

WRIGHTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2024

1. PARISH COUNCIL Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the Meeting of the Council held on 22nd May 2023 Councillor Mrs J Burton was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2023/2024, and Councillor Mr A Shaw was elected Vice-Chairman.

2. PARISH COUNCILLORS

At May 2023, following the 2023 elections, Wrightington Parish Councillors were:-

APPLEY BRIDGE

Mrs K Juckes 68 Appley Lane North, Appley Bridge.
Mr C House 77 Runshaw Avenue, Appley Bridge, Wigan.

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.
Mr A J Shaw 12 Town Lane, Charnock Richard.

The Parish Council began the year with 6 members. In October 2023 the Parish Council welcomed Councillor Mrs Judith Warburton and Councillor Mr Hugh Carey onto the Parish Council as the newly co-opted Appley Bridge Ward Councillors. However, in November 2023 Councillor Hodgkinson lost his life after a freak road traffic accident whilst walking on the rural roads in the Village. This had a significant impact on the Parish Council and made members more determined to address speeding and inadequate signage issues in the Parish. In addition to this the Frank Hodgkinson Memorial Walk, organised by the Parish Council, took place on Monday 1st April, leaving and returning to Mossy Lea Village Hall. The walk raised approximately £500 for North West Air Ambulance who were instrumental in helping Frank on the day of his tragic accident. Following the April 2024 Parish Council Meeting, Councillor Shaw tendered his resignation from the role of Mossy Lea Ward Councillor. The Borough Council has been informed of both vacancies and appointments to the vacant positions will be made in due course. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, some Councillors, and the Clerk have attended training events and conferences throughout the year. The Parish Council and Councillors continued to work throughout the year with Borough Councillor Mrs Juckes, Borough Councillor Bailey, Borough Councillor Whittington 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 2023 and have been reviewed over the past 2-3 months ready for acceptance or approval at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council later tonight. The Parish Council will be adding a Grants Policy and a Document Retention Policy to the policies they already hold, and will be replacing their own Standing Orders with the NALC Model Standing Orders for the direction of Parish Council business going forward. Following circulation of Budget details in January 2023 and full discussions on the income and expenditure to date, and predicted income and expenditure for 2023/24 at the Budget Meeting, it was determined that the Parish Requirement for 2023/24 was £21,300.00 - £625.00 (Council Tax Support Grant) = £20,675.00 Parish Precept for 2023/24. Concurrent Contributions were also received. Following the Budget Meeting in January 2023 the Parish Council agreed to amend the way finances are reported at Meetings to assist with budgeting going forward. Councillors now monitor income and expenditure monthly to ensure that Parish Council finances remain on track during the course of the year. The Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 were approved at the May 2023 Parish Council Meeting and were audited by the internal auditor, followed by the external

auditors 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 2024 will be approved at the May Parish Council Meeting to follow.

A successful Capital Bid application to West Lancs. BC for funding towards the purchase of 2 SPID's saw the installation of 1 SPID in each ward towards the end of 2023. The devices appear to be doing their job at the locations chosen and the Parish Council is pleased with the impact they are having on traffic speeds. A successful Capital Funding Bid application in February of this year to West Lancs. Borough Council means that electric hand driers have recently been installed in the toilets at both village halls.

Following investigatory work by Councillor Carey and the Clerk, the Parish Council chose Netwise UK as the most suitable service provider to develop the Parish Council's new .gov.uk website and provide .gov.uk dedicated email addresses for the Clerk and Parish Councillors. Email addresses have now been set up and construction of the website is well underway. It is hoped that this will go live over the next few weeks.

During the year the Parish Council applied for a Biodiversity Grant from LCC the effect of which was to benefit Pingawings Preschool, Appley Bridge Scouts and The Meadows. Pingawings received some squirrel proof bird feeders, suet balls to fill them, a bug hotel and some wildflower seeds. Appley Bridge Scouts received 24 bird box kits, and The Meadows was presented with a wildlife camera for use at the site.

