

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2014

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2013 Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2013/2014, and Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

At May 2013 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.

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 6 members. The vacancies were advertised following which, in November 2013 the Parish Council appointed Mrs Amanda Kay to the vacant Appley Bridge Ward Councillors post. The remaining Parish Council Vacancy has been advertised. 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, Councillors Code of Conduct Training, open days, public consultations and site meetings to address issues which arise in the Parish as required. Councillors continue to receive 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. 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. The Parish Council supported West Lancs. BC's adoption of an Armed Forces Community Covenant during the course of the year. The Parish Council and Councillors continued to work throughout the year with Borough Councillor Mrs Baybutt and Borough Councillor Mrs Evans for the benefit of the Parish.

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. Village Hall constitutions were amended during the year bringing the quorum down to 3 in line with the Parish Council Standing Orders. Following a detailed Budget Meeting where the effects of the new Council Tax calculations were discussed and the fact that Concurrent Contributions from West Lancs. BC will be reduced by 15%, it was determined that the Parish Income requirement for 2013/14 was £10,000.00. Taking account of the fact that West Lancs. BC will be passing on to the Parish Council the grant of £498.00 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 £9502.00 for the financial year 2013/2014. Concurrent Contributions of £4021.00 (a reduction of 15% on last year's concurrent funding) were also received. A further reduction of 15% will be made again in the 2014/15 financial 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 2013 were audited by BDO Stoy Hayward with no matters arising. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2014 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.

53 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 47 applications last year.)

Examples of controversial planning applications related to the following: A further application for the erection of 1 wind turbine at Wrights Covert, Hesketh House Farm, Toogood Lane, Wrightington, was received during the course of the year. Having successfully fought 2 applications already, a large public attendance at Council Meetings once again resulted in very strong objections to the proposals being submitted. The Parish Council and residents objected to the proposals on similar grounds to those submitted when the applications for turbines were received at Raby Fold Farm and Stoneleach Farm, 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. This application was refused by the Borough Council and the Parish Council and residents now await the outcome of the applicants appeal against that decision. The WRAT Pack and the Parish Council now find themselves fighting a further planning application for a wind turbine on land adjacent to Copyhold Farm, Carr House Lane. Once again strong objections to this proposal, on the same grounds as detailed above, have been submitted to the Borough Council.

The Parish Council had detailed preliminary discussions with residents attending Parish Council Meetings, on proposals to relocate Wigan Athletic Training facilities on land adjacent to, and to the rear of, Wrightington Country Club. A residents group was formed to fight a planning application once submitted. Councillors and residents were extremely relieved when the proposals were dropped and the proposed location was changed to a golf course in a neighbouring Parish.

A planning application for 4 affordable homes on land off Broadhurst Lane was received. The Parish Council has no objections to the provision of affordable homes provided they are in appropriate places. Residents strongly objected to the proposals which were refused by West Lancs. BC as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The applicant has now appealed against this decision.

The Parish Council has recently objected to an application for a change to military use of the wood at Hesketh House Farm, Toogood Lane, Wrightington. The Parish Council objected on the grounds that this would be inappropriate development, would be a loss of amenity, a noise nuisance and the fact that the wood is full of bluebells which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

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

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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, 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.

The Parish Council has made a Donation during the course of the year including Appley Bridge Pensioners Social Club.

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.

PACT issues can now be raised at the Coffee Mornings held at Mossy Lea Village Hall which PCSO Benson and PC Lodge regularly attend 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.

APPLEY BRIDGE

Following an unsuccessful 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 Parish Council sought the advice of the contractor and determined that the damage to the existing floor from tap dancing classes was so significant that funds would need to be accumulated from both village halls to pay for the purchase and installation of a completely new engineered oak floor which was duly installed. As damage to the existing floor was due to tap dancing, following lengthy but unproductive discussions with the dancing teacher, it was determined that tap dancing classes should be suspended to prevent damage to the new floor. Shortly afterwards the Council were informed that most of the dancing classes would cease at the village hall as the teacher was re-locating to the Methodist Church Hall on Skull House Lane. The Parish Council decided that it was impossible to continue a professional working relationship with the dance teacher and requested that classes ceased completely in the Village Hall. Parking associated with the dancing classes has now become a problem on Skull House Lane on Saturdays. Following a successful Capital Bid to West Lancs. BC, new and more efficient radiators were fitted in the main hall, the ballet rails were removed and the hall was subsequently painted including the ceiling. A room thermostat has recently been fitted to ensure that the room is at a constant comfortable temperature for all village hall users. The building is now extremely well used and all village hall users are more than happy with the results. The Parish

