

**Whitwick Parish Council**

**Website:** [www.whitwickpc.org.uk](http://www.whitwickpc.org.uk)

**Tel:** 01530 459527



**Whitwick Community Office,  
3a Market Place,  
Whitwick,  
LE67 5DT**

## **SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

**Parish Council** – There are 11 seats on the Parish Council and the last election took place in May 2015, with members serving until 2019. The Parish was divided into wards: Broom Leys - 2 councillors; Holly Hayes - 3 councillors; Hermitage - 3 councillors and Thornborough - 3 councillors.

**Councillors** - Parish councillors give their time freely – they do not receive allowances and none have claimed any expenses. Contact details for all councillors are given on the Council's website or are available by phoning, visiting or emailing the Community Office.

**Meetings** - The Parish Council held 12 ordinary meetings and 2 special meetings in 2017/18, and 6 meetings of the Property Management and General Purposes Committee, which has now been given delegated powers by the council to make certain decisions. All meetings are open to the press and public and council meetings commenced with a public question and answer session. Council Meetings were held at Park Hall in Whitwick Park, normally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month at 7 pm. Whitwick residents are always welcome to attend. The Staff Committee held 1 meeting and 2 appraisal meetings in private.

**Finance** - The Council's precept for 2017/18 was £193704. The Council banks with Unity Trust. The opening balance at 1 April 2017 was £102,485. During the year, provisional income totalled £223080 with provisional expenditure of £168984 giving a provisional closing balance at 31 March 2018 of £156581, depending on some large liabilities which are still to be finalised. This includes amounts reserved for contingencies, elections (casual vacancies and 2019 full council) and earmarked funds set aside for specific projects or purposes. A more detailed balance sheet will be available to view on the Financial Information page of the website or by contacting the Parish Manager.

**General Power of Competence** - Whitwick Parish Council is eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence introduced by the Localism Act, passing the two tests of having a sufficient number of elected councillors and a qualified Clerk. Broadly, the Council can now do whatever a private individual can do without the need for specific statutory powers.

**Policies and Procedures** - The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Internal Monitoring/Audit Statement and has policies for Risk Assessment, Asset Register, Website Privacy, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Media, Equal Opportunity, Complaints Procedure, Community Grants, Health and Safety, Environmental, Protocol for Conduct of Chairman, Staff Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures and a Retention of Documents Statement (all reviewed annually and available on the council's website). New policies adopted during the year were Lone Working Policy, Lone Working Risk Assessment, Reserves Policy and CCTV Policy/IT Policy.

**Memberships** - The Council is a member of the National and Leicestershire and Rutland Associations of Local Councils, the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland), the Leicestershire & Rutland Playing Fields Association, Fields in Trust and the Friends of Charnwood Forest. The Parish Manager is a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

**Website** - The Parish Council has its own website which is regularly updated and includes news, agendas and minutes and dates of future meetings. There is also an email link/enquiry form to the Parish Manager or for booking Park Hall to hire for your own events. The site has been rated 'comprehensive' by the County Council. Community groups and businesses are encouraged to provide their information to the Community Office for inclusion on the website.

**Staff** - During the year, the Council recruited a second Caretaker to join the existing team of employees – the Parish Manager, an Administrative Assistant and a Caretaker who work together to oversee the services the Council provides to the parish. All staff work on a part time basis, being flexible where possible in an endeavour to meet the needs of the council and the community.

**Audit** - The Council has re-appointed Richard Willcocks of Redwood Pryor Ltd as its Internal Auditor. PKF Littlejohn have been designated as the Council's external auditors. The Council's accounts are made available for public inspection as part of the audit process.

## **WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **(a) Priority Services**

**Whitwick Community Office** - This established facility is the base for two staff that provide regular opening hours for public enquiries. The local PCSO also has free access to use the office when on duty in the parish, which the council hope is a useful resource to help better serve Whitwick. The photocopying and office service is provided as a local facility for the community. A growing resource of community information is being developed and the Parish Manager will endeavour to accommodate enquiries by prior appointment outside normal opening times. The scheduled 9 hours opening per week has in reality been more than doubled, on average being open for 18.5 hours per week. The Parish Council hopes residents will continue to use the Community Office as a 'one stop shop', enabling local people to be dealt with at the first point of contact wherever possible but otherwise signposted to what services are provided and by whom. The Office has recently become a collecting point for the latest copy of the Community Voice monthly magazine for anyone needing copies.

