

LITTLE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2023-24

Following the statutory Parish Council Election process in May 2023 required by Cheshire West and Chester County Council a full Little Leigh Parish Councillor structure was returned. New Councillors for our village included Sue Beecroft and Sophie Littler. Unfortunately, Mark Ayre decided to 'stand down' as a Councillor later in 2023 due to substantial ongoing time commitments. During his time as a Councillor, Mark had brought energy and a high level of local knowledge to the Council. In March 2024, Sharon Geary was co-opted to replace Mark on the Parish Council.

As in most areas of life these days budgeting on our annual precept and financial resources has been a significant focus. Our main areas of expenditure this financial year have been:

- Beech tree by village hall survey; £800
- Village Hall maintenance, including essential damp-proofing; £1,400
- Annual membership fees to organisations and Village Hall Lease;
- Financial security/funding for the many events which have taken place in the village over the year including the Gus Glynn band and the Abba tribute night.

Unfortunately, this expenditure has meant that we had a lower Financial Carry Forward for the 2024/25 year and the Councillors agreed that the annual precept should rise by 10%

After an absence of a number of years, our hardcopy village newsletter '*Grapevine*' has been re-established for distribution to homes in Little Leigh. A massive thanks to Councillor Sue Beecroft for her hard work in creating and producing this new format to inform Little Leigh residents of news regarding village life, forthcoming events, etc, as well as sections on a local business showcase and environmental guidance/tips. This is especially relevant for our residents who do not access information on-line. Also, another big 'thank you' to Councillor Jenny Jones who has taken on the task, alongside a number of volunteer residents, to distribute this four page newsletter around our scattered community.

Other significant features in the life of the village over the past year, as I feel, the following features: planting of wild flower patches at the junction of Shutley and Brakeley Lanes, maintenance of the village planters, volunteers planting spring bulbs in 'the grass triangle' off Brakeley/Shutley Lane and litterpicking, reporting of 'state of the roads' issues to CWAC on a regular basis and ongoing maintenance of the village hall and exploring areas for development, eg an interactive whiteboard.

The role of Councillor Jenny Jones and her team of helpers remains a very significant feature of the life of Little Leigh. Over the past year this team has provided residents and visitors to the village with the opportunity to participate and socialise in activities such as the Friendly Club, drop in club, coffee mornings and knit and natter.

Councillor Jenny Jones has also been a lead in planning our Green Festival where over 30 workshops, activities and presentations are planned in partnership with the school.

It has also been a busy year for planning applications within the Little Leigh boundary, both residential proposals and rural green belt issues. The main areas for discussion and Parish Council views have been: Holly Bush Inn (various applications), new Chapel Farm barn and stables on Shutley Lane, residential development at Crumleigh Heath Farm and a Farrier's Forge at Hall Lane.

The ongoing issues within the village during the year which have been discussed in Parish Council include:

- Provision of a bus service from the village;
- Involvement of the primary school re: parking issues;
- Involvement of the PSCO, Di Wiggins, re: speeding within the village, especially along Ash House Lane and Runcorn Road;
- Requests to CWAC to improve safety in at least two significant hazardous sites – junctions of Shutley Lane/Runcorn Road and Smithy Lane/Runcorn Road;
- A team of Parish Councillors who regularly report to CWAC about the blatant pothole problems across the village, however, this has been with limited success;
- Complaints to CWAC in respect of the condition of Shutley Lane and Church Road in regard to gulleys, grids and road verges;
- Further necessary improvements to our Village Hall and increasing further the opportunities for social events.

No doubt many of the above will continue to be monitored, discussed and appropriate action (within our means) taken to resolve issues, eg proposed Hydrogen pipeline.

Finally, apologies if I have omitted any other village initiatives within this 2023/24 Annual Review but it has been a busy year in many aspects and my main intention is to provide an overview of the work of the Parish Council within Little Leigh life. We feel it is vital to maintain a balance within our wide spatial village community with its mix of Green Belt rural, Green agriculture and a number of differing residential groupings.

Joe Lawless

(Chair, Little Leigh Parish Council)