

Weston Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting Report 2022-23

What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is a statutory local authority set up under the Local Government Act 1972 that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the level of government closest to the community, with the district authority (in our case Newark & Sherwood District Council -N&SDC) above it in the hierarchy. Weston Parish Council has 7 Councillors who try to ensure that the views of the community are taken into account by the authorities, agencies and organisations that make legislation and take decisions on services and issues affecting the community.

Councillors are elected every four years and assisted by an employed clerk / Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk, who may be the only paid person serving a council, does not vote or make decisions for the council. All of Weston's Councillors live within the community and it is easy to contact both them and the Parish Clerk.

At the recent Parish elections in May Chairman Glyn Francis, Pauline Laughton & Nick Scott stepped down from the council and we would like to thank them all for their work and support during their time as councillors. The council welcomed new councillor's David Hill, Simon Meadows and Richard Liversage; we are looking forward to their thoughts and contributions to the council. We have one councillor vacancy, if anyone is interested please have a chat with any of the councillors or clerk.

In the position of Clerk/RFO during this past year we thank Andrea Wilson & Janet Birkin. Janet is currently still working as our clerk but we are in the process of handing over to our new clerk Olwen who we hope will be starting at our September Meeting. The work of the clerk isn't just turning up for the meeting writing the minutes and agendas, but many hours of preparation, cascading emails to councillors, organising meetings, carrying out the council's decisions plus obtaining and giving guidance on any legal issues or new legislation. Also to carry out financial management, forecasting the council's budgets and ensuring all legal requirements are completed in a timely manner. This year the council have now set up online banking.

The Council Chair and Vice-Chair are elected each year and Cllrs Colin Laughton and David Chase were elected at the AGM in May 2023 as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. During this meeting the councils Policies, Risk Assessments and Operating Procedures were reviewed and approved.

As the authority closest to the people, parish councils are invariably the first place residents will go with concerns or ideas. During this year we have received resident's comments regarding planning matters, vegetation, improper use of footpaths, speeding vehicles, parking, dog fouling, drainage, noise nuisance, anti-social behaviour, litter and garden fires. For this reason they are a vital part of any community. Parish councils make all kinds of decisions on issues that affect the local community.

It's true to say that on their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions. But they do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence, those other organisations that do make the final decisions (such as Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), N&S District council, Health Authorities and Police for example). Probably the most common topics that parish councils get involved with are planning matters (they are statutory consultees), crime prevention, managing open spaces and campaigning for and delivering better services and facilities.

In terms of planning, the Parish Council is invited to give feedback and local advice on planning applications, however the District Council is not obliged to take these views into account when making their decision. The role of the Parish Council is to represent local views and should provide

local knowledge, Raise areas of concern, Inform, debate, and add value to the process, Contact and involve District Councillors if required. The PC can only comment on these planning applications in the same way as any other member of the public, however, any comments by the PC must be agreed during a properly called public council meeting. Members of the public should send their own individually written letters or e-mails direct to the planning authority. During this year the council have considered and voted both for and against on various proposed developments within the Parish. We are currently waiting on several applications that have been submitted or appealed and are still being considered by Newark & Sherwood District Councils planning department for their final decision.

Weston Parish Council assets include the village gateway signs, dog bins and benches. The main asset is the church clock, unfortunately a difficult subject at this time. We have had the clock repaired by 'Time Assured' paid for with monies from the parish accounts and grants made from both Nottinghamshire County Council & Newark and Sherwood District Council. After difficulty with the church regarding gaining access, the clock was finally reinstalled in its housing in the tower. A new ladder identified as being required and was promptly purchased by the council and put in place. The clock requires weekly winding; this has been carried out by our volunteer clock winders for the past 40 years.

Sadly in March 2023, the clock has stopped being wound due to unacceptable restrictions by the church representatives to gain access to the clock. Our key, used for many years by the clock winders, was requested to be borrowed back over 2 years ago by the churchwarden due to one of their keys having broken. Regrettably despite years of communications the church have still refused to return this key to the Parishes clock winder. The council are very active at this time trying to resolve this sad situation with both the All Saint's PCC and the Diocese.

The Council would like to thank N&SDC for their grant of £150 for the King Charles III coronation, this money was used to support Weston's Village Street Party in May and to purchase the coronation commemorative medals given out at that event.

Other News - the village gateway sign at the junction of the Great North Road and Main Street has sadly recently been damaged again. We are currently liaising with Morris Signs who made and installed the sign, Via Ltd (Highways) and our Insurance Company to undertake the necessary repair and reinstallation.

Under a scheme from NCC / Via Ltd Weston have the opportunity to employ a 'Lengthsman' - someone able to carry out and assist with highway maintenance and upkeep within the village. More information is posted on the notice boards and the website or please speak to a councillor.

The Parish Council currently meets monthly, with the exception of August and December. Meetings, which are held in the Village Hall, typically commence at 7.30pm and everyone is welcome to attend. The Agenda is posted both on our website and on the village notice board the week prior to the meeting. The public has an opportunity to raise any local issues in an Open Forum at the beginning of the meeting.

Weston Parish Councillors

Colin Laughton – *Chairman*

David Chase – *Vice-Chairman*

Richard Henderson Simon Meadows

Richard Liversage David Hill

Clerk- Janet Birkin / Olwen Edwards