

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of the Council of the Parish of Wrightington held on Monday 20th March 2023 at Mossy Lea Village Hall at 7.30pm the following were present:

Councillors: Mrs J Burton (Chairman), Mr F Hodgkinson, Mr F Johnson, Mr A Shaw, Mrs K Jukes, Mr R Alexander and Mr C House. Also present were 21 members of the public.

OPEN FORUM

(At this point in the Meeting members of the public present can report, ask questions, raise issues and make observations on parish matters or items appearing on the Agenda. Reports will also be received from the Police, Borough and County Councillors if attending – Once open forum is closed the Chairman will only suspend standing orders to allow public participation in extreme circumstances.)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that everyone's points of view be treated with respect. Residents present expressed their concerns about parked vehicles on Mossy Lea Road, outside the White Lion. It was confirmed that since Covid-19 capacity at the White Lion has expanded and when the car park at the rear is full, parking on the road becomes a problem. It was reported that the current layout/capacity of the White Lion does not resemble what they have planning permission for. Seating and dining are now both inside and outside and the pub is so popular that sometimes residents cannot get off their driveways. Those present asked if anything could be done about limiting capacity at the White Lion or to improve road safety at this location. It was confirmed that parking issues in relation to school pick up and drop off times are short term, however, parking associated with the White Lion is reported to be dangerous with vehicles parking on both sides of the road, parking on the pavements, and causing problems for buses, farm vehicles and HGV's using Mossy Lea Road. Extending the capacity of the pub, and the popularity of the pub, are the problems. It was reported some of the parking spaces were lost when the temporary structures were erected during Covid-19. There are also problems with noise late at night, altercations outside the pub and banging of car doors. The noise from the air conditioner and extractor fans is also very loud. The bottle bank has been moved from the far end of the car park towards the front of the pub and is also very noisy when in use. The residents reported that their quality of life has diminished greatly in the last year as the smells from the kitchen are widespread and last year this was accompanied by cluster flies in their homes. It was reported that there have recently been sightings of vermin. The residents would like to see the Police there regularly and enforcing the regulations. Borough Councillor Jukes confirmed that she has been aware of this issue since October 2022 and reported that the Borough Council Enforcement Officer has attended to survey parking associated with the school. Councillor Jukes has suggested a multi-agency Meeting involving representatives of the school, the Police, LCC, the Church and the White Lion to discuss the issue. She has also contacted St Joseph's Church in relation to parents using the Church car park and walking their children to school from there. It was confirmed by those present that it is the overflow from the White Lion car park which causes the problem, and that school parking is a minor issue compared to the noise and nuisance from the pub. An email address for LCC was supplied by someone attending the Meeting, who suggested that evidence to support the reports such as videos or photographs is required. Borough Councillor Jukes confirmed that there is little that can be done about the noise from the air conditioning however, she can bring the reports about smells, flies, the bins, and vermin, to the attention of the Environmental Health Officer. It was reported that the farmer at the rear of the White Lion had offered to rent them some land to extend the car park. The Chairman confirmed that parking problems have been an issue for over 12 months and have been reported by the Parish Council frequently to the Police, along with photographs. Borough Councillor Jukes asked residents present to send any photographs to her so that she can pursue this matter. A resident was present to ask if the local Community Group, set up to fight the planning application at The Cornerhouse, was still in existence. The Clerk agreed to pass on the resident's contact details to the members of the group, along with a request that they make contact. The resident reported that the Cornerhouse will come before the Parish Council for discussion again as it has not been sold yet. Another resident present reported on the current legal action against Maybrook developments in relation to the removal of hazardous waste from the railway pad at West Quarry, to an appropriate disposal site. (Councillor Mrs Jukes left the Meeting during discussions on this subject) The material to be removed is fibrous. The Parish Council were asked to write to the Council and the Environment Agency to ask if risk assessments and method statements will be produced, and made available, before the waste is removed/transported so that no contaminated materials can escape into residents' homes and affect the

residents of Appley Bridge. It was reported that LCC and West Lancs. BC are both in dispute with Maybrook, along with the Environment Agency who have issued a court summons against Maybrook the company and a separate one against the landowner personally, whilst the Parish Council are the only body supporting them. It was suggested that some residents feel the Parish Council is failing them, and leaving them open to self interest and bringing the Parish Council into disrepute. The Chairman stopped comments on this matter at this point confirming that the Parish Council are only consultees on all the matters discussed and cannot enforce anything in relation to the Quarries.

