

WINWICK

*Best Kept Village
in Cheshire – 2000*

C/o Winwick Leisure Centre
Myddleton Lane
Winwick
Warrington
WA2 8LQ



PARISH COUNCIL

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20 May 2019

To all Members of Winwick Parish Council

Dear Councillor

The **Annual Parish Assembly** (meeting of Electors) will be held on **Tuesday 28 May 2019 at 7.00 pm at Winwick Leisure Centre.**

The next Parish Council meeting will commence at the rise of the Annual Parish Assembly.

Julian Joinson
Clerk to the Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Code of Conduct - Declarations of Interest
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare and disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when the item is reached.

The Clerk is available prior to the meeting to advise and/or to receive details of the interest and the item to which it relates.

Declarations are a personal matter for each Member to decide. Whilst the Clerk will advise on the Code and its interpretation, the decision to declare, or not, is the responsibility of the Member based on the particular circumstances.

3. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 22 May 2018

4. Chairman's Report
5. Questions / Comments from the Public

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Winwick Parish Council

Annual Parish Assembly held on 22 May 2018

Present: Councillors M Matthews (Chairman), D Bennett, G Friend, S Gordon, A Iddon, C Mitchell and D Williams

Residents: There were two residents of Winwick Parish present.

Also in Attendance: Ms C Jones, Interim Finance Officer and Mr J Joinson, Interim Clerk

WPCPA.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emery and Gosney.

WPCPA.2 Code of Conduct – Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

WPCPA.3 Minutes

Decision – That, subject to the deletion of the words ‘Peel Hall’ and substitution with the words ‘Houghton Green’ in sentence 2 of bullet 1 on page 3, the minutes of the meeting of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 23 May 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

WPCPA.4 Chairman’s Report

The Chairman presented the following report:-

It had become something of a tradition for the Chairman to provide a short written report to the Assembly as a reflection of what had worked and, perhaps more importantly, what had not.

What had Gone Well

When the Labour Group, led by the Chairman, had become the majority party on the Council it had set itself three priorities:-

- To introduce a litter picking service;
- To introduce measures to calm traffic and reduce speeding; and
- To improve the performance of the Leisure Centre, which at the time was losing around £40k per annum.

In relation to litter picking, the Chair expressed his thanks to Councillor Mitchell for the work she had done in getting that service off the ground, as well as other initiatives that she had championed (eg. the Community Bus) as a Borough Councillor for the area. It was recognised too that individual Winwick councillors needed to take ownership of the service, but it was now available to be used. On the traffic issues, the Parish had received a fantastic turnout for the public meetings and

both the Chairman and Councillor Mitchell had also held several meetings with senior officers and fellow Borough Councillor Terry O'Neill about the design and funding of the schemes for Golbourne Road, Myddleton Lane and Delph Lane.

The Chairman indicated that he had also held several meetings with Councillor O'Neill regarding development across the Borough and, in particular, those impacting on Winwck.

What had Gone Less Well

The Chairman acknowledged that there were some areas where he had failed and where the Council had not lived up to the standards that a Parish Council should set itself. In particular, he sought to explain why, having started to turn around the financial performance of the Leisure Centre, the Council was actually right back where it started two years ago in terms of operating losses.

The current situation had started with the legacy issues faced by the Chairman some two years ago when taking up his office, then things appearing to improve, next the situation slipping back and finally deteriorating significantly in the aftermath of the 'Bonfire Night Extravaganza'. A fair comment would be that unless the Council set up and operated a management regime that delivered a well-run Centre, the Council would face continuing reputational damage and financial loss from what should be its main community asset.

Summary

Notwithstanding the above issues, the Chairman could draw many positives from the past year's experience. He had learnt that if the Council wanted to have a Centre which worked for the community and was one that all could be proud of, it was essential to have people who could be trusted and who respected the highest standards of governance. If people did not, then small chinks in governance that started with, for example: cheap drinks for your mates, lock ins and cash payments, could suddenly become: pilfering, missing stock, then theft, allegations of 'kick backs' on contracts, fraud and a wide range of reputational issues.

