

MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017-18



This is my second year as Chairman of Mollington Parish Council. I was elected at the Annual Meeting in May 2017 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, and a copy of the minutes is also posted following their confirmation at the next meeting. These documents are stored on 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 eventually filled by Councillor Amanda Clarke, whose tenancy was short lived as she left us for the sunnier climes of Shropshire in July 2017. We also lost Councillor Mike Riley temporarily, but fortunately he re-joined us, bringing our number back up to five. Our greatest and saddest loss this year was Councillor Charles Charlesworth. We said our final goodbyes to him in September and will greatly miss the width and depth of his knowledge, especially in planning matters. The Parish Council is still two members short and would welcome any applications from residents to be co-opted.

Finance: The Parish Council set the precept for 2017-18 at £7,000 and also received a Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £204. This more than covered the Council's outgoings for the year as there were no surprises. We were successful in bidding for a Transparency Fund grant of £3,317.81 to help us set up our website and gave a grant of £100 to our Clerk to enable her to upgrade her computer. Councillor Crowe once again gave us the £300 to pay for the licence for the use of the school field out of hours for community use. The precept for 2018-19 has been able to beset at £1,000 because of this good fortune.

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

Our insurance remains very competitive at £168. The Parish Council's bankers are still Unity Trust Bank and they continue to provide an excellent service.

Planning: In May traders at Mollington Grange business park expressed their concerns about their future after the site owners revealed they intended to convert the units into two and three bed mews houses which would be sold on the open market. The situation was discussed by Councillors and CWaC Planning Officers and Councillors visited Mollington Grange and spoke to a number of tenants. The majority view was that they would prefer to stay at Mollington Grange, especially those who had built a business that relied on the immediate area. The Parish Council objected to the proposals on the basis that not all of the units fulfilled the criteria required by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order – SI 2015 No.596. The Parish Council also felt that the proposed change of use was contrary to Policy ECON1 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan which stated that "The Council will promote sustainable economic growth in the borough and wider sub-region, supporting existing businesses, encouraging indigenous business growth and attracting new inward investment". The Planning applications have just been approved by Cheshire West and Chester.

Throughout the year the Parish Council received 12 applications for comment of which two were refused.

Virgin Media: With some not inconsequential concerns along the way, Virgin Media arrived in the Village early in 2017 to run a broadband cable from Lea to Saughall via Station Road and Well Lane.

There were a number of incidents, not least of which was the damage to the historic wall in Well Lane caused by Virgin's contractors. Fortunately they held their hands up to it and repaired the damage.

Highways, Transport and Rights of Way: CWaC Highways were asked about the possibility of having a footpath from the end of Townfield Lane to the bus stop on the A540 outside Mollington Grange so that people did not have to walk on the road or through long grass. The response was that CWaC did not carry out improvements of this nature unless they were funded through local safety schemes.

A speed limit assessment has been undertaken for Grove Road which recommends a reduction to 40mph between Demage Lane and the School. There will be further amendments to speed limits once CWaC's 4-year programme of the introduction of a 20mph limit outside schools comes to the Village.

CWaC had received a direction from the Planning Inspector to make an Order for some of the paths claimed across the site between Mollington and Blacon. CWaC were organising the internal decision to make an Order and would have it advertised as soon as possible. The Parish Council would receive a copy. The successful appeal had not included a short section, and it was advised that there were two ways to get this back. The first was a high court case, for which the Ramblers were being requested to provide indemnity. If a high court case was to go ahead then CWaC would be advised to wait for the result before making the current orders. The second option was to provide evidence from some users and, should the landowners object and the appeal go to a public inquiry, the inspector at the inquiry could make an order outside the modification if he/she was convinced. The Parish Council sent a formal letter of objection to the Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council (Addition of Public Footpaths No.12, No.13, No.14., No.15, No.16 in the parish of Mollington) Modification Order 2017

Bookstop: The Parish Council is supportive of the unused bus shelter on Townfield Lane being turned into a Bookstop. Shelves have been put up and it is already well stocked with books.

Village Hall: The Hall's Big Lottery Fund (BLF) application was submitted at the end of March and was for £500,000, the maximum allowable, leaving a shortfall of up to £500,000 to complete the full project. In early July the application passed Stage 1 and moved into Stage 2. A questionnaire was sent out focusing on what people wanted to do and how they could be helped to do it, identifying needs and who could fulfil them. Some of the responses were encouraging. 14 options emerged. Tenders have gone out to four potential bidders to undertake the project. The outcome was not yet known. The results of the Phase 2 lottery bid should be known in March, with Phase 3 being undertaken at the end of the year.

Boundary Review: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England published draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for CWaC following a ten-week initial public consultation. The draft recommendations proposed that there should be 70 councillors in the future, five fewer than at present. The recommendations outlined how those councillors should represent eight three-councillor wards, 11 two-councillor wards and 24 one-councillor wards across the borough. The consultation closed on 6 November 2017. The Parish Council was happy with the proposals. The final recommendations have just been released and Saughall and Mollington stays the same but with the addition of Puddington.

Garden Competition: This year's winners were:

1st prize and Shield – Mrs Jennifer Morgan, 49 Mollington Court

2nd prize – Mr and Mrs John Lamb, Willow Brook House, Well Lane

3rd prize – Mr and Mrs Leslie Banks, Mollington Court

Congratulations to all of them and we hope they will continue to provide us with such a wonderful show. The prizes were presented prior to the Parish Council meeting in November by the Lord Mayor of Chester, Councillor Razia Daniels. Our judge this year was Mrs Kay Thomas, who is a member of Saughall Gardening Club.

A new Chairman will be elected at our annual meeting in May and I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for battling on in a difficult year for all of us, including our Clerk who has had health problems to deal with. Let's hope 2018 proves to be a better year for everyone.

Michael Jones
Chairman, Mollington Parish Council

March 2018