A resident of Appley Lane North reported on recent developments at West Quarry at the rear of his house. It was reported that Northern Diver have purchased a piece of land on West Quarry at the rear of houses on Appley Lane North and beyond, going down towards their existing site. It was reported that Northern Diver confirmed they would be clearing the land and defining the boundaries. The resident asked them if any further permissions were required, asked about the leachate from the site, about the gas monitoring equipment and about the railway pad. He was informed that Bullens have bought the railway pad.

Northern Diver have provided a number of residents with a plan of their proposals for the area of land they have purchased. The plan shows housing, industrial units and re-opening of the disputed access of Appley Lane North. Residents understand that this land is still an active gas monitoring site and feel the equipment should be restored first. It is also understood that the land is Green Belt. The Parish Council were asked to contact Northern Diver to determine what they are doing. LCC and West Lancs. BC will be asked if the proposals outlined by Northern Diver in their letter to the residents are possible.

A resident of Dawber Delph was present to express concern about the poor condition of the perimeter fence around East Quarry. During better weather this is one of the points of access used by visitors to the quarry. The fence is bent, cut or removed to gain access. The fence is too low and is very easy for visitors to climb over to access the quarry. It was reported that fence repairs take weeks to complete and there has been no improvements to security at East Quarry since the fatality which occurred in 2015. The Parish Council were asked to contact Maybrook and West Lancs. BC to ask why the fence has not been replaced. Open Forum Closed at 8.10pm. Councillor Mrs Jukes returned to the Meeting.

123. **APOLOGIES** – There were no apologies received.

124. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Members were asked to consider any personal/prejudicial interest they may have to disclose in relation to matters under discussion at the Meeting - **Councillor Mrs Jukes declared a pecuniary interest due to the fact that she is currently in a legal dispute with the owner of West Quarry, which remains on-going. No further declarations were made at this point in the Meeting however, should a Councillor feel he/she has any interest in later matters he/she will declare it at that point.**

125. **MINUTES** – The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 20th February 2023 had been circulated in advance of the Meeting and were accepted as correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

126. **CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION ITEMS**

Items to be reported to, and noted by, the Council – no decision required: REPORT 1 – page 5 – **Noted.**

Items requiring discussion, observations or action by the Council:

- a) Request from residents to discuss parking problems on Mossy Lea Road, in the vicinity of the White Lion Public House – **The Parish Council will contact the Police and LCC. Borough Councillor Mrs Jukes will also follow this matter up. It was confirmed that Saturday and Sunday mornings, and weekends, are a problem. Standing Orders were suspended to allow the LCC officer present to speak – who suggested that the Council request an experimental order to prevent parking on one side of the road. However, this may impact on residents on the other side of the road. Double yellow lines are likely to displace the problems elsewhere. It was confirmed that a Police presence would help. Enforcement is one of the main issues. Possibly double yellow lines either side of the pub entrance, could help, or intermittent double yellow lines at intervals to create a chicane effect in the road. This would also act as a traffic calming measure. The Meeting was resumed.**

- b) Forms and information for the forthcoming Parish Council elections – **The Clerk explained how to complete the nomination forms for Councillors wishing to reapply.**
- c) CIL Funding 2023 & Infrastructure Projects from West Lancashire Borough Council – **The Parish Council will re-endorse the project to improve the Play Area at Appley Lane South**
- d) Budget concerns raised by a resident for discussion by the Parish Council – **Prior to discussing the questions the Chairman asked if everyone was happy with the explanations given by the Clerk at the Budget Meeting. This was confirmed and the Clerk was thanked for her efforts. The Clerk confirmed that following the Budget Meeting the Parish Council will be putting additional measures in place going forward to address some of the issues raised.** (Responses to the questions are detailed at Report 2, Page 5-6)
- e) Emails of thanks from ABCA and All Saints School for the hedgehog houses, bird boxes etc – **It was confirmed that the Meadows and the Schools were delighted with the items donated. It is uncertain whether the Biodiversity Grant will be available in 2023.**
- f) Late items received which may require discussion/action/observations for the next Agenda –
 - i) The Clerk reported on correspondence and notices received from an independent Surveyor in relation to a party wall agreement required to ensure that the interests of all parties involved are maintained during the building of the extension at 1 Lowther Terrace. The Clerk confirmed that West Lancs. BC legal officers (as the landowners) have agreed to the appointment of this independent party provided the Parish Council (as the tenant) agrees – **Resolved – If the Borough Council are happy to go ahead with the appointment, then so are the Parish Council.**
 - ii) Email request from a resident confirming that the water abstraction licence granted to East Quarry owners, Maybrook, on 7th January 2021 is still in place and de-watering of the quarry is permitted however, no action has been taken to date to remove the water in accordance with the licence. The Parish Council are asked to contact the landowner to ask why the de-watering has not been undertaken, making the quarry a less attractive venue and reducing the risks to visitors – **The Parish Council will write to the landowner and ask this question.**

