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Clerk's Report to the Annual Meeting of the Electors of Haigh Parish The Classroom at the Stables, Haigh Hall - 21 May 2024 – 7pm

Meetings

Over the past year the situation with formal Council meetings has returned to normal and most have been held face to face at St David's Parish Hall at six week intervals where possible. However, because of inclement weather the December 2023 and January 2024 meetings were still held virtually. This will probably continue to be the case in the forthcoming year.

Bubblefest 2023

Undeterred by our experiences in 2022, when, because of what followed due to the death of Queen Elizabeth II, we had to cancel the Bubblefest, we decided to hold Bubblefest 2023 on Sunday, 25 June instead of in September. It was a resounding success. We were hoping for good weather and a good turnout and, for the most part, we got our wish. People had been waiting a whole year for the opportunity to come along and the event was a sellout. Unfortunately, at about 3pm the heavens opened and the crowds vanished to avoid being drowned by the torrential rain.

Having raised what for the Parish Council is a tidy sum through the Bubblefest, we are now looking into deserving good causes in the area that we can support.

Bubblefest 24 is being held on Sunday, 7 July and tickets go on sale tomorrow. We have most things taped, but an event like this needs many hands on deck on the day for it to run smoothly. If you can spare an hour or two between 7am and 5pm on that Sunday to help, we would love to hear from you. Please leave your contact details with a member of the Parish Council tonight or contact the Parish Clerk by email as soon as you can.

Planning

Throughout the past year we have continued to examine planning applications and have made representations when necessary. We have continued to focus in particular on the progress of applications relating to the tent pegging events at a site in Pendlebury Lane and a small residential development in Leyland Mill Lane. After several years, neither has reached a resolution.

For about 13 years the Council have been monitoring events in relation to the derelict 'Bridge 63' building – once the very popular Crawford Arms pub at Red Rock. More recently, we have again turned our attention to the potential developments at this location, as there have once again been rumours that new plans are under informal discussion with Wigan Council. We await further news with interest.

Community Engagement

We published the third edition of our now annual newsletter in 2023 and have recently published the fourth edition. We have also communicated with residents through meetings (which have been accessible to the public both virtually and in person) and via email and Facebook.

Information about parish councillors and formal information relating to meetings is published regularly on the two Haigh Parish Council pages on Wigan Council's website. During the past year we have considered launching our own website, but decided that, for the present time, this was not necessary.

During 2023 we continued to trial a budgetary participation process which involved using a digital platform called Vocaleyes to engage with the Parish community. The platform is used to

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showcase suggested projects in the Parish and residents who are members of the platform are invited to vote on the projects. Residents are also invited via the platform to suggest future projects and join working parties to steer winning projects to success.

In the Spring of 2023 the Council was judged as having met the criteria for an award of £2,000, which is to be shared amongst the projects that win the most votes with a view to help making them a reality. Over the past year we have added a further £500 in grant funding from Vocaleyes and £3,304 from the monies raised through Bubblefest 23 to the fund.

The most popular project appears to have been the introduction of a Christmas tree or other decorations in a central part of Haigh Parish. We have been carrying out research into this over the past year or so and are working with Wigan Council's Street Lighting department. We are hoping that we will be able to put something concrete into place in the next few months.

Remembrance

In 2023 we again arranged for poppies to be displayed on lamp standards around the Parish in November. The poppies were put up and taken down by a Parish Council member and a relative. Some of the members took part in the Parade at Aspull on Remembrance Sunday and a wreath was laid on behalf of the residents of Haigh during the service at the War Memorial. Every year the Parish Council makes a donation of £100 to the Royal British Legion. This year was no different to others.

Elections & Co-options

2023 witnessed the parish council elections, which are held every four years. Sitting councillors put their names forward and all were re-elected unopposed.

They were joined by a newcomer, **Cllr Andrew Keogh**, who has proved himself to be a tremendous asset to the Council. Over the past year he has played a major part in the publication of two editions of the newsletter by preparing the layout for printing as well as hand delivering many of the copies himself. He has also been instrumental in spearheading the research into the potential introduction of Christmas decorations to Haigh Road – a project which we hope will come to fruition later this year.

Due to circumstances beyond her control **Cllr Emily Hetherington** had to very suddenly resign her position as a parish councillor soon after her election, but has provided support for the Council's work whenever this has been possible. We were sorry to see her go. Her resignation resulted in a Casual Vacancy, which a couple of weeks ago was filled via co-option by **Cllr Jill Ingram**. Unfortunately, Cllr Ingram had a prior engagement and cannot be here tonight, but she has sent us her best wishes for a good evening and we would like to wish her all the best for the future in her new role.

Progress with Other Projects

Apart from the Christmas decorations, the Bubblefest and Planning matters, parish councillors have also been working on a number of other projects:

- **Cllr Marie-Clare Kenyon** has continued with her work on trying to create a joined-up bridleway in the Parish;
- **Cllr Ian Parker** has been monitoring the public footpaths to ensure that they are kept clear and their routes are mapped correctly;
- **Cllr Andrew Wilson** has focussed lobbying for improvements to traffic management along the entry routes to Haigh Woodland Park;
- **Cllr Bobbie Darbyshire** has acted as liaison with St David's Church and local community groups.

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Following an appeal in the newsletter we have received letters of support for **Clr Paul Kenyon's** work on improving the canal towpaths in the Parish. These are in a terrible state and much in need of upgrading. It has taken a lot of time and effort to convince other stakeholders to come on board, but there are now signs that things are beginning to fall into place.

Last, But Not Least

The Parish Council meet with Wigan Council's senior officers four times a year to discuss issues of concern in the Parish. During the cold spell last Winter a resident of Hall Lane raised concerns about the treacherous road conditions in that area and the lack of gritting by Wigan Council. This was raised by the parish councillors during one of those meetings and we achieved a result: Wigan Council agreed to provide a new grit bin in Hall Lane for use by the residents.

Permission was obtained by the Parish Council from a resident for the bin to be located at the roadside on his land and the flag on which the bin stands was fitted by three parish councillors. The Parish Council is now the proud owner of the bin and is responsible for re-filling it when it becomes empty. That's 'Working in Partnership' in action!

Krystyna Pilkington
Clerk to Haigh Parish Council
21.05.24