

**MINUTES OF THE WESTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN
WESTON VILLAGE HALL
ON THURSDAY 11th MAY 2023 AT 7.00PM**

Present:

Councillor J Griffiths (Chair), Councillor Mrs H Hart, Councillor M Hardenberg, Councillor D Leake, Councillor A Massey, and Councillor Mrs R Garner.
Stafford Borough Councillor Mrs Karine Aspin

DW Croxford, Parish Clerk

Two members of the public

Apologies: received from Councillors Mrs G Wray, Mrs J Gair, J Tallentire.

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of the Weston Annual Parish meeting of 10th May 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council as proposed and seconded by Councillors Hart and Leake respectively.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Report of Weston Parish Council

The Parish Clerk presented the Weston Annual Report of the council, highlighting key activities and achievements during 2022/23.

The Council has held eleven full Parish Council meetings this year, the September meeting being cancelled following the sad passing of HM Queen Elizabeth. Parish Councillors and the Clerk have also represented the Parish Council at other meetings including the Trent Valley Collaboration Group and Weston Village Hall Committee meetings.

During 2023 two new Councillors were welcomed onto the Parish Council, Councillors Gair and Massey, to fill the two vacancies that existed.

Councillor Icke has decided to stand down from the Parish Council at the May Election after serving since April 2018. He was warmly thanked for his services at the April Parish Council meeting.

Following the Election on 4th May 2023 we have a full complement of Parish Councillors, welcoming Councillor Garner into office.

During 2022/23 the Parish Council have:

Continued to monitor the plan for the work of the Parish Council over the coming three years.

This plan was based upon questionnaires delivered to every household in the Parish and the results have triggered the priority work areas for the Parish Council. The progress is

discussed at the monthly Parish Council meetings.

Renewed an ongoing substantial Grounds Maintenance contract to provide grounds maintenance for all the grassed public areas and other facilities owned by Weston with Gayton Parish Council. For the first time, instead of formal contracts administered by the Clerk, grants have been made to the Churches in Weston and Gayton, and Gayton Village Hall for maintenance of their grassed areas.

Repainted several items of children's play equipment on the on the Village Green and installed new swing seats.

Worked closely with both the Borough and County Councils on a range of issues from reviewing and commenting on planning applications, the speed of traffic, highway maintenance, pothole repair, footpath maintenance, dog fouling matters and flooding issues. Such dialogue and liaison with key officers at both Councils accounts for a significant proportion of the work of the Parish Council and ensures issues of concern in both Weston and Gayton are addressed as swiftly as possible.

The Civic Amenity/Refuse and Recycling Wagon will be returning to Weston and Gayton this year and the Parish Council have arranged for two visits to Weston at one at Gayton.

Supported the Community Speed watch Programme and continued to rotate the Speed Indicator Device between the two locations. Data continues to be collected regularly.

In March the Council purchased and planted a significant number of Leylandii and other ornamental trees to improve the Village Green area.

With local works beginning apace it is becoming clearer that the impact of HS2 construction traffic around Weston will be significant for an extended period. The Parish Council are monitoring the position closely.

Looking forward to 2023-24

The Parish Council agreed the annual budget in January 2023 and the annual precept for Weston was a zero percent increase on the previous year.

We will continue to monitor the roads, footpaths, rights of way and gullies in the area to ensure all remain functional and that the risk of flooding is minimised.

We will continue to maintain the pleasant environment of the Village public areas and painting of the children's play area is to begin shortly.

As indicated above we will also face additional challenges to our highways network once the construction phase of HS2 is underway.

HS2 Phase 2a – Programme Update

An update on the general and local situation was delivered by Victoria Roberts, Senior Community Engagement Manager, Phase 2a HS2 Ltd.

Victoria advised that, last month, the Government updated Parliament on their transport capital investment programme. The Transport Secretary's statement included an update on the HS2 project, recognising significant inflationary pressures facing all parts of the UK economy.

Since this update HS2 has been working closely with the Government and our supply chain on the details of any changes to the HS2 works currently taking place and the future programme of works.

The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to delivering HS2 from London Euston to Manchester, and this includes extending the railway between the West Midlands and Crewe.

In line with direction from the Government, main civils works between the West Midlands and Crewe will be paused for approximately 24 months.

During this time HS2 will be continuing with vital preparatory works already underway. This includes completing live utilities works and habitat creation sites, in line with seasonal wildlife cycles. The land acquisition programme under the HS2 Phase 2a Act will also continue to secure the land needed to build the new railway. Continuing with the land acquisition, and the utilities and environmental works already underway, will place HS2 in a strong position for when the programme of main civils works start again.

There are thus no further surveys on design developments, or invasive traffic management, planned in our local area for the next 24 months.

As well as the HS2 Community Investment Fund (a fund available for community projects), of which the Parish Council were already aware, Victoria highlighted another fund for HS2 affected area, namely the Road Safety Fund which is managed by Staffordshire County Council.

This Road Safety Fund is designed to fund road safety improvements in HS2 affected communities.

Victoria offered to contact SCC on our behalf to introduce the Parish Council to begin the process of revisiting earlier claims for road safety improvements within the village envelope to SCC which have not progressed, as well as considering new improvements.

Victoria was warmly thanked for attending and updating the Parish Council.

Any Other Business (Public Participation)

A member of the public expressed her appreciation at the efforts of Councillor Hart, on behalf of the Parish Council, for all her efforts to expedite the installation of the new post box, now situated on Green Road.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 11th July 2023, 7.30 pm in Weston Village Hall

JAN GRIFFITHS