

# **Wetton Parish Council: Annual Parish Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

## **Parish Council Action 2015-2016**

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

Cllr Andrew Bownes, Cllr Nicola Drummond, Cllr Mark Goodridge, Cllr Margaret Hodgkinson and Cllr Graham Stubbs were all re-elected unopposed in the Parish Council elections in May. Cllr Janet Scholes did not stand for re-election. Cllr Caroline Heaton was also elected in May. Cllr Niki Dymek was subsequently co-opted in July to fill the remaining vacancy.

Cllr Andrew Bownes was elected as Chair at the Annual General Meeting in May 2016. 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**

Two 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.

In view of the overall condition of village roads, the Parish Council asked for details of Staffordshire Highways' inspection regime – and whether the village roads were yet considered a priority for more extensive re-surfacing. The Parish Council were subsequently advised that surface dressing of roads in and around the village was scheduled for late spring / early summer 2016

The continuing issue of cars being raced through the Swainsley Tunnel was brought to the Parish Council's attention – and the impact on those living within the boundaries of this Parish (as well as Butterton). The Parish Council met with County Cllr Gill Heath to emphasise their concern that five years had elapsed since the problem first arose; and their support for preventative measures. They also highlighted the wider safety issue with that part of the Manifold Trail between Swainsley and Wetton Mill which is a public road open to motor vehicles. Staffordshire Highways subsequently decided to introduce a 20 mph speed limit.

In the course of that discussion, Cllr Heath offered the opportunity to introduce a 30 mph speed limit in Wetton Village – as had been originally planned five years ago; but not pursued because the priority then had been the Swainsley Tunnel. The Parish Council – mindful of how the necessary signage would have an effect on the appearance of the village but mindful also of issues of road safety – decided by a majority to accept the 30 mph limit.

### **Village lengthsman**

Following Graham Needham's resignation as village lengthsman, it was not possible to engage a new lengthsman – Rupert Hignett - until mid-May. Unfortunately, Mr Hignett was not - for reasons of ill-health – able to fulfill the usual specification for regular cutting of village verges and associated tasks.

The Parish Council re-visited that specification to include a year-round responsibility for weekly checks; with the aim of ensuring that work would be carried out when necessary.

The Parish Council subsequently engaged Ivor Fletcher initially to undertake the maintenance back-log; and have since engaged him as village lengthsman.

## Village Car Park

The Parish Council have been unable to make any progress with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council about re-surfacing the village car park.

The Parish Council's understanding is that SMDC have deferred any re-surfacing of the car park until they have completed an Asset Review of priorities.

## 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 have increased their ear-marked reserve for major repairs and replacements to the play equipment to £3500.00.

## Other activities

- **Toe wrestling event at the Royal Oak:** The Parish Council facilitated discussions between the landlord of the Royal Oak pub and residents concerned about the event.
- **Night-time Motor Rallies:** Following complaints about the noise of night-time motor rallies coming through or close to the village, the Parish Council held discussions with a representative of the Motor Sports Association responsible for approving rallies in the Peak Park. As these rallies are lawful, the Parish Council can do nothing about them.
- **Derby Kids Camp:** The Parish Council were approached by Derby Kids Camp about possibly using the playing field as the venue for their camp in 2016. Whilst the Parish Council appreciated DKC's long association with Wetton and that John Wint's death meant that his field would be sold, they shared concerns about the proximity of the playing field to machinery at Bliss Bedding. Cllr Stubbs was able to offer another venue.

## Finances

Until last year, the Parish Precept had not been increased since 2010 /2011. Last year's increase of 5% - amounting to £1.87 per Band D household – was with a view to adding incrementally to the ear-marked reserve for replacing play equipment.

But as noted above, the Parish Council have in any case been able to increase that ear-marked reserve by £1000 – because the amount budgetted for the playing fields did not have to be used in full. And the Parish Council's total reserve funds at the end of the financial year were over £5000.

Against this background, the Parish Council decided not to increase the Parish Precept for 2016/2017. In making that decision, they had in mind that – were there to be cuts to funding from Staffordshire Highways or SMDC towards the lengthsman scheme – then substantial increases in the Precept would have to be considered.