

MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016-17



This is my first year as Chairman of Mollington Parish Council. I was elected at the Annual Meeting in May 2016 with Councillor Phil Crane as Vice-Chairman.

Parish Council Meetings and Reports: Mollington Parish Council continues to meet every two months (starting in January) in Mollington, Backford and District Village Hall. Our Annual Parish Assembly is held in March and our Annual Meeting, where officers are elected for the forthcoming year and we receive the year end accounts, is in May. The traditional meeting day is Tuesday. The agenda for each meeting is posted on the two village Notice Boards, located on Grove Road opposite the Village Green, and on the grass verge on Townfield Lane outside Meadow Court. A report detailing the main issues discussed at each meeting is posted on these Notice Boards shortly after the meeting. A copy of the full minutes is available from the Parish Clerk following their confirmation at the next meeting or from the Parish Council's website www.mollington-pc.org.uk. A copy of the annual report, this being the latest, is delivered to every household in the Parish by volunteers, usually in May and a copy can also be found on the Parish Council's website.

Councillors: The Parish Council can elect seven Councillors every four years. The last election was held in 2015 and six Councillors were elected, leaving one vacancy. This was filled by Councillor Amanda Clarke but we have since lost Councillor Mike Riley who has, reluctantly, decided that he cannot continue as a Parish Councillor. We are looking for someone to fill the vacancy by co-option.

Finance: The Parish Council set the precept for 2016-17 at £6,864, and received a Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant from Cheshire West and Chester Council of £136, bringing the total to £7,000. This should cover the Council's outgoings for the year as long as there are no surprises.

The Parish Council received a clean report from the external auditors following a thorough examination by Wellfield Accounting Services, the Council's internal auditor.

We paid slightly more this year for our insurance, due to an increase in insurance premium tax, but the premium remains very competitive at £164.25. The Parish Council has decided to stay with Unity Trust Bank despite the introduction of a monthly charge of £6 because they are an excellent bank to deal with.

Planning: It was a relatively quiet year for planning applications. Of the 10 applications received for consideration and comment, eight were subsequently approved by the Borough Council, one was refused and one was withdrawn.

The application that was refused was for a touring caravan park with 10 pitches, a camping area with 5 pitches, part conversion of a building to form a toilet and shower block, access alterations & installation of a drainage system at Oakwood Farm, Parkgate Road. It was refused mainly on Green Belt grounds. The Oaks Golf Club was closed as it had been trading unprofitably since being taken out of receivership. The site was bought by a private investor who confirmed that it was not the intention to re-open as a Golf Club. An application to turn the building into a private residence has just been approved.

In February 2017 CWaC changed the way in which they notify Local Councils of new applications. Instead of being sent a copy of the full planning documents, Local Councils will be notified by email that there is an application and they must then access the details themselves on the CWaC website. The Parish Council has raised its concerns about the operation of this new system with both CWaC and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC).

Highways, Transport and Rights of Way: PC Chris Burnham, Cheshire Police's Traffic Management Officer and Mr Wallace, the Headteacher of St Oswald's Primary School, attended the May meeting to discuss traffic issues near the school and the debate was continued at the July meeting when Dave Reeves from CWaC's Place Operations Team visited us. Most pupils are from outside the village so they are driven to school every day, which causes parking problems at the start and end of the school

day. There are also issues relating to speeding vehicles on Grove Road and Well Lane. CWaC's 3-year programme of introducing 20mph zones around all Cheshire West schools was noted, but it was anticipated that Mollington will have to wait until the final tranche in 2018-19. It was agreed that Mr Wallace should follow-up ideas for better control of parking and the Parish Council would ask CWaC for the derestricted length of Grove Road to be assessed with a view to extending the speed limit further up Grove Road. A traffic survey carried out in Well Lane suggested that there wasn't a speeding problem!

The Parish Council has made an unofficial approach to CWaC to have a footpath made from the end of Townfield Lane to the bus stop on the A540 so that people don't have to walk on the road or in the long grass. The response so far is not encouraging.

CWaC refused the application to add footpaths from Parkgate Road to Shelley Road and Browning Close in Blacon. An appeal has been lodged.

Councillor Crowe has done his best to bring a bus service back into part of Mollington village, but to no avail so the only bus servicing the Mollington area is the No.22 which runs along the A540 between Chester and Heswall. Every opportunity will be taken to press for a reinstatement of the route through Mollington.

Parish Plan: The Parish Council wanted to know what issues still needed to be addressed following publication of the Parish Plan in 2008, so a questionnaire was compiled and delivered to 245 households. 161 residents completed and returned the forms and more than 100 comments were added to the basic tick-box yes/no answers. The results of the questionnaire were delivered to all households in May and any actions identified have been or are being dealt with.

Village Hall: On 29 April 2016 permission was granted for extensions and alterations to the Village Hall. The Village Hall Committee is now looking for grant funding to undertake this work. The project has the support of Chris Matheson MP who offered practical assistance in dealing with the Big Lottery Fund, making it possible for the Village Hall to submit an application

Boundary Reviews: To quote Longfellow "all things must change to something new, to something strange". The Boundary Commission are conducting a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries aimed at reducing the overall number of constituencies in the UK and making the number of electors in each constituency more equal. The Parish Council supported the proposals for the historic City of Chester but declined to comment on the knock-on effects or other areas. And now CWaC have asked the Boundary Commission to undertake an electoral review of the Borough. The review will look at the total number of councillors to be elected to the council (council size); the names, number and boundaries of wards; and the number of councillors to be elected from each ward. Changes to parish boundaries were made during the recent community governance reviews and these won't change again. We await the first part of the consultation on warding patterns which is due towards the end of March.

Garden Competition: This year's winners were: 1st place and Shield Ken and Helen Black, Adswood, Townfield Lane; 2nd place Mrs Jenifer Morgan, 49 Mollington Court; 3rd place John and Irene Lamb, Willow Brook House, Well Lane. Congratulations to all of them for providing us all with such a wonderful show. The prizes were presented prior to the Parish Council meeting in November by the Sheriff of Chester, Councillor Myles Hogg. Our regular judge, Debbie Jones from Sycamore Park Garden Centre, was no longer available but a replacement was found, Mr James Lester, who was an advisor in horticulture in the North East until his retirement to Wirral area. He seemed very knowledgeable and, of course, critical.

In May 2016, we said our goodbyes to the Rev. Stephen Southgate who has taken over as Rector at Hambledon Valley in Oxfordshire. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their help and support, and our Clerk, Pauline English, who makes sure that what we do isn't breaking any laws or rules. Residents are always welcome at our meetings so if you have any issues that you would like to raise personally with the Parish Council please come along and take part in our Open Forum at the beginning of each meeting.

Michael Jones
Chairman, Mollington Parish Council

March 2017