Over the course of the Parish Council year, it has become apparent that the needs, problems and issues in the 2 wards which join together to form the Parish of Wrightington, are very different. It is evident that the majority of time at Meetings is often given over to the discussion of Quarry related issues in Appley Bridge. The Parish Council did suggest that the residents of Appley Bridge form a Residents Association giving a collective voice, but a single point of contact and communication to, and from, the Parish, the Borough and the County Councils. In discussions it has been suggested that the division of the existing Wrightington Parish Council into 2 Parish Councils could be beneficial. An Appley Bridge Parish Council and a Wrightington Parish Council (comprising of the current Mossy Lea Ward). The Borough Council has been asked to look into the implications of progressing with this, but there has been no response to date. A Community Governance Review would be required, undertaken by the Borough Council, following receipt of a petition signed by a specific number, or percentage, of residents requesting this separation, being served upon them. The process is time consuming and not without its complications, but with no response from the Borough Council to date, no progress has been made with this.

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.

49 Planning Applications have been dealt with by the Parish Council during the year in comparison to 68 applications last year. Some examples are as follows:

In early 2023 the Parish Council was informed that the proposals to demolish the building and build 9 dwellings, 4 of which would be affordable homes at the Corner House, Mossy Lea, had been disposed of/closed. This was then superseded by applications for Permission in Principle for 4 dwellings on the site of the Corner House and a further 4 affordable homes on the car park. The Parish Council strongly objected to these proposals as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, with no evidential need for these affordable homes on the car park, whilst objecting to the 4 dwellings on the site of the pub as over-development and over-intensification of the site which

would result in unsustainable development. Planning in Principle for both developments was refused by the planning committee.

A further planning application for permission in principle was submitted to erect a maximum of 2 dwellings on land north of the electricity substation on Mossy Lea Road. Again, the Parish Council objected strongly to this application and when the opportunity arose Councillor Jukes spoke against the proposals at the Borough Council Planning Committee Meeting on behalf of the Parish Council. There had been no material changes since the previous application for development of the site in 2002/2003 was refused. With development in Wrightington restricted to limited infill and re-use of existing buildings, this application being neither of these, drainage issues, flooding, disturbance to the ecology and wildlife and visual amenity was unacceptable, and loss of amenity to neighbouring properties due to the elevation of the land proposed for development was significant. All of the above lead to the application for permission in principle being refused by the planning committee.

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, inputting the planning application number or address of the property. 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 following are some of the areas in which Wrightington Parish Council have been involved during the past year:

POLICING

PCSO Neil Smith remains responsible for Policing Wrightington, Parbold, Hildale, Bispham, Dalton, Newburgh, and sometimes beyond when the need requires. Due to the extensive geographical area to be covered, Policing is difficult and Police visibility minimal.

VILLAGE HALLS

Fire detection and security at the village halls is monitored and checked annually. Electrical safety certificates have been renewed, and gas safety certificates issued, at both village halls in 2023.

APPLEY BRIDGE – The high standards of grounds maintenance and planting at the village hall has continued again this year and has resulted in the hall being booked for children's parties and family gatherings as well as the normal weekly activities which occur such as Motown Aerobics, Pilates, children's and adult's martial arts classes, WI, Brass Band rehearsals and Yoga and Wellbeing classes are now established. Residents and participants in the Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial on Appley Lane North again returned to the Village Hall for refreshments afterwards. Work to repair the pot-holes in the car park has been booked in with the contractor for early 2025, however, should a cancellation occur in his work schedule before then, he will inform the Parish Council and complete the work sooner, having checked the price of materials and recalculated the cost if required. In November and December 2023, a new Village Hall Treasurer and Booking Secretary were appointed respectively and both are looking forward to their first Village Hall Meeting to report back to the Committee.

MOSSY LEA – Similar high standards of planting at the village hall has continued again this year. Coffee Mornings, supported by the Parish Council and providing an amenity in the Parish continue to take place once a month in the village hall. The Church of God continue their weekly meetings in the hall on most Saturdays in the year. There are now a number of sewing type classes delivered in the hall most months, with the Crafty Ladies meeting in the hall 2 Fridays each month and a regular Wednesday evening Yoga class is now well established. The Clerk took on the role of
Wrightington Parish Council

Treasurer at the Village Hall in December 2023, following the death of Councillor Hodgkinson, whose wife had held this post until this time.

Both village halls were used for the Borough and Parish Council elections in 2023 and for the recent Borough Council elections in 2024.

