

Willington Parish Council

Annual report

2019 – 2020

Welcome to Willington Parish Council's Annual Report for 2019/20. The following pages contain details of the Council's activities throughout the year, financial statements, and other relevant Council information.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Jane Lowthion).

This was the 5th year of Willington Parish Council now with some new councillors and a new parish clerk.

This year has been a roller coaster of activity, from engaging with the community, to community events, work parties etc. through to isolation and meetings using zoom. We are grateful to Willington Hall for allowing us to hold meetings and events there until lockdown changed all our lives.

Parish Council Meetings

Council meetings are held six times a year. The agendas for these meetings are posted on the village noticeboard and on the website, as are the minutes. We have been encouraged by members of our community attending some of these meetings and participating in the open forum. Councillors John Leather and Harry Tonge regularly attend our meetings and keep us up to date with developments in Cheshire West and Chester

The March meeting was delayed by a few weeks due to lockdown but am pleased to report that we were one of the first councils to get to grips with zoom and to hold a meeting very soon after the regulations were changed, to allow us to hold remote meetings.

Community engagement

Covid 19

We are pleased to note that the community in Willington rapidly came together to set up a WhatsApp group of volunteers and to ensure every house in Willington was supplied with phone numbers to ring if anyone needed help with shopping, prescription collecting, dog walking etc. Until now very few requests have been received, especially as neighbours, friends and family are all supporting each other. We hope that we will slowly come out of this present crisis but the community spirit it has engendered will surely live on. This spirit was particularly exemplified by the 75th year commemorations of VE day when considerable numbers of people decorated their gardens and dressed up to toast and remember the war heroes and considered those celebrating on May 8th 1945 when they emerged out of the world crisis imposed by war.

Questionnaire

We included a questionnaire with our newsletter in August to ascertain people's thoughts on the work we do and what other things should be tackled in the parish. We were delighted with the number of responses. A full report was published in the November newsletter.

Since then we have responded to many comments:

- The old noticeboard on the green has been converted so anyone can post items of local interest on it.
- A hardworking team cleared the pathway along Willington Road. This is yet to be completed due to social distancing restrictions.
- Christmas lights were purchased for the green. Thanks to James and Jane who allowed them to be plugged in to their electricity supply.
- A carol service was held on the green in early December led by Donna Okell and Rob Merrick as a very realistic Father Christmas. Mince pies and mulled wine were also provided. It was well attended and enjoyed by all.
- We continue to work with and badger Cheshire West and Chester on reducing the speed limit on Willington Road and discussing the possibility of installing a vehicle activated speed sign on Chapel Lane. Thank you to the volunteers who have been carrying out speed checks throughout the parish providing valuable information to support the discussions.
- Regular newsletters were the preferred method of communication and we have produced four this year.

Other community events

History of Willington Evening- over 100 people attended the History of Willington evening on 24th October. Sue Masterman gave an excellent presentation and shared lots of fascinating information she has gathered for the History of Willington book project she is working on.

Picnic on the green – the Neighbours of Willington group organised a very successful picnic on the green in July.

Tour of Britain cycle race – this passed through our parish on the 11th September causing great excitement. The community came out onto the roads in force, to cheer the cyclists on and were pleased to be part of the live television coverage.

Environment

The picturesque setting and infrastructure of our lovely village is important to all and we have continued to take action when necessary to protect it:

- John Grimshaw has set up a task force of volunteers who will be called upon to take part in any small community projects concerning the environment.

- Road repairs and blocked drains are reported to the Highways dept on an ongoing basis and actions monitored and followed up when necessary.
- In particular, the problem with the road between the 2 entrances of Willington Hall was discussed with the Highways dept. and following this the drains and pull- ins were cleared of soil and debris. We recognise however that this is an ongoing problem.
- Footpaths are regularly walked and any problems reported to the Public Rights of Way team as necessary
- Litter picking equipment and vests were purchased and distributed to the volunteer litter pickers. All areas of the parish are now regularly scoured for rubbish. Thank you to all volunteers who to continue to carry out this task.

Best Kept Village 2019 -Willington came third out of six in our category (villages with a population of under 400). We also received a 'Little Gem Award' in recognition of our tidy, relevant and water-tight notice board. Unfortunately the Best Kept Village competition is is not going to continue.

Planning

The council received, reviewed and commented on 6 planning applications this year.

Financial matters

The precept was increased by a small amount this year, representing an annual increase of £1.24 for a band D property

Statement of Accounts

	Year ending (£)	Year ending (£)	
	31/3/19	31/3/20	Notes
Balances brought forward	6376	5880	
(+) precept	4517	4505	
(+) other receipts	9	1407	Includes CWAC grant, income from event and VAT repayment
Total receipts	10902	11792	
(-) staff costs	2510	3433	Additional funding required for support and training for new clerk + additional hours
(-) all other payments	2512	3317	Includes training for new councillors and spend from receipts as above
Total payments	5022	6750	
(=) balances carried forward	5880	5042	

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors, clerk and our residents for working together to enhance the parish we live in, helping to engender community spirit and get through an unexpectedly challenging year. I think we can all be proud of our achievement.

Jane Louthion (Chair of the Parish Council)