

Wigginton and Hopwas Parish Council Chairman's Report May 2017

Firstly I would like to welcome our newest Councillor, Caroline Gibson from Hopwas. We now have six Councillors but this still leaves one vacancy. We would therefore still be pleased to hear from any other resident who feels they would like to get involved. We might even get to the position of requiring an election. Whilst on the subject of council members I take this opportunity of thanking my fellow councillors for the work and support they have given over the last year. A special thank you must go to our clerk, Margaret Jones who manages to juggle the work of her other councils and family duties with our demands most effectively.

For this year the council has maintained its share of your Council Tax at the same level yet again whilst continuing to retain a healthy reserve. Although we do plan to increase our spending in the coming year we would hope that any increase in Council Tax in future years will be very limited. This is despite the fact that both Lichfield D C and Staffordshire CC, as is the case with most other local authorities, have reduced the services they provide. The rationale seems to be that the Parish Councils will pick up the slack. W & H P C have already been approached regarding delivering or directly funding some of these services. Our approach has been that unless the Parish directly benefits 'we will keep our hands in our pockets'.

One area we will pay attention to is the grass bank in Main Road Wigginton. In the past this has been cut with decreasing frequency by Lichfield D C. Your Parish Council will this year take over the cutting of the grass in the hope that the centre of the village can be improved visually.

The perennial subject of speeding traffic in Wigginton and Hopwas is of great concern to the residents. In an effort to tackle this problem Councillors have met with the Highways authority in order to determine the best approach to this problem. As far as Wigginton is concerned traffic calming islands have been proposed and the residents of the village consulted to determine their views. Although a small majority approved this approach many had reservations mainly due to the increase in parking along this section of road. This is now even worse and the Councillors plan to meet with the Highways authority again to discuss a possible resolution. In the meantime the subject of speeding control is on hold. Councillors would like to thank all who responded to the consultation, much useful data was gathered in this exercise.

In the other villages, a picnic bench have been provided in Comberford and a Goal Post in the playing field in Hopwas. I hope that residents will find both of these facilities useful. Also in Hopwas a tree was planted in the old cemetery grounds in Hints Road, this was to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee last year. The Council will also take on the maintenance of this area in the coming year.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Hopwas, Wigginton and Comberford has now been finally approved by the full Council of Lichfield D C. The Plan now has legal stature and any proposed new developments need to comply with the plan. This should give some protection to unwanted developments in the Parish. As however I have made clear before, the Plan can only go so far, it cannot override guidance given by a higher authority such as the planning authority or national government. The Plan does need to be reviewed on a regular basis and

we are aiming to do this early next year. We did receive much expert advice from residence in preparing the plan but if any other residents feel they can make a contribution in the future we would be most pleased to hear from them.

One of the periphery duties of the Council is to act as Trustees for the Wigginton Village Hall Trust. This Trust now simply controls the money resulting from the sale of the old village hall and is available to finance projects that are considered to benefit the village of Wigginton. Since no suitable project has been identified the decision was taken to invest part of the capital in a longer term investment. This has been actioned over the last six months and should at least maintain the purchasing power of the capital.

Should any residents have a problem that they feel the Council can assist with we are always pleased to see them at one of our regular monthly meeting.