Planting of the baskets on the railings has been undertaken at both village halls and a Christmas Tree was again erected outside Appley Bridge Village Hall in December.

HIGHWAYS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Parish Council has continued to report the poor state of the carriageway around the roundabout at Junction 27 of the M6, the persistent flooding on the roundabout during heavy rainfall makes the roundabout very dangerous. Additional reports of pot-holes, blocked gullies, flooding, poor road sweeping and inadequate grass cutting, have been reported throughout the year as they have arisen. However, the Chairman, Councillor Johnson and the Clerk met the West Lancs. Borough Council Clean and Green operations manager in March to discuss poor grass cutting and slow progress with replacement litter bins in the Parish. Confirmation has recently been received that new litter bins will shortly be installed in a number of locations suggested by the Parish Council in both Mossy Lea and Appley Bridge, and that grass cutting across the Borough will improve this year.

Speeding vehicles on Moss Lane, Courage Low Lane, Toogood Lane, Church Lane, Mossy Lea Road, Moss Lane and Appley Lane North and South, have been reported throughout the year to the Lancashire Road Safety Partnership and the Police. The Borough Councillors are also pursuing this matter as rural roads are often used as rat runs, through quiet villages with winding roads and farm machinery, where highway safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders is often compromised.

The broken seat on the grassed area near the Mossy Lea Road/Boundary Lane junction has been replaced this year by the Parish Council who has now assumed responsibility for the bench and have a licence from LCC to support its location.

The flowering Cherry Tree planted at The Meadows, planted by the Parish Council as part of the Queen's Green Canopy to mark her Platinum Jubilee, continues to flourish and now has a plaque to inform visitors of the reason it is there.

The Parish Council has been notified of improvements and enhancements at Fairy Glen as one of the shortlisted West Lancs. Borough Council CIL funded schemes. The Parish Council supported this provided the proposals would not detract from the natural environment and natural woodland which has evolved over time at Fairy Glen.

The Parish Council has been pursuing a route change to the bus service from Wigan to Wrightington Hospital which, if diverted to take in Mill Lane and Appley Lane North, would assist residents of Appley Bridge to access service provision in Shevington and Wigan more easily and to attend appointments at Wrightington Hospital and return home from them.

During the course of the year the bus shelter at the top of Appley Lane North, opposite Pesto, had a new roof fitted as the previous one had become brittle due to age and had broken.

The Parish Council continue to support and monitor the 6 public defibrillators in the Parish, all of which are functional and on The Circuit, which is the database where all publicly accessible defibrillators are recorded, kept by North West Ambulance. The 6 locations are as follows: Mossy Lea Village Hall, Mossy Lea Road. The Pensioners Hall, Chisnall Avenue, Mossy Lea. Sharrocks, Mossy Lea Road. Appley Bridge Village Hall, Appley Lane North. Maria Costello, Hall Lane, Appley Bridge and The Boathouse, Mill Lane, Appley Bridge.

Parking issues outside the White Lion Public House, Mossy Lea Road, became the subject of increasing discussion at a number of Parish Council Meeting with parking and planning issues,

along with noise nuisance issues, reported by a number of residents in the vicinity of the pub. The Parish Council contacted LCC for their assistance who revisited the location and agreed that there was a problem and suggested some double yellow lines to address this. Some residents were keen to point out that parking had only become an issue since unauthorised development at the White Lion had increased the number of covers in the restaurant. Ultimately LCC has suggested the installation of double yellow lines and are now considering the residents' suggestion that these are required all along Mossy Lea Road, on both sides, from the junction with Boundary Lane to the junction with Tunley Lane. Retrospective planning applications have now been submitted for some of what was believed to be unauthorised development. It was also stated that some of the parking problems are related to the school also in this vicinity, where there is insufficient parking available for the teachers and visitors to the school.

Ongoing issues with both East and West Quarry continue:

Detailed discussions at Parish Council Meetings in relation to work, development, water extraction, possible breaches of planning, permitted development, enforcement action and stop notices, have taken place.

