

MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019-20

This report covers the period May 2019-May 2020. May is when we should hold our Annual Meeting but we have had to make alternative arrangements this year due to Covid-19. The year has been skewed by the Covid-19 pandemic which started to impact on our community in March 2020, although it had been in everyone's mind since the start of the year when it was first identified in China. Activities in the Parish can be seen as two stories, one pre-covid and one post-covid.

Parish Council

Local elections were held in May 2019 and we welcomed two new Councillors, Sally Atkin and John Fielding. Before Covid-19 the Parish Council continued to meet in person every two months, either at the Village Hall or St Oswald's Primary School. The dates are posted on the website and the notice boards. Our last meeting was in March and since then we have been unable to hold meetings in public due to the Covid-19 restrictions. However, we will hold a 'virtual' meeting on 19 May using Zoom video conferencing and this will be the norm until we get approval to restart our public meetings from our National Associations. Residents are always welcome to attend meetings and we will endeavour to ensure this can happen in future. Until we resolve this please send questions or suggestions to Roger Jones (rogerdjones@hotmail.com)

The Village Hall

Our Village Hall, which is a shared resource between Backford (including Caughall and Chorlton), Lea-by-Backford and Mollington residents is in desperate need of rebuilding and if we don't do it now there is almost no hope that we will ever be able to replace the hall in the future. Accordingly, the Trustees of The Village Hall have decided to proceed to contract stage and the Project Team are currently working with the Professional Team and the Main Contractor to proceed to agree contract documents. The current plan envisages completion by April 2021, with demolition after that, but the demolition stage could be brought forward if it appears that such a plan would be more efficient. At present, the hall remains unavailable for our usual activities. However, it is hoped to continue fundraising opportunities and community support for the Village Hall throughout this time although perhaps in a different way to that which we have previously enjoyed. Please contact Rosie Sedwick if you wish to help with fundraising.

Speeding

There has been concern for several years about the speed of the traffic along Grove Road particularly, but not exclusively, around school pick up and drop off times. A study was undertaken three years ago with CWaC Highways to determine the extent of the problem and come up with recommendations. The intention was to change the speed limit from 'derestricted' 60mph to 40mph along the affected section. This was not implemented at the time but the Parish Council are now discussing whether we would like to proceed with the change, subject to the approval of the affected residents in both Lea and Mollington. Costs have been obtained from CWaC and some finance has been offered by our Ward Councillor, Simon Eardley, from his Members' budget. The remaining costs will need to be met by the Parish Councils and the school subject to approval by the PTA. A contribution may be available from the PTA but this has not been confirmed. Other areas in the village, such as Townfield Lane from the finger post to the main Parkgate road, are also of concern to residents and are being discussed with CWaC Highways.

Mollington Golf Course.

Following a successful public meeting in November 2019, we have continued to gather opinions to help us formulate our response to any development that the new owners, Harworths, may submit to Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWA). We know that Harworths have been in discussion with CWA but no formal plans have yet been submitted. Meanwhile, contributions from cyclists, walkers, nature lovers and anglers as well as farmers have helped us to form a nuanced view of what the community would like to see happen with the site. We continue to welcome contributions and will have further public meetings should we hear of any developments.

Chester 10K and Half Marathon

Sunday March 8 saw the Chester 10K coming along the Parkgate Road and returning via the Finger Post in Mollington back into Chester. This event was in the week leading up to lockdown and the street marshalls wore gloves as they handed out refreshments. Litter was picked up using hygiene procedures already in place. A gathering of clapping and cheering residents pleased the runners and the whole event was over and cleared away by 10.30 am. The Essar Chester Half Marathon should have been coming through Mollington and Lea on 18 May, but it was cancelled due to Covid-19. Its route along Coalpit Lane, Grove Road, Damage Lane, Station Road and Well Lane was of some concern to a few residents, as it would have prohibited travel for the hour that runners were passing. However, most residents were supportive and are keen to see such an event pass their doors in the coming years. The revised date for the Half Marathon on Active Leisure website is Sunday 20 September 2020.

