

Wetton Parish Council: Annual Parish Meeting May 18th 2015

Parish Council Action 2014-2015

The Parish Council met eleven times between April 2014 and March 2015.

Parish Councillors who served throughout the past year were Cllr Graham Stubbs (Chairman), Cllr Andrew Bownes, Cllr Nicola Drummond, Cllr Mark Goodridge, Cllr Margaret Hodgkinson, and Cllr Janet Scholes. Cllr Steve Martin resigned from the Parish Council in February 2015. Rosemary Crafts has served as Parish Clerk.

The Parish Council have maintained the practice introduced in June 2010 of posting draft minutes of Parish Council meetings on village noticeboards on the day following the meeting in the interests of transparency and better communication of Parish Council business. In addition, agenda and draft minutes have been emailed to Parishioners on request. The Parish Council will, from April 2015, have to comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Councils and post their agenda, minutes and accounts on-line.

Planning

There have not been any planning applications to consider during the year.

Highways

The Parish Council routinely reports potholes in village roads and other necessary road repairs to Staffordshire Highways.

The Parish Council have held discussions with Staffordshire Highways about their current policy on repairing potholes; and, in particular, whether the use of Roadmaster vehicles to fill potholes would be as effective for deep potholes as excavation and planing and a repair sealed into the surrounding road surface. Staffordshire Highways have agreed to monitor the situation.

In addition, the Parish Council have raised with Staffordshire Highways the issue of blocked gulleys and the need for more regular maintenance. A comprehensive clearing out of village gulleys was as a consequence carried out over the summer; and with new vehicles equipped with technology to record gully blockage levels, allowing for pre-programmed continuing maintenance.

Village lengthsmen

Graham Needham continued to serve as village lengthsmen throughout the year; until his resignation in March 2015 for reasons of other work commitments.

The regime of frequent "lighter-touch" verge cutting as required, and regular cutting of the Village Green, has been cost-effective in maintaining the appearance of the village. And the Parish Council have continued to argue to Staffordshire Highways that money expended on a minor works Highways Team working in the Parish at most six days a year could be better deployed as additional expenditure for the lengthsmen scheme; but without success as yet.

Village Car Park

Following representations to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council reported last year, the Parish Council were assured by the District Council that re-surfacing of the village car park was programmed to be undertaken during 2014. That has not happened.

In the meantime, the Parish Council have sought to deal with problems about car park management – specifically, failures of SMDC's contractors to empty recycling bins; and strict enforcement of fines for parking outside marked bays. Whilst the unsatisfactory performance of the recycling bin contractors has been acknowledged by SMDC, they have not agreed significantly to modify their parking enforcement policies. Nor have SMDC responded positively to the Parish Council's proposal to take over the day-to-day management of the car park.

Playing fields

The children's play area has been regularly inspected and maintained by the village lengthsman, and complies with ROSPA's annual inspection. The playing field and pavilion are maintained by volunteers; to whom the Parish Council are very grateful.

The Parish Council remain committed to keeping the playing fields as a community asset. They thus commissioned an additional inspection by ROSPA to assess the longevity of the current play equipment in order better to plan for its replacement. As a consequence of that inspection and the advice that the play equipment would need to be replaced in about five years' time, the Parish Council determined to create an ear-marked fund from their reserves to be able to contribute match funding when applying for grants to buy new equipment; and to aim progressively to increase the fund over the coming years.

Other activities

Lighting along the footpath from School Road to the churchyard: The Parish Council were successful in securing grant funding from Staffordshire County Council to pay for motion-sensitive lighting set into the wall of the footpath from School Road to the churchyard - to augment the lighting installed by the Parochial Church Council to illuminate the kissing gate.

Village Defibrillator

The Parish Council took over the defibrillator project originally planned by Wetton Village Hall; and to which they reassigned expenditure previously pledged to the village hall, as well as securing a grant from SMDC's Councillors' Community Fund. The Parish Council are grateful to the Royal Oak pub for "hosting" the defibrillator prominently outside; and to Ian Frith for doing the installation free of charge

Finances

The Parish Council had been able to keep unchanged the level of precept per household since 2010/11 – and still to carry forward a reserve of £4680 in the financial year 2015/2016; of which, for the reasons explained above, £2500 is an ear-marked fund for replacing the play equipment. With the objective of progressively increasing that ear-marked fund, the Parish Council agreed to a 5% increase in the Parish Precept for 2015/2016 – which amounts to £1.87 for a Band D property.