**Whitwick Park Hall** - As well as providing a venue for all council and committee meetings, Park Hall is used regularly (nearly every day) for parties, functions and social events. Regular hirers are now established and an increasing number of new opportunities are being provided for residents and their families to benefit from specialist activities. The existing facilities have been enhanced this year with improved lighting on the driveway – 4 new street lighting columns with LED lights costing £3,348 have replaced the previous illuminated bollards that could not be repaired.

### **(b) Other Projects**

**Community Grants** - This scheme continued in 2017/18 and grants totalling £1460 were given to 8 local organisations who asked the Parish Council to support their work, including the new Community Christmas Carol Singing event led by local churches in Whitwick.

**Community Projects - 'Poppies on Lampposts'** was a new community initiative for 2017, led by the Parish Manager who quickly obtained conditional permission from the County Council for lamp posts to be used in Whitwick (and for other parish council areas too). Funding was kindly provided by a few local businesses and individual donations additionally supported this project. The installation of 70 large poppies along the entire route of the Remembrance Parade from Hermitage Leisure Centre to the War Memorial in North Street was done by two parish councillors, joined by a volunteer, the Parish Manager and several students from Stephenson College. A surplus of £60.25 has been set aside towards starting the 2018 project. The Council was proud to take this initiative for Whitwick.

**Grit Bins** – Following the severe snowfall in December, the Parish Council has been requested to provide several new grit bins. The consent of the County Council is required for each location and strict eligibility criteria has to be met and unfortunately this will not be straightforward as many locations are on gritting routes and normally would not be allowed. The Parish Council will be urging special consideration be given by the County Council but locations will need to be prioritised. In an endeavour to fulfil some of these requests the council has earmarked the unspent budget to support purchases in 2018.

**‘Christmas Lighting Scheme’** – generously supported by local businesses and led by Cllr Peter Moulton, it provided a lovely seasonal display and was as ‘green’ as we could make it. The trees themselves were made of recycled plastic and the lights were solar powered and therefore used no electricity, nor required wiring or connections to a power supply. It gave the Parish Council and the local business community an opportunity to work together with a brand new initiative to celebrate Christmas. By co-ordinating a Christmas Lighting Scheme for traders to rent their tree, the parish council sorted out and installed brackets to make it a really straightforward scheme that was affordable, whilst providing enjoyment to children and adults alike when seeing the trees on the streets of Whitwick.

**Easter Egg Hunt** - the parish council worked in partnership with 'Woodstock in Whitwick' Committee to successfully provide a free community event for local residents, led by Cllr Sue Colledge. This new initiative produced ‘eggcellent’ results and was enjoyed by the many children, adults and 4-legged friends who came to the free event in Whitwick Park. 360 eggs were ‘claimed’ and there was also an opportunity for children to donate eggs to other children who were ill in hospital.

**Community Policing** - Our local Safer Neighbourhoods Team regularly attend meetings to have a dialogue with the Parish Council on community policing issues, giving reports and advice on current crime prevention initiatives and latest crime statistics. Information bulletins are shared with councillors and co-operation with investigations has been given by sharing CCTV data and by free independent use of the Community Office.

**Grounds Maintenance** – The Council has completed the second year of the contract with NWLDC to provide this service on parish land and this contract continues to 31 March 2019.

**Health and Safety** - Ellis Whittam continue to provide expert advice/support to the parish council, with guidance on specific areas being received and being implemented on a phased basis.

**Land and Property** - Following transfer from NWLDC and developers, the Parish now owns many parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. A full list of all the sites is included in the latest Asset Register on the website. The Council is also sole trustee of the King George V Fields Charity which covers the Park and part of the Parsonwood Hill Recreation Ground. A replacement metal fence has been installed at the Robinson Road play area, requiring an investment of £4,200.