127. DIVISION OF WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL INTO 2 SEPARATE PARISHES – Resolved – discussions deferred until after the Parish Council elections.

128. PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE – PARISH COUNCIL DEDICATED EMAIL ADDRESSES
– Follow up and report back by Parish Councillors looking into this. The Clerk will forward any information obtained about Easy Websites to Councillor Alexander - **Resolved – discussions deferred until after the Parish Council elections.**

129. ACTION TAKEN/REQUIRED TO SATISFY AUDIT REQUIREMENTS - It was noted that: The Parish Council confirms the following action has been taken throughout the year to satisfy audit requirements: i) The Risk Assessment/Management Plan/Register – was reviewed and adopted at the May 2022 Parish Council Meeting. ii) The effectiveness of the Internal Audit was confirmed – the Internal Auditor is both competent and independent, has no relationship with the Clerk or Councillors. The Audit trail is detailed, planned and the broad scope of the internal audit covers all aspects of the Councils business including financial, administrative, practical and procedural matters. Any issues arising from both the internal and external auditors are reported to the Parish Council at the earliest opportunity and the appropriate action taken. It was **Resolved – That Mrs Stewart be appointed to undertake the 2023/24 Parish Council Internal Audit.**

130. HIGHWAYS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

- It was confirmed that the Parish Council will contact Maybrook, LCC and West Lancs. BC in relation to the poor condition of the perimeter fence around East Quarry.
- It was confirmed that the Parish Council will ask Northern Diver about their plans for the land purchased at West Quarry.
- Councillor Johnson reported that nothing had been done in relation to his reports last month.
- It was confirmed that the Parish Council will ask West Lancs. BC Enforcement Officer to check what planning permissions have been granted at the White Lion and advise them as to what permissions must be applied for and what is permitted on the site.

- Parked vehicles in front of Jubilee Terrace, Appley Lane South, are obstructing access to the bus stop.
- Speeding vehicles on Courage Low Lane, Toogood Lane, Moss Lane, Tunley Lane and Mossy Lea Road are a significant problem. This will be reported to LCC.
- The Chairman reported that she was concerned that at the last Meeting residents felt the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman had misled the Parish Council. The Chairman has looked back at correspondence in relation to West Quarry and confirmed that the Parish Council reported the baled waste on the railway pad at West Quarry in 2020. She further confirmed that following this in 2021 a member of the public thanked the Clerk for sending copies of all the email trails in relation to Parish Council reports at West Quarry. The Parish Council involved the Borough Councillors in office at the time, and have supported the residents with all the reports at West Quarry. The Vice-Chairman did not mislead the Parish Council, as the Parish Council had already reported all the issues which were pointed out to him on his visit to West Quarry, and they will continue to do so. The Parish Council fully support the residents with all the issues at West Quarry. The Parish Council also support the licence to drain East Quarry, however, they do not support the landowner's business. The Parish Council would like to see the residents of Appley Bridge get their lives back in summer and do not want to see another death at East Quarry. The Chairman does not feel that she, or the Vice-Chairman have misled the Parish Council.

131. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES – Nothing to report.

132. VILLAGE HALLS

MOSSY LEA – new hot water boiler purchased, awaiting delivery and installation.
APPLEY BRIDGE – the No Ball Games and Bollards sign on the front of the Village Hall is broken. The sign needs taking down and replacing with a No Ball Games sign. There is a large pot-hole in the car park which needs repairing. The Clerk will contact West Lancs. BC to see if they can assist with this.