By changing the bar and back office management, recruiting a new Responsible Finance Officer and by making sure that the Council's procedures and financial regulations were followed and by having Members in charge of key budgets, the Council could at least ensure that all income was properly accounted for. That would provide a sound basis on which to build public confidence. However, the Council did need to take a broader look at the governance of the operation and its customers' needs and expectations. Other options such as a tenanted bar might also need to be explored, if the Leisure Centre was to get close to breaking even.

The Chairman expressed his hopes to be able to play some continuing role in the process of improvement.

Decision – To note the Chairman's annual report.

WPCPA.5 Questions / Comments from the Public

Members of the public raised the following matters:-

- It was hard to find out about the work of the Parish Council, as it had no up to date website. It was difficult, therefore, for residents to find out how to exercise their democratic rights. The issue of the website had been raised as long ago as April 2016 and it was disappointing that there had not been much progress made since then. The Leisure Centre website also brought up out of date content which meant that people did not know what events were taking place. *Response:* The Chairman indicated that his own business used Get Seen Media, but it was difficult for the Leisure Centre to spend money on its electronic profile without tendering properly. It was suggested that a discussion on marketing and 'front of house' be held at the next Management Committee meeting.
- The negative effects of social media were plain to see when things went wrong, such as after the Bonfire Night event. The resident concerned offered to help, where possible, with marketing. *Response:* It might be useful to set up a new Facebook page and if possible to delete the old one. Further discussions could be held with Get Seen Media. Some content had already been prepared by the Clerk for the new Parish Council website. The Chairman added that he had no spare time to carry out marketing and that other staff experience was limited and their time would cost. Ms Jones added that the Council could seek quotes for marketing from a number of sources. However, a specification would need to be drawn up first.
- For the last three months members of the public had not had access to the Finance Reports before the meetings. Members of the public would like to see these in advance. *Response:* Ms Jones noted the comments and, although she was currently dealing with other high priority matters, she should be in apposition to accede to this request soon.
- A resident endorsed some of the Chairman's comments about successes, particularly with regard to the litter picker service. The problems with the Leisure Centre were acknowledged and it was suggested that a zero based approach be used, rather than tweaking the existing business model. It was suggested that perhaps a detailed discussion on this could be held at some future date. *Response:* It was suggested that the right management team needed to be involved in the recovery programme. The Centre was probably at its lowest ebb at present. It was difficult to get to the bottom of the core problem. In May 2017, the Centre was almost breaking even, but around £10k slippage occurred in the summer, following which things had gone wrong at the Bonfire Night event. Thereafter, towards the end of the year the situation had improved again. The answer would be to ensure that someone was on top of the Centre's finances. By way of example, measures had been introduced to stop entertainers being paid cash on the night of their performance. Councillor Iddon indicated that there had previously been a Users Committee and that it might be worth trying that again.

- The Centre appeared to be used by a minority of the Parish and some people from outside of the Parish, for whom local residents were subsidising their usage. How could local residents be encouraged to use the Centre? It needed to be seen as a proper community resource. *Response:* It was acknowledged that many people were unaware of what the Leisure Centre offered. The Chairman added that this was probably very true of those residents south of the Motorway. Overall, he was not concerned if the Centre was used more widely, for example by people from outside of the Parish, if that returned it to profit. However, if the Centre could not be made profitable Members would need to take a long hard look at its future. The Leisure Centre was already running on a minimum number of staff hours and low pay. Councillor Iddon suggested that the Centre historically had run using a great deal of goodwill, but that some of that had eroded in recent years. It was recognised that the loss of the previous Leisure Centre Manager had been an unsettling experience for some users and some providers of services to the Centre. However, other community centres managed to operate without similar issues. The character of the Manager was a key factor in embedding good governance, but this was hard to test at interview. For example, a potential interim replacement for the previous Manager had subsequently caused great embarrassment to his existing employer. Councillor Friend reported that, if residents south of the M62 were polled about the Leisure Centre, they might want it to close. Councillor Williams indicated that others would not even have heard of the Centre. The Chair summarised by reiterating his point about good financial management. One obvious example was that staff needed to recognise that tickets for a £500 entertainment act would need to be priced at more than £5 each to make a profit.

Decision – To note the questions and comments raised by members of the public and the responses given.