Council has recently had discussions with the WI and Appley Bridge in Bloom representatives in relation to putting planters on the grass adjacent to the car park. Initial discussions seemed quite promising however, as the Parish Council have to consider the health & safety implications highlighted by the WI, of placing something on the grass verge which could become a trip hazard, it has now been decided that the planter placed on the grass by the WI should be removed. The Parish Council are now considering erecting a fence at the edge of the grass to prevent any damage by vehicles. 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 meeting 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 and proving very popular. The hall continues to be used for children's parties and it is hoped that, once the anti-virus software is updated and the new computer purchased becomes fully functional, computer classes will commence. The Village Hall Committee, with the agreement of the Parish Council has recently appointed a new Caretaker, who is not only responsible for cleaning the village hall but will also undertake general maintenance, changing light bulbs and touching up paintwork. He has recently spaded by the overgrowth from the footway at the front of the village hall and planted bulbs. Wildflower seeds will now be sown on the grass verge and on the grassed area to the rear of the hall. Following an unsuccessful bid to VIP for a contribution towards a New Notice Board at the village hall the caretaker has now suggested that it is possible to refurbish the existing Notice Board by sanding and staining and replacing the self-healing interior with metal. This will be more cost effective and prolong the life of the existing Notice Board and will mean that the Parish Council can now approach County Councillor Fillis with a request for financial assistance towards the suggested fencing to protect the grass verge at Appley Bridge Village Hall. At the beginning of 2014 the Parish Council submitted a bid to West Lancs. BC Capital Schemes for new kitchen units in the hall to make better use of the space and to allow easier access to the water stop-tap and the gas meter. The Parish Council has been informed this month that their bid has been successful and once the terms and conditions are agreed the project can proceed. The Parish Council submitted a scheme for additional play equipment on the playing field adjacent to the village hall from s106 monies accumulated from development in the Parish. The first scheme was unsuccessful. The Chairman met Borough Council officers on site and an alternative scheme has now been submitted.

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 and Broadhurst Lane.

A solution to the longstanding parking problems at Mossfields, Mossy Lea, is now in sight. 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, resulted in a recent planning application to provide 8 parking spaces at the front of blocks 1-4 and 5-8 Mossfields. Planning Permission has now been granted and site investigation trial digs have commenced. The original car park will be re-measured and re-marked to provide additional parking spaces and existing signage will be replaced with new

signs indicating that the parking is for Mossfields tenants only. Each tenant, whether they own a car or not, will be issued with a numbered parking space and there will be 2 spaces left for visitors. Following devolution of responsibility for grass cutting from LCC to West Lancs BC, grass verge cutting was undertaken by the Borough Council again this year with a number of amenity areas continuing to be cut by the Parish Council by virtue of a similar delegated service agreement. Initial grass verge cutting was unsatisfactory and the Parish Council made a number of complaints which were finally resolved when the Parish Council asked LCC Officers to intervene to ensure that West Lancs. BC adhered to the LCC specifications devolved to them.

20mph speed limits were rolled out to the estate roads in the Parish during the course of the year however, it is understood that enforcement will be a problem.

Pot-holes in the parish are the subject of continual discussion at Parish Council Meetings. The Parish Council continue to liaise with LCC to try to find a solution to flooding problems on Mossy Lea Road in the vicinity of Raby Fold Farm and Mossy Lea Village Hall. 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.

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.

The Parish Council continue to press for progress with 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 are understood to be the stumbling block to this upgrading. The Parish Council continue to collect evidence forms to prove historical use to support the application. The Parish Council continued to object to the diversion of part of public footpath No.5, off Robin Hood Lane. The Parish Council believe that the pond has always been, and should remain, in the field to be enjoyed by anyone using the public right of way and should not form part of the garden of the applicant. 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
19 May 2014