133. PLANNING To discuss the following applications:

- 1) 2023/0041/FUL Proposed 2 storey dormer front and side extension. 3 The Grove, Appley Bridge – **Resolved – No Objections.**
- 2) 2023/0058/FUL Removal of existing rear extensions/conservatory with replacement orangery extension. 246 Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington - **Resolved – No Objections.**
- 3) 2023/0059/FUL Construction of single storey pitched roof extension to side, and single storey flat roof extension to rear of existing bungalow. 164 Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington – **Resolved – No Objections.**
- 4) 2023/0160/PNC Notification – Change of use from Agricultural building to storage of building materials (Class E). Lane Farm, Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington - **Resolved - The Council has significant concerns about this application. This farm and 127 Mossy Lea Road are both in same ownership. It has been reported that there are currently a number of breaches of planning control regulations at this site. It is felt that a retrospective planning application should be submitted on the advice of the enforcement officer.**
- 5) 2023/0128/LDC Certificate of Lawfulness – Existing use for tourism – Camping and Caravanning. Charity Farm, Smithy Brow, Wrightington. Councillor Shaw declared an interest in this application and took no part in discussions or voting - **Resolved – No Objections.**

134. LANCASHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – Nothing specific to report.

135. ACCOUNTS - To receive the following list of accounts for Approval:

For Payment:

Mr F Johnson	Reimburse cost of window cleaning MLVH	£20.00
Mrs C A Cross	Reimburse Mileage Expenses 2022/23	£205.20
Charnock Richard PC	Reimburse Broadband/Landline/Mobile Phone Charges Oct 22-Mar 23 (50% of total cost) £81.93+£81.96	£163.89

British Garden Cntrs	Hedgehog/bird boxes/bug houses etc. Biodiversity Grant	£217.89	
Golden Days GC	Hedgehog/nest boxes/bird feeder, bat box (Bio. Grant)	£155.90	£311.49
CHS	Burco hot water boiler – MLVH		£463.99
Mrs C A Cross	Clerk’s Salary – Net		£959.39
D/D NEST	Pension Contributions (employer + employee)		£41.19
D/D Plusnet	Internet MLVH		£27.60
D/D Plusnet	Internet ABVH		£23.62
D/D Waterplus	Water usage ABVH		£41.32
D/D Waterplus	Water usage MLVH		£38.64
E.on	Electricity usage ABVH		£180.44

Resolved: Payment of the above accounts is approved.

136. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING Monday 17th April 2023 at 7.30pm
Appley Bridge Village Hall

RESOLVED: That the next Meeting of the Parish Council will be on Monday 17th April 2023 at 7.30pm at Appley Bridge Village Hall.

Minutes 123 to 136 will be accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman at the Meeting to be held on Monday 17th April 2023.

Members of the Public and Press are welcome to attend

Meeting Closed: 9.22 pm.

Chairman:

Date:

REPORT 1

- a) Notification permission refused for single storey side extension with associated alterations, including new driveway access form the highway. 5 Toogood Lane, Wrightington.
- b) Notification permission granted for single storey side extension following removal of existing detached garage. New entrance porch to front elevation. 8 Hinds Head Avenue, Wrightington.
- c) Notification permission granted for conversion of existing barn-first floor to ancillary residential accommodation associated with the existing dwelling. 349 Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington.
- d) Notification permission granted for single storey rear extension and new side chimney stack. 14 Church Lane, Wrightington.
- e) Notification West Lancs. BC objection to County matter – Lawful Development Certificate for the use of imported fill material (inert) to raise quarry floor to within approx. 1m of current water level for safety reasons. East Quarry, Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge.
- f) Notification that progress is being made with the proposed extension, which will involve work to the party wall between 1 Lowther Terrace and the rear of Appley Bridge Village Hall. The surveyor will contact the Parish Council to liaise on this matter should it be necessary.
- g) Details of The Thursday Club at The Vale Hall, Skull House Lane, commencing Thursday 16th March – displayed in Notice Boards.
- h) Confirmation the engineers have agreed with suggested SPID locations. Have suggested giving the SPID a go at the Appley Bridge site before cutting back trees.

REPORT 2

1 - Setting the Precept.

Certain councillors, at the budget meeting of 30/01/23, claimed to be aware of the financial hardships under which people are struggling at this present time, and yet these same councillors raised the precept by the equivalent of 5.8% (band D property example), without explaining the need for this increase at a time of considerable hardship for many. This is a particularly questionable decision as the parish council is planning on maintaining balances of over £27,000 at the end of the next financial year, which is still over 100% greater than the amount raised from the precept.

