

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2021

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 21 May 2019 Councillor Mr F Hodgkinson was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2019/2020, and Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

At May 2019 and continuing on to May 2020 Wrightington Parish Councillors were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

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| Mrs R Critchley | 2 Dawber Delph, Appley Bridge. |
| Mrs K Jukes | 68 Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge. |
| Mr C House | 77 Runshaw Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan. |

MOSSY LEA

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| 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. |

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and specific Coronavirus related legislation all elections were cancelled and members remained in office until May 2021. This also applied to elected posts on the Parish Council which also remained in post until May 2021 and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council began the year with 6 members. However, during the course of the year Mrs R Critchley resigned from her position as a ward Councillor for Appley Bridge. There are currently 3 applicants for the 2 vacant Appley Bridge Ward Councillors posts, and 1 applicant for the 1 vacant Mossy Lea Ward Councillors post. It is anticipated that one of the Appley Bridge ward Councillors posts will be filled with effect from the June 2021 Meeting with the remaining 2 vacant posts to be filled with effect from the September 2021 Parish Council Meeting. 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 were reviewed, amended and approved as required during the course of 2019 and were carried forward to 2020/21 due to the sudden impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic which sent the Country and the world into a total lockdown, forcing businesses to close, meetings to halt, schools and workplaces to close with the majority of people being forced to work from home, to undertake home schooling, and the elderly and vulnerable to remain in their homes shielding to keep themselves safe from the Coronavirus pandemic. Following circulation of Budget details in February 2020, it was determined that the Parish Requirement for 2020/21 would be £19,300.00 – top up grant of £613.00. The Parish Council precepted upon West Lancs. BC for the sum of £18,687.00 for the 2020/21 financial year which was the same figure as last year and resulted in a small percentage drop in the Council Tax for residents. Concurrent Contributions were also received. The Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020 were approved at a socially distanced meeting held outside in August 2020 to comply with Covid guidelines and were audited by PKF Littlejohn, with no matter arising requiring action. 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. The Councils Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2021 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.

63 Planning Applications have been dealt with by the Parish Council during the year in comparison to 44 applications last year.

The Council were notified by West Lancs. Borough Council that a review of the West Lancashire Local Plan will commence in Autumn 2021.

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:

Face to face Parish Council Meetings ceased in March 2020 with the national lockdown until the Coronavirus Act 2020 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 were passed which allowed the Parish Council to meet remotely using Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype and other remote platforms. Residents were advised to email the Parish Council with any concerns, observations or issues they wished to raise and the Parish Council began remote meetings, using the Zoom platform in January 2021.

Throughout the course of the lockdown the Parish Council posted advice notices on the Notice Boards and website.

The Parish Council made a Donation of £500 to the Parbold Against Landfill Campaign Group to assist in ensuring the safety of the residents of Appley Bridge and the possible dangers associated with ineffective gas monitoring equipment and combustible materials stored at West Quarry. The Parish Council has contacted Borough Councillors, the County Councillor, LCC and West Lancs. BC Officers, the Fire Service and the Environment Agency to try to assist with the removal of combustible materials currently being stored, without a licence, on West Quarry.

POLICING

PCSO Neil Smith is responsible for Policing Wrightington, Parbold, Hilledale, Bispham, Dalton, Newburgh, and sometimes beyond when the need requires.

Police initiatives and intervention were greatly appreciated by the residents of Appley Bridge during the extremely hot weather experienced during the early months of lockdown to address anti-social behaviour associated with access to East Quarry for swimming. A positive police presence, using Appley Bridge Village Hall car park to set up a mobile Police Station, lead to a very successful intervention which assisted residents greatly at this already difficult time in 2020.

VILLAGE HALLS

Fire detection and security at the village halls is monitored and checked annually and all electrical equipment has been PAT tested.

APPLEY BRIDGE – The village hall closed as soon as the country went into lockdown. The Parish Council took the opportunity to complete some external roof work to address a roof leak, with work then taking place internally to repair the damage caused in the secure room and chair store by the leaking roof. In addition new electric roller blinds were fitted to the large windows in the main hall. The Parish Council took the decision to close the barrier at the village hall with keys being given to a member of staff and a parent from All Saints School to enable parking at school opening and closing times. Recent quotations requested to relocate the water and gas meters from the cellar to the kitchen make this work cost-prohibitive.

MOSSY LEA – Some painting work has been undertaken during lockdown. Work is required to address a damp issue in the hall and as there have been ongoing problems with the central heating system a new boiler will be installed in the coming months. A new projector has been purchased and installed in the village hall.

In the early months of lockdown, both village hall car parks were used by West Lancs. BC for the location of skips which residents could use, free of charge, to reduce the accumulation of items normally disposed of at refuse and recycling centres which were closed during early lockdown.

Planting of the baskets on the railings at both village halls has been undertaken and new Notice Boards have been erected in the grounds of both village halls.

In view of the increased cleaning required, the provision of adequate signage, hand sanitiser and cleaning materials to comply with Covid guidelines the hourly charge for hiring the village hall has been increased to £15 per hour with effect from re-opening. The halls are now beginning to slowly re-open with supervised activities for the under 18's since the 12th of April and further opening for meetings from 17th of May 2021.

HIGHWAYS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Parish Council continued to pursue the removal of debris and detritus left by LCC at the end of the old road adjacent to the BP garage. The Council continue to lobby West Lancs. BC for improvements to the play area at Appley Lane South, to improve and enhance this amenity.

The Parish Council were notified by the Environment Agency that a licence has been granted for the abstraction of 70% of the water in East Quarry. There was a mixed response to the granting of this licence with some residents concerned about the potential for increased flooding in the Parish whilst others supported this as a means of addressing the anti-social behaviour associated with swimming in the quarry. Due to the ongoing issues with both East and West Quarry the Parish Council has invited the Quarry owner to attend the June 2021 Parish Council Meeting.

CONCLUSION

Despite the Coronavirus pandemic 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. However, now the Coronavirus Act 2020 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 are no longer in force, which allowed for remote Parish Council Meetings, the Parish Council must return to face to face Meeting with effect from the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May 2021.

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
17 May 2021