

MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015-16



I am now coming to the end of my second year as Chairman of Mollington Parish Council. We have a rule that no-one can be Chairman for more than two years consecutively, so this will be my last year. It has been a relatively quiet time for Mollington, with no major issues raised.

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. This year we have tried moving our meetings to a Wednesday evening, but this has proved difficult due to the lack of available accommodation in the Village Hall. We did consider moving back to the School, but several Councillors now find the low chairs too difficult to manage – we are all getting older. 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 and, until recently, has also appeared in the St Oswald's Parish Magazine and on the community website www.mollingtonvillages.co.uk. Unfortunately the editor of the Parish Magazine is moving away from the area and so far no replacement has been named so publication is on hold. A copy of the full minutes is available from the Parish Clerk following their confirmation at the next meeting. The Parish Council is developing its own website with the help of Chris Jones, Chairman of Mollington, Backford and District Village Hall Committee, and this should be available in the next few months. A copy of the annual report, this being the latest, is delivered to every household in the Parish by volunteers, usually in May.

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. So far we have not managed to fill the vacancy but we will continue to advertise it on our Notice Boards and hopefully someone will come forward before the next election in 2019. Contact details for the Councillors and the Clerk are posted on the Notice Boards and will appear on the new website.

Finance: The Parish Council set the precept for the year 2015-16 at £6,500, the same as in 2014-15, and received a Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant from Cheshire West and Chester Council of £153. This is £39 less than last year and will reduce further in future years until it is phased out altogether.

For the first time the Parish Council had to make a payment towards the cost of holding an election, a cost previously borne by CWaC. Fortunately the election was not contested, which kept the cost down to £181, although we had to budget for much more than that "just in case..." and we are taking the opportunity to put some of this aside towards the cost of the next round of elections in 2019.

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 £84 less for our insurance this year, benefitting from more competition amongst the insurance companies offering cover for parish councils. An increase in insurance premium tax will put the cost up a little in the coming year.

The Parish Council currently receives a New Homes Bonus as a result of CWaC top slicing 20% of the amount they receive from the Government. This is a discretionary payment and CWaC have decided that, in view of their difficult financial situation, they can no longer offer it in 2016-17.

Planning: This was a very quiet year with the Parish Council receiving only five applications for consideration. Of these, no comments were offered on three and these were subsequently approved by CWaC. One was withdrawn and will be resubmitted once it has been amended. The final application was for a "Footgolf" facility on land next to The Oaks Golf Club, on which the Parish Council made comments relating to safety due to the proximity of the A540. The facility was moved away from the main A540 to the rear of the site and was approved by CWaC. We are curious as to how this game will be played!

Councillor Crane attended an event called "Meet the Developer" in Crewe which was intended to enable Cheshire communities to engage with developers, particularly in areas where new homes were proposed and/or a Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared. Unfortunately there were no issues raised that were of particular interest to the Parish Council.

Following the adoption of the Local Plan (Part 1), CWaC has now moved on to look at more specific policies in Local Plan (Part 2). The Parish Council was consulted and commented on Local Service Centres, confirming that Mollington should not be considered because it fails to meet the majority of the criteria.

Highways, Transport and Rights of Way: Thanks to Councillor Crowe, we now have a bus shelter on the A540 outside Mollington Grange Business Park. Now that there is only one bus service close to the village, this is the only bus shelter currently in use. It doesn't make up for the lack of a village bus service, but at least it keeps people dry!

An application was made in 2013 to add footpaths from Parkgate Road to Shelley Road and Browning Close in Blacon. In September 2015, little progress having been made on this application, the Parish Council wrote to Steve Robinson, CEO of CWaC asking for progress to be made as a matter of urgency. An immediate response was received as a result of which it has been confirmed that an investigation is currently taking place. Once this has been completed a report will be issued with a recommendation as to whether or not CWaC should make the Order.

Parish Plan: The Parish Council has decided not to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan but instead to update the Parish Plan, and a questionnaire has been delivered to every household seeking views on a number of issues raised in the original Plan to find out whether or not the situation has changed for the better or worse since the original Plan was adopted. The response has been excellent and although the results are not yet available they will be published as soon as they have been analysed.

Village Hall: In March the Parish Council submitted a planning application on behalf of the Village Hall Committee seeking permission to erect a new building on the current site. Following submission, the Planning Officer expressed some concerns about the proposed size of the new building and asked for justification. The application was reconsidered by the Village Hall Committee and some adjustments were made to comply with the Planning Officer's requirements before the application was resubmitted. This has now been done and the Planning Officer's decision is awaited.

Policing: Cheshire Police have undergone a major reorganisation and Mollington now falls within the Chester North Local Policing Unit (LPU) which covers Blacon, Upton, Saughall and Mollington. The team is headed by Sergeant Ian Wilson and the new Community Beat Manager for Mollington is PC Paul Taylor, supported by PCSO Lauren Davies. Both PC Taylor and PCSO Davies intend to come to as many Parish Council meetings as they can, workload permitting, and Lauren is hoping to set up some surgeries, probably at the Village Hall.

Garden Competition: This year's Garden Competition was won by Mrs Jennifer Morgan of 49 Mollington Court, with Mr & Mrs Ken Black of Adswold, Townfield Lane in second place and Mr & Mrs Robert Percival of New Oak, 9 Mollington Court in third. The prizes were presented prior to the Parish Council meeting in November by the Lord Mayor of Chester, Councillor Hugo Deynam. Judging was, once again, undertaken by Debbie Jones and we must thank her for her continued support for our event. We must also record our thanks to the ladies of the WI for their planting on the Village Green and to Heather and Graeme Lewis who keep the area around the fingerpost looking bright and colourful.

Whilst I am dishing out the thanks, I would also like to extend these to my fellow Councillors who provide all the help and support any Chairman could want, and to our Clerk, Pauline English, who makes sure that what we do is legal. We always welcome the attendance of residents 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.

Angus MacSween
Chairman
Mollington Parish Council

March 2016