

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2013

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 21 May 2012 Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2012/2013, and Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

At May 2012 Wrightington Parish Councillors were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mr J Clinch	16 Clifton Crescent, Wigan
Mr I McRae	11 Rookery Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan
Mrs D Hanlon	8 Stonemill Rise, 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.

The Parish Council began the year with 6 members. The vacancies were advertised following which, in September 2012 the Parish Council appointed Mr Peter Gartside to the vacant Appley Bridge Ward Councillors post. Councillor Gartside has also been appointed as the Parish Council representative on the Richard Durning's Trust his appointment to be effective from their AGM in May. In October 2012 Mrs Davina Hanlon resigned from her position as Appley Bridge Ward Councillors with immediate effect. There are now once again 2 Parish Council Vacancies, one in each ward. 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 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. The Chairman and her husband had a very enjoyable evening when they attended a united sing on St Bartholomew's day at Tunley URC and the Induction Service for the new Vicar at St James's Church. The Parish Council and Councillors successfully continued to work together throughout the year with Borough Councillor Mrs Baybutt and Borough and County 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 formerly adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. The Parish Council adopted a New Code of Conduct, the provisions

of which are the same as that adopted by the Principal Authority, West Lancs. BC. The terms of new code became effective and binding on 1 July 2012. As a result of the new code of conduct, at the Budget and Parish Council Meeting, both held in January 2013, all Parish Councillors had to apply for a dispensation, granted by the Clerk as the Proper Officer of the Council, the granting of which allowed them to take part in discussions to set the Parish Precept. The Parish Council precepted upon West Lancashire Borough Council for the sum of £7095.00 (an increase of £495.00 on the previous year) for the financial year 2012/2013 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 2012 were audited by BDO Stoy Hayward with no matters arising.

The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2013 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.

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 57 applications last year.)

Examples of controversial planning applications related to the following: An application for the erection of 3 x 24.5m wind turbines at Stoneleach Farm, Toogood Lane, Wrightington. A large public attendance at Council Meetings 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 application for a turbine was received at Raby Fold 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 subsequently withdrawn. The WRAT Pack and the Parish Council now find themselves fighting a further planning application for 1x 90m high wind turbine a little further along Toogood Lane at Hesketh House Farm. Councillors and the Clerk attended a consultation by Stratus Environmental Ltd at St James's Church Hall in February 2013 on these proposals. Once again strong objections to this proposal, on the same grounds as detailed above, have been submitted to the Borough Council. It is understood this application is scheduled to be determined by the Borough Council Planning Committee in June. The Parish Council, neighbouring Parish Councils and residents objected very strongly, though unsuccessfully, to the application for change of use of The Brookhouse Public House to a dwelling.

The Parish Council has recently objected to proposals submitted to, and being discussed by, Wigan Borough Council for further development at Herons Wharf. Objections are on highway safety grounds as the already inadequate access to this site is located in Wrightington, West Lancs.

The Parish Council has also had detailed preliminary discussions, with large numbers of residents also attending Parish Council Meetings, on the proposals to relocate Wigan Athletic Training facilities on land adjacent to, and to the rear of, Wrightington Country Club. A suitable response will be compiled once a planning application is received.

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.

The Parish Council has made a number of Donations during the course of the year to Appley Bridge Pensioners Social Club, the Hinds Head Bowling Club, Sue Ryder and Vitalise totalling £250.00.

POLICING

PCSO Benson began the year continuing his sole responsibility for Policing Wrightington, together with Parbold, Hilldale, Bispham, Dalton, Newburgh and sometimes beyond, when the need required. PCSO Benson continued to Police this large geographical area admirably and to the best of his ability however he reported in October the appointment of PC Beverley Lodge as the new Community Beat Manager responsible for this Policing area.

PACT issues can now be raised both at the regular Coffee Mornings held at Mossy Lea Village Hall which PCSO Benson and PC Lodge try to attend to meet residents, pass on information and advice, and to collect details of PACT issues requiring attention or at the PACT Meetings which have again been re-instated in the Parish, on a less frequent basis and rotationally at the Village Halls.

The new 101 telephone number introduced by the Police for non-emergency calls in reportedly 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. The Parish Council installed flag poles holders at both Village Halls flags were flown to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Armed Forces Day, and Remembrance Day. Village Halls were again used in May for the Local Council elections and also in November for the Police & Crime Commissioner Elections.