Question 1. Why did the councillors who voted for this increase do so, knowing the level of balances held by the council? Councillors took account of the increased hours allocated to the Clerk, the possibility of a contested election in 1 or both wards, the anticipated cost of a new website and email addresses and the fact that utility bills have increased considerably since last year. Councillors felt it would be irresponsible not to take account of these factors. Some felt that the reaction to raise the Precept was premature.

Question 2. Do these councillors accept that their decision will perpetuate the inflation rate, unnecessarily? No comment.

Question 3. Is there a deliberate intention by these councillors to keep the balances at this level, above the levels recommended by JPAG (Joint panel on Accountability and Governance: NALC) No comment.

2/ Setting the Budget

From attending the Budget meeting and disseminating the published budgetary figures, there appears to be very little evidence of Budgetary planning by the council, apart from the Clerk presenting areas of expenditure over the next financial year. Budget planning should contain 3 clear strategies; Short term planning, medium- and long-term planning, contingency planning. There is little evidence of this. It appears that the budget is merely previous areas of expenditure rolled forward with an amount added for additional costs (it was unclear how these additional costs were determined). It was surprising to hear comments, 'this is how every council do it' (Cllr Shaw) and, 'we have the lowest precept in West Lancashire' (Wrightington councillors)

Question 4. Can either of these claims be substantiated, how does Cllr Shaw know every Council budget and where is the information of Wrightington PC having the lowest precept? It is still believed that Wrightington Parish are one of the lowest Precepts in the Borough.

Question 5. Can the councillors show any evidence of medium- or long-term planning? Councillors confirmed there are no medium, or long term, matters planned at the moment.

Question 6. Can the councillors explain that the Business support grant received 2020/21 of £22,676, which has to be used for Village Halls only, seems to have been subsumed into the budget with no obvious evidence of where that money has been allocated?" It was confirmed that the money is being used to support Village Hall expenditure. It was confirmed that Village Hall income is paid over to the Parish Council periodically.

3/ Balances.

In the financial year 2017/18 Wrightington Parish council managed to accumulate end of year balances of £14,316 (increased from previous years balance of £2,087). This then further increased 2018/19 to a balance of £ 16,655 and in 2019/2020 to £20,963. (NB. The following year £22,676 was received as the business support grant taking the total in balances to £42,851.) Guidance states that 'a council should typically hold between 3- and 12-months expenditure as a general reserve' (Good Councillors Guide on Finance & Transparency 2017)

Question 7. Would the representatives at that time (2017-2020), explain the purpose in accumulating such a substantial increase in balances, or was it unintentional and accrued through an absence of financial planning? The Parish Council has considered an extension to Mossy Lea Village Hall over the past few years and has also used CIL money received in that time where possible, to fund some expenditure items.

4 As elected representatives.

Some councillors seem to be of the opinion that the present budget planning and reporting, clearly evidences how monies are being spent, in fact, as was apparent at the budget meeting, councillors did not know the detail of this and had to refer to the Clerk for explanation. As custodians of this money there is a necessity to be able to explain it, as at present it most certainly lacks transparency. Councillors are wrong to claim that 'as the accounts are audited every year' this is sufficient information for the parishioners. The AGAR report purely shows monies received, monies spent, increases and decreases in levels of expenditure and of balances held. It does not show transparency on how and where the monies are spent over a period of time. Councillors should know, even if only estimated, how much of the budget (%age) is being spent on different categories of expenditure during the financial year and in previous years, thus enabling them to monitor expenditure over the year and evaluate year on year expenditure against each area of expenditure. For example, can councillors from the present information determine:

Example Questions to aid Budget planning:

How much has each Village Hall cost to run over the last 5 years?

How have these areas of expenditure increased or decreased?

How much income has been received from each village Hall (accepting Covid variances)?

Are the Village Halls running at a profit or a loss?

How do expenditure and income compare between ABVH v MLVH?

With information in this detail councillors could make accurate financial planning and residents would be able to see monies being allocated appropriately. (Village Halls are used purely as an example).

Councillors agreed that changes in the way the accounts are presented going forward will help Parish Councillors to monitor finances more easily and a further division of items of expenditure will also assist. It was agreed that it will be good practice going forward so that Councillors will be able to explain this.