

Wiswell PC Chairman's annual report 2023

The financial year ending March 2023 has again been a year of considerable activity within our village and I'm indebted to colleagues in the Parish Council, the wider community and our Parish Clerk for their hands on support and positive encouragement throughout the year.

Mike Hill (Parish Clerk) has just completed his first year with us. His deft guidance, gimlet eye for funding opportunities and a focus on actions to improve our community has been instrumental in moving us forward. Mike, with the support of councillors, is reconfiguring our web site to make it a better point of reference for all things village. Copies of minutes, papers and accounts can be found on the site along with photo galleries of village events. Further web site developments are planned.

One of our earliest tasks was to set up a social committee to explore the potential for an annual sequence of events that would provide opportunities for us to meet as a cohesive and inclusive community. We got off to a rip roaring start with a highly successful platinum jubilee celebration in June 2022 attended by over 120 people. This was followed by our annual Christmas Carol event and pie supper at The Freemasons in December, a ladies' and a men's Christmas dinner and a well-attended quiz night / pie supper in February 2023 again hosted by the Freemasons. Thanks to all residents for supporting us with their attendance at these functions and for their help with planning and preparation. A special thanks to Mike Cavanagh and Paul Marlow for their energy, enthusiasm and advice in planning (often over a few well-earned pints) and delivering these events and to Sarah Clemson and Oi Mei Wrightson for their help with publicity and communications.

We don't enjoy the benefits of a village hall as a focal point for the community and so big thanks to David and Paula for allowing us to use the gardens of Lantern Cottage for our summer events and to Steve Smith and the Freemason's staff for hosting some of our activities.

In relation to village amenities Sue Walmsley and Sarah Yeowart have taken on responsibility for Coronation Garden after many years of dedicated tending from Maureen Robinson, Jenny Scholfield and other helpers who have left such a fine legacy for us. We have reluctantly removed the old holly bush but have replaced it with a rowan tree which over time will provide an equally good source of berries for our bird population. We have also purchased a new Lancashire flag to add a bit of colour to the area. Our Union Jack flag will continue to be used for designated events such as Coronation weekend. Funding has been committed to pay for the internal painting of the telephone box with a view to reintroducing the library.

We have at last, through the good offices of United Utilities, installed our defibrillator on the side of the clean water pumping station on Moor Lane. The defib is checked on a ten day cycle by members of the PC.

We were pleased with the response and ideas generated by our village survey and are in the process of implementing an Action Plan to address some of the issues identified by you on which we think we can make a positive impact. Outcomes from the survey can be found on our web site.

I know that some residents have queried the rise in precept this year (monies from council tax directed to the work of our Parish Council). There are two principal reasons for this. Costs have risen and we are a small PC compared to the likes of Barrow and Whalley. We face the same fixed costs as larger PCs but with a lower amount of households to draw income from. Secondly, we are ambitious in terms of what we want to achieve for our community and this requires some expenditure. Our annual income is below £8k per year and averages out at about £57 per household per annum which we hope residents will consider represents good value. However, we promise that we will continue to keep costs as low as possible and access additional funding for projects wherever possible.

As Chair I am lucky to be able to call on the wise counsel and support of my vice chair Alan Scholfield. Alan's renowned attention to detail and knowledge on all matters relating to highways and planning has been invaluable in helping to address the concerns of residents over the years. In addition, he is our representative on the Whalley GS and burial committees as well as managing the lengthsman's programme (maintenance of hedges, grass areas within the village). We were delighted to welcome Judith Pursglove onto the council at the start of the year and to report that we now have a full complement of councillors following the recent appointment of Sarah Clemson and Oi Mei Wrightson. Oi Mei will continue to administer our neighbourhood watch programme.

We are never complacent and are always looking to improve on what we do. I know I speak on behalf of all councillors when I say that we are open to fresh ideas and advice. Please don't hesitate to speak to us or contact us via E mail or through our Clerk on the council web site. Furthermore, we always welcome members of the community to our meetings in Pendleton Village Hall. A full list of dates and times can be found on our noticeboard and web site.