APPLEY BRIDGE

The Parish Council submitted 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 then 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 try to pay for the purchase and installation of a completely new engineered oak floor. Whilst this matter was on-going applications were 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. Both these funding bids were successful and the work undertaken has made a tremendous difference to the kitchen facility in the village hall. The Parish Council completed this work by upgrading the radiator and lighting, choosing light fittings to complement the age of the building. Once complete the Parish Council asked the Parish Champion, County Councillor Mike Otter, for a financial contribution of £200 towards the cost of a new cooker. Councillor Otter agreed to this and the kitchen was completed in late 2012. In early 2013 discussions resumed in relation to a replacement floor in the main hall. As damage to the existing floor was due to tap dancing the Chairman and Clerk met with the Dancing Teacher to reach an agreement for future tap dancing classes in the village hall. Following a productive meeting it was agreed prior to the March Meeting that tap dancing classes would now take place in the small meeting room and the new floor was installed in the main hall in early April. However, the agreement to use the small meeting room was subsequently and disappointingly rescinded and, following discussions at the April Parish Council Meeting, attended by parents and the dancing teacher, it was determined that tap dancing classes should be suspended to prevent damage to the new floor and until an alternative temporary roll out or snap-lock surface could be found on which tap dancing classes could be taught. The Parish Council has recently been informed that most of the dancing classes will now cease at the village hall as the teacher will be re-locating to a different venue. A microphone socket was installed in the main hall to assist with the use of the hearing loop. The Parish Council applied for Borough Council Capital funding towards the upgrading of the radiators in the main hall, with a 30% contribution towards this bid to be paid by the Parish Council. Notification has recently been received that this bid has been successful. 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 jujitsu, the Women's Institute 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, this was quite well attended and an enjoyable afternoon which is likely to become an Annual Event. Hot-pot Supper and Sing-a-longs are also held and proving very popular. The Village Hall was quite well used at the beginning of the year 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. At the beginning of 2013 however some of these classes were lost as their increasing popularity meant that the teachers had to look for larger premises. It was disappointing however to note that some unreported damage did occur during a 17th birthday party following which, the decision was made that no further bookings would be taken for young persons' birthday parties unless a deposit was left at the time of booking and insurance against such damage was taken out by the person making the booking, with a copy to the Village Hall Committee. A successful application for funding from Small Sparks for a number of small folding tables and a DVD player added to the facility.

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 review of litter bin provision in the Parish was also undertaken by the Parish Council at the request of West Lancs. BC, this resulted in a new litter bin being located on the grass verge near the Parish Council Notice Board adjacent to the playing fields at Appley Lane South.

The Parish Council agreed to a request from Shevington Parish Council to extend the planting for the Appley Bridge in Bloom project into the West Lancs. side of Appley Bridge eg: at the railway station. The Council also agreed to West Lancs. BC undertaking cleaning and tidying work to the War Memorial adjacent to the Community Centre. This work was completed before the well-attended Remembrance Day Service organised by the Parish Council.

Parking problems at Mossfields, Mossy Lea, are still prominent and with the encouragement of the Parish Council the tenants submitted a successful bid for funding to the Estates Management Team to create additional parking at the front of the flats facing Mossy Lea Road. 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 in place.

Part-time 20mph speed limits have been introduced on Mossy Lea Road, near Mossy Lea Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School with further 20mph speed limits being implemented on a number of estate roads in Appley Bridge during the course of the year.

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. The Council has recently decided to express an interest in taking on a similar delegated service agreement for the maintenance of public rights of way. It was agreed this will be trialled for a 12 month period following which the Council will decide whether to hand responsibility back to LCC or continue to undertake this work on a delegated service basis.

Several months ago, the Parish objected to the proposed diversion of part of public footpath No. 5, off Robin Hood Lane, Wrightington, as the proposals would constitute a considerable loss of amenity and significantly alter the characteristics of the route of this right of way. The Parish Council have recently been re-consulted on this matter however, their objections remain unchanged.

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. Progress with both these matters has been significantly hindered by long term sickness problems by officers at LCC. Stakes have finally been removed from the grass verge on Appley Lane North following 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 were 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 that the road already had a name. This was actually correct however a further recent consultation has been received on renaming this street and the Parish Council preferred option is Rookery Fold.

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. 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
20 May 2013