

Willington Parish PC Annual Report to 31st March 2023

Welcome to Willington Parish Council's Annual Report for 2022/23. It contains details of the Parish Council's activities throughout the year, its financial statements and other relevant information.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (by the Chairman of the Parish PC, Councillor Andrew Nicholas).
This was the 8th year of Willington Parish Council.

I want to begin this report with a note of gratitude to Councillors John Grimshaw and Jane Lowthion for their service to our parish and the community of Willington. When the Parish Council (PC) was set up in 2015, John was our first Chairman and I remember him saying that he wanted Willington Parish Council to be a work based council and not just a "talking shop". Both John and Jane have been a good example of that statement and have both worked hard on and led the way on a number of different projects. We are saddened that we have lost them from the PC and wish them both well in their "retirement."

The PC consists of five Councillors and our Clerk; during our eight years of existence we have been served by total of nine different Councillors and two Clerks. Reading back through the annual reports we should be proud of our achievements, even if sometimes, due to things beyond our control, they have taken longer to complete than we would have wished.

I believe that the PC serves an important role in making a positive difference to the community of Willington and without it we would not have a voice to represent us. It is therefore vital that we have members of our community willing to put themselves forward to serve as Councillors. We are therefore pleased to welcome two new Councillors to our PC, James Abbott and Stuart Ingram. We look forward to working with them and their contributions.

This year is an election year and the remaining Councillors needed to make up our allotted five are, Councillors Rob Merrick, John Lindsay and myself. As there were five candidates for five seats, the election was 'uncontested'

Our Borough Councillors John Leather and Harry Tonge have both retired and new Borough Councillors will be elected on the 4th May (after this report has been written). We would like to thank them both for attending our meetings and for the many financial grants that we have received from their Members Budgets. , We appreciate their generous support and the time they have dedicated to supporting the work of the PC and keeping us updated with CWaC initiatives.

I would also like to thank our local MP, Edward Tipmson CBE KC for his support and for his contributions to our newsletter.

Parish Council Meetings

PC meetings are scheduled six times a year, on the last Tuesday of every other month. During the last year we held eight meetings and the Annual Village meeting.

A total of twelve members of the public and three Police Community Support Officers (PSCO's) also attended some of our meetings to participate in the open forum.

The agendas for these meetings are posted on the village noticeboard and on the website, as are the minutes.

We are extremely grateful to Willington Hall for their provision of a room free of charge to hold our meetings and social events.

Achievements 2022-23

- * Brunswick Cottages documentation - The lettings officer at Jigsaw Homes confirmed that the letting principles documented on the first page of the documentation (which is held by the PC) will be adhered to. Giving priority to local applicants for these properties.
- * The target crowd funding for additional defibrillators (AEDs) was achieved. We now have three operational AED's that have been deployed on three occasions.
- * An additional 13 residents have attended the CPR and AED training (we have provided training to over 80 residents since we obtained our first AED).
- * We issued and analysed a village questionnaire and reported its conclusions in our newsletter.
- * We adopted CWaC's new Code of Conduct and signed up to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) "Civility and Respect Pledge."
- * Flagstones and gravel were laid in front and under the bench seats on The Green, giving a cleaner seating area; the waste bin was also moved further away from the seating area.
- * 'Slow' road markings have been painted between Willington Corner and Willington Hall, and CWaC Highways have agreed to reinstate the central white lines. This action should encourage safer driving on this section of road.
- * The Task Force have cleared fallen leaves and branches from The Green and cut the hedges. The "Finger Post" road sign at Willington Corner will shortly be repainted.
- * We obtained funding from the CWaC Neighbourhood Community Pride Scheme for a new (moveable) bench and a Willington Interpretation Board, both to be located on The Green. We also received a grant from our Borough Councillors Members Budget to cover the purchase of an AED external cabinet to be sited at Willington Hall.
- * Litter picking volunteers continue to keep Willington litter free. Thank you all.

Local Council Award Scheme

Your Parish Council has recently been re-accredited to the Local Council Accreditation Scheme at Foundation Level.

We achieved Foundation Level (which demonstrates that a council meets the requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice) back in 2017 just after the Parish Council was formed but we need to be re-accredited every five years. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement. The accreditation involved us completing and submitting a detailed questionnaire covering all aspects of the PC's work such as its documented processes (and evidence that it adheres to those processes), community engagement and communication, financial management and action planning.

In their summary of our submission, the assessment panel stated that...*'The panel were very pleased with the overall quality of the application....and thought that overall the Clerk and Council were doing a good job and functioning to a high standard.'*

It is really good to have a outside body take a good look at what we are doing and confirm that we meet the required standards.

Roads

All the necessary actions, including acceptance of costs incurred, have been approved by the PC for the 30 mph speed limit on Willington Road. We are chasing CWaC Highways for a scheduled installation date for their new contractors.

CWaC Highways have also conducted a speed limit assessment for Chapel Lane and Gooseberry Lane and have concluded that the present speed limit of 30 mph from where it begins on Rough Low will be designated a 20 mph zone. They will design the scheme after the installation of the new speed limit on Willington Road. We have allocated the funding to meet 50% of the cost.

We are grateful to our Speed Watch team for monitoring and reporting speeding vehicles and for the follow up actions of our PCSO.

Planning

We have discussed and commented on four planning applications and three retrospective applications. We have also reported to Planning Enforcement two potential cases of breaches of planning regulations and one of breaking planning conditions.

Planning is the most controversial subject of the work of the PC. To clarify.... we are not the decision makers, we are just consultees in the planning process. It is the Planning Department who decide if our comments are material or not, and fall within the planning rules before making their final decision. Objections to planning applications that fall outside of the planning rules whether they are submitted by the PC or local residents are simply dismissed. We therefore exercise a balanced judgement during our discussions before drafting and submitting our comments. We always keep in mind what is fair and in the interests of the wider Willington community.

On the topic of Planning Enforcement and the actions of this department, our role is simply to report suspected breaches of planning rules. It is then up to the Enforcement Officers to investigate if there has been a breach of regulations or planning conditions, and what subsequent action is necessary. Our homes may be our castles, however there are limits on what we can legally do to them, without adhering to the planning process, rules and regulations.

Newsletter

We have produced and circulated four newsletters. Grateful thanks to our editor, Jeanette Winnett-Trapp for her contribution and sterling work. Sadly due to work commitments Jeanette is no longer able to continue in this role and we need the help of a new editor to assist the PC in the production of future newsletters.

Village Events

The first event of the year was the celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee with a picnic on The Green. Two village quizzes have been held at Willington Hall and we celebrated Xmas with our lights and carol singing on The Green, including a visit and distribution of presents from Santa and his helpers.

Most of the organisation of these events has now passed over to a working party of volunteers supported by the PC. We are grateful for the work they are doing and look forward to the exciting events they are planning for the coming year.

J A Nicholas

John Andrew Nicholas
(Chairman of the Parish Council)