damage did occur in the gents toilets following a 17th birthday party which will cost in the region of £160.00 to repair. A recent application for funding from Small Sparks for a number of small folding tables and a DVD player was successful and these items will be purchased shortly.

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.

Parking problems at Mossfields, Mossy Lea, are still prominent and with the encouragement of the Parish Council the tenants submitted a bid for funding to the Estates Management Team to create additional parking at the front of the flats facing Mossy Lea Road. Their bid was successful and West Lancs.BC and LCC are now investigating the highways and planning implications before proceeding with parking enhancements. The Parish Council offer of a full Topographical Survey to assist with the project remains.

A part-time 20mph speed limit has recently been introduced on Mossy Lea Road, near Mossy Lea Primary School with further 20mph speed limits being implemented on a number of estate roads in Appley Bridge.

Following receipt of complaints, and with the assistance of the County Councillor, double yellow lines have been installed on Hall Lane, either side of Wrightington Hospital entrance, to prevent parking on the pavements and obstruction of site-lines for motorists exiting the hospital.

Following devolution of responsibility for grass cutting from LCC to West Lancs BC grass verge cutting was undertaken by the Borough Council this year with a number of amenity areas continuing to be cut by the Parish Council by virtue of a similar delegated service agreement.

Pot-holes in the parish are the subject of continual discussion at Parish Council Meetings. Flooding problems in a number of places in the Parish have again given serious cause for concern. Stakes remain in the grass verge on Appley Lane North despite numerous reports by the Parish Council in relation to the highway safety implications for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders who may need to use this grass verge in an emergency. The Parish Council will pursue their removal.

In October 2011 the Parish Council were informed by LCC that all funding for Bus Shelter provision had been withdrawn therefore, plans for the promised new shelter near Mossfields were withdrawn. The bus shelter on Mossy Lea Road, near the junction with Chisnall Avenue, has recently undergone considerable refurbishment including a new roof and the inclusion of a notice board. Discussions continue to ensure that the notice board is turned around so that it can be viewed from the pavement. This shelter and the one opposite the BP garage have both been cleaned

Councillors attended the Calico Brook, Appley Bridge, Flood Risk Management Scheme public open day where a scheme to potentially alleviate flooding problems associated with excess water from the quarry in Appley Bridge were displayed and discussed. The anticipated cost of the scheme is £1.1 million, which will come from DEFRA funding. It is hoped that this work will address a very long standing problem in the Parish.

The Parish Council has recently been consulted on a proposed new name for the road between No.5 Mossy Lea Road and Bluebird Garage off Mossy Lea Road. The Parish Council objected to the suggested 'Macey Lane' and suggested a number of alternatives. The Council await the outcome of this consultation.

The Parish Council continue to pursue the upgrading of the right of way from Moss Lane to Mossy Lea Road from a public footpath to a bridleway. Land ownership issues and landowners permissions remain the stumbling block to this upgrading. The Council will continue to press for progress with this matter. 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
21 May 2012