East Quarry issues remain ongoing with residents of Appley Bridge being divided in their opinions of whether to dewater the quarry, or not. Security issues at the quarry also remain at the forefront of discussions. The suggestion of putting dye in East Quarry over the summer months in 2023 was discussed by the multi-agency group at West Lancs. Borough Council, however, the idea would not be considered due to the perception of efficacy and cost, the cost implications of which would fall to the landowner, who also has the final decision about whether to add the dye or not. The Parish Council has asked the Borough Council to pursue the de-watering of East Quarry with the landowner, before the Summer of 2024, and has suggested using this window of opportunity to dewater and address security at the site to help prevent any future fatalities at this quarry.

Following the acquisition of a large piece of West Quarry, behind the houses on Appley Lane North and to the front of houses on Lowther Terrace, by Northern Diver, they made their proposals for the land public, but have not as yet submitted any planning applications to support those proposals. In May of 2023 the focus of Parish Council discussions at Meetings revolved around the action taken by Northern Diver who commenced clearing the land they had purchased. Northern Diver took action to define the boundaries of the land, felling trees, removing shrubs and bushes, revealing gas pipes and gas monitoring equipment. Concern was expressed that some of the pipelines had been damaged during the clearing work, that the site is still leaking leachate, and that the trees were protected under the Forestry Act. Development at the site was swift and considerable; however, it took several months for West Lancs. Borough Council to react to the reports from the residents, Parish Council, and Borough Councillors, to issue an enforcement notice, followed by a stop notice. Work involved the creation of an access using an existing gateway off Appley Lane North, without planning permission. The impact of the significant groundwork and clearing works is clear to see and now forms the basis of an appeal against the enforcement notice issued by the Borough Council for the site to be restored to its former state. Throughout this whole process the Parish Councils major concern has been for the health and safety of the residents of Appley Bridge who have been impacted by this unauthorised development. The Parish Council, and the residents, have submitted their concerns in relation to the development by Northern Diver to the planning inspector and await the outcome of the planning appeal.

Additional issues in West Quarry have arisen as a result of the relocation of Chorley Concrete from Dawber Delph on Skull House Lane, to the disused railway pad on West Quarry which they purchased from the quarry owner. The business was relocated and began operating from this site mid-2023. In addition to Chorley Concrete operating from this location, their subsidiary company Gaskell's Haulage is also operating from this address. Neither operation having secured the correct planning permission to do so, the activity was unauthorised and confirmed as such in October 2023 by the Borough Council enforcement officer, who requested that development cease immediately and that a planning application be submitted to legalise the operation. This did not happen and operations continued until a retrospective planning application was submitted in November 2023.

The Parish Council submitted their objections to the proposed operations at this location due to the significant increase in HGV traffic movements this would create, and the noise, vibration and nuisance issues relating to the proposals. They expressed concern about the proposed lengthy operating hours, 6 days per week, and confirmed that the proposals were unacceptable and disruptive in this village setting. In addition, some of the development had encroached onto Green Belt land, which should be restored, and the Parish Council shared the Environment Agency concerns in relation to the risk of contamination and pollution if a proper risk assessment, and mitigation of the identified risks, was not undertaken. The risk of explosion with possible leakage of leachate and landfill gas, which was inadequately monitored by faulty, damaged and in some cases non-existent infrastructure removed from the site as part of the groundworks. At the beginning of 2024 the retrospective planning application went before the West Lancs. Borough Council Planning Committee, however, the residents reported that the officer's report and recommendations for a temporary approval for 5 years were flawed and inaccurate in places. It was agreed that Councillor Carey would attend the Planning Committee Meeting to represent the Parish Council and put forward their observations. Discussion of this application at the Planning Committee Meeting was deferred, and has been now on 2 occasions, pending information received in relation to this development from Network Rail. Once Chorley Concrete has satisfied the conditions, agreements, and possible restrictions imposed by Network Rail, the application will then go back to the Borough Council Planning Committee for determination.

CONCLUSION

In 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.

As this is my final Annual Report for Wrightington Parish Council, I would like to thank the Parish Council as a body, my Parish Councillors as individuals, and the residents of Mossy Lea and Appley Bridge for the help and support I have received during my 33 years serving the Parish of Wrightington and the Parish Council. I hope I have served you well. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish my successor, the Parish Council, and the Parish of Wrightington every success for the future.

Report from Mrs C A Cross
The Clerk to the Council
20th May 2024