

Wetton Parish Council: Annual Parish Meeting 15th May 2017

Parish Council Action 2016-2017

The Parish Council met eleven times between April 2015 and March 2016.

Cllr Mark Goodridge – elected as Chair at the AGM in May 2016, Cllr Nicola Drummond, Cllr Niki Dymek, Cllr Margaret Hodgkinson and Cllr Graham Stubbs have served throughout the year.

Cllr Lucy Powis was co-opted in July to fill the casual vacancy following the resignation of Andrew Bownes in April 2016. Cllr Denise Noble was co-opted in January to fill the further casual vacancy following the resignation of Caroline Heaton. Rosemary Crafts has served as Parish Clerk.

The Parish Council have complied with the Transparency Code for Smaller Councils by setting up and maintaining a Parish Council web-site – on which agenda, minutes and accounts are published; together with details of the Parish Council and other matters of community interest. Agenda and minutes are also posted on village noticeboards.

The Parish Council continue with their policy of publishing draft minutes within a day of so of their meetings - in the interests of transparency and better communication of Parish Council business.

Planning

Four planning applications have been considered during the year.

Highways

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

Surface dressing of village roads was carried out by Staffordshire Highways in May and June. The Parish Council had numerous issues with the quality of the work and what would be its longevity; and which they raised with Staffordshire Highways to little effect.

This apart, the chief Highways issue has been the decision of Staffordshire Highways to withdraw the funding of £699 per annum for the village lengthsman scheme with effect from April 2017, further reported below.

Village verges and community spaces

The Parish Council were very grateful to Mr Peter Ellse, the new owner of New House Farm for offering a donation of £600 in 2017, and again in 2018, towards the maintenance of village verges and community spaces. The Trustees of the Devonshire Maintenance Fund have also offered to increase their annual donation for these purposes by £100.

In September 2016, the Parish Council sent a leaflet to all households in Wetton village inviting views on priorities in maintaining village verges and community spaces from available funding, and on the question whether the Parish Precept should be increased to pay for additional work; followed by an open meeting of the Parish Council.

On the basis of that consultation, the Parish Council then decided:-

- To prioritise village verges and community spaces within the village – and to leave to Staffordshire Highways to discharge their responsibilities for road safety by cutting verges on roads leading out of the village
- To confine mowing of the playing field to a small area to save on maintenance costs to the ride-on mower
- To aim to avoid any increase in the Parish Precept for reasons of maintaining village verges and community spaces – but also to recognise that this would depend on Staffordshire Moorlands District Council continuing to fund lengthsman's work, and on the generosity of donors.

Village lengthsman

Andrew Hall, village lengthsman at Butterton and at Warslow, was engaged in March 2016 initially to undertake a maintenance back-log; and the Parish Council have since engaged him as village lengthsman in place of Ivor Fletcher.

Playing fields

Repair work to the play equipment was carried out by Ivor Fletcher in the summer of 2016. ROSPA undertook their annual inspection of the play equipment in August 2016.

The playing field and pavilion are maintained by volunteers; to whom the Parish Council are very grateful. Cllr Denise Noble has taken on the responsibility of regularly inspecting the play equipment. Cllr Noble has also agreed to assess replacement options.

The Parish Council have an ear-marked reserve for major repairs and replacements to the play equipment to £3500.00.

Finances

In addition to the reserve ear-marked for play equipment, the Parish Council have aimed to maintain a "free" reserve of the order of £2000 for cash flow and other contingencies.

In considering the Parish Precept for 2017-2018, the Parish Council were mindful that any modest percentage increase yielded very little additional revenue; but that circumstances might arise when a much substantial increase was needed to continue service levels. They therefore decided to make no increase in the Parish Precept at this stage,