Heritage Panel

An Interpretive Panel and accompanying website is just one example of a joint project between all three local Parish Councils this year. This Heritage Panel has been produced by Mollington Parish Council and includes information about the five Villages of Backford, Caughall, Chorlton, Lea-by-Backford and Mollington. Two Panels have been printed and one has been sited next to the Notice Board on Grove Road. The other is in the bar area at the Village Hall. The Panel has been well received and, in light of Covid-19, has proved to

be a point of interest for many villagers as they take their daily walk during lockdown. Mollington Parish Council has paid for one of the Panels and the cost of the other has been shared between Lea and Backford. Both have been helped by a grant from Ward Councillor Simon Eardley's Members budget.

Garden Competition

We held our annual Garden Competition during the summer months and prizes were presented by the Lord Mayor of Chester at our November Council meeting. Our judges this year were Martin Bentley and Colin Williams of Lea-by-Backford and we were fortunate in receiving a donation of a £50 voucher as first prize from Premier Plants of Ledsham and a voucher from Haven Interiors of Ledsham as third prize. The Parish Council provided the second prize. The results were 1st Mr & Mrs Kerfoot, North Lodge, Well Lane, 2nd Mr & Mrs Hockedy, Townfield Corner, Townfield Lane and 3rd Mr & Mrs Longden, White Lodge, Well Lane.

New look Websites for all three Parish Councils

All three existing Parish Councils websites are looking dated and none can be viewed easily on a mobile phone. None comply with the latest Government standards. In another example of joint working, it was agreed by all three Parish Councils that they would commission new websites which should have shared content given that the three Parishes share our main community assets, namely the school, church and village hall. The most important issues to be addressed were as follows: The sites should be simple to manage, access and navigate whilst meeting all the security requirements. In line with the Parish Council's Standing Orders three quotations were requested and received. Bob Hadfield, designer of Upton Parish Council website, was appointed as Web designer. The sites will be live by the end of June 2020.

Maintaining Village Assets

Thank you to all the residents who have again shown an interest and taken action to freshen up our heritage features and keep the village relatively clear of litter. Lockdown has meant that litter has not been the problem that it usually is. Jeff, our Amenity Cleaner, has been self-isolating since March but will be back at work on Monday 18 May, as lockdown measures are eased. Thank you to residents who clear our local footpaths. With CWaC footpaths officers unable to do this type of work, this is always appreciated.

Village signage

The signage into the village is damaged and in a poor state of repair We have agreement from CWaC that the village signs will be repaired or replaced as appropriate when normality is restored.

Broadband

At present the B4RN team are around 200 short of the required target. In light of Covid-19 and the resultant pressure on broadband as more locals work from home, it is hoped that many more will sign up for the scheme. There have been issues with wayleaves which are presently being tackled. If you would like more details on the B4RN project please email Christopher Jones on chris@stow-jones.co.uk

Dog Matters

During lockdown more people and their dogs have been walking the fields and lanes and we have had to ask owners to make sure they take poo bags home and put them in their own grey bins and not leave them in community bins as these were becoming unpleasant to walk past. We would ask that resident dog owners continue to do this as a matter of routine in the future.

Covid 19 Community Response

Following concerns regarding Covid 19 and its effect on our elderly and vulnerable residents who are required to self-isolate, we set up a Covid Community Response Team to collect prescriptions and shop. Fortunately, the majority of our residents have been supported by family and neighbours but we are presently collecting prescriptions for five resident families and shopping for two resident families. The main problem has been an inability to get onto on-line supermarket delivery services which may continue for the foreseeable future.

Tree survey

The recent loss of significant trees has led to residents' concerns out the safety of historic trees in the future. It is proposed that we create a one page per tree register documenting position, species, size, age, condition "ownership" and willingness of property-owner to engage with tree preservation.

Finally, my thanks to my fellow Councillors, Pauline our Clerk and to Simon Eardley, our Ward Councillor, for their support over the last 12 months.

Roger Jones

Chairman, Mollington Parish Council

May 2020