**Newsletter** – The Council provides a monthly newsletter which is printed in the popular Community Voice magazine and now delivered to 5,000 homes in the parish. The full page article started by introducing all 11 of your parish councillors and then the part-time staff. We hope it now helps to keep you informed about news, activities, developments and future meetings of the parish council.

**Notice Boards** – A Community Notice Board outside the Old School has voluntarily been refurbished by Cllr Anthony Barker and now provides a better opportunity for free publicity for events and meetings of local organisations. The Parish Notice Board located on the frontage of the food store, by kind permission of Midlands Co-op Society, continues to provide information and parish news, in addition to the website.

**Planning** - The Council considers all planning applications submitted in the parish as a consultee though the final decisions are taken by NWLDC. The Council also responded to previous consultations by NWLDC’s and their new Local Plan is now in place. During the year, the Council was delighted that an appeal by a developer for major residential development in the Parish off Thornborough Road was withdrawn.

The Parish Council made every endeavour to protect the Green Wedge from development but the NWLDC proposals for a new Leisure Centre on the former golf course off Stephenson Way became the preferred site, despite the many objections submitted by the parish council and local residents. The Parish Council will be consulted later in the year on what happens to the site of the current Hermitage Leisure Centre and will urge that every opportunity be provided for residents to speak before NWLDC make a decision.

**Parish Charter** – this continues to usefully establish the best way for NWLDC/Parish Council to work effectively together. Information is shared on changing responsibilities and quarterly liaison meetings are attended by the Chairman, the Parish Manager and sometimes other councillors are able to attend.

**Railway Station** – This historic building is owned by the Parish and leased to Whitwick Historical Group for a nominal rent, with opportunities for liaison between both parties taking place when necessary to support the valuable work that is done to preserve our heritage.

**Street Environment** – In response to public requests, the Parish Council have identified some locations to provide seating, starting with a bench at Hermitage Road. Applications will need to be made to the County Council for licences for some locations but this will be done after consultation with immediate neighbours. Flower boxes were again provided at all village entrance signs.

**Whitwick Park** - There were problems during the year with vandalism to the toilets, fencing and sometimes to the bowling green. Measures were introduced to combat this and it was necessary to adjust locking of additional gates to control access. New artificial turf has been installed at the two goal mouth areas, costing £2016, although the nets had been badly vandalised and have been removed due to being unsafe.

**Allotment Management – Thornborough Road** – the self-management Committee continues to successfully operate the site for the benefit of plot holders and is developing opportunities to make best use of the rented site, currently leased from Wyggeston's Hospital Charity.

**Allotment Management – Walkers Flats** - a new self-management Committee has been successfully launched and the Parish Council is supporting them in this role as the tenants work hard together to improve the site and encourage new members to take on the few empty plots.

## **FUTURE WORK**

**Community Response Plan** – The Council will continue to look at ways of helping residents be resilient to local emergencies or problems, which might be weather related or have other causes. Although this is in its early stages, a few volunteers have kindly come forward and more names are needed. Everyone has potential to either need or be 'a good neighbour' to help Whitwick cope with incidents like severe weather (snow or flood), power cuts, major traffic problems, explosions or water contamination. If you would like to know more, contact the Parish Manager or any councillor – without any obligation.

**Directory of Services** – although the Council is committed to further develop work on this directory to be made available both in hard copy and on the website, only a few local groups have submitted their information for inclusion. We will continue to encourage local businesses and organisations by publicising their services.

**External Funding** - The Council will continue to consider current grant regimes to identify any opportunities to attract grant funding into Whitwick.

**Future Service Delivery** - The Council will continue to review options for future service delivery in the Parish as the County and District Councils are looking to reduce the services they provide to meet Government savings targets. A review of the parish grounds maintenance contract will be completed and a tender process will be completed for a new term commencing in April 2019.

**Local Council Award Scheme** - The Council will consider applying for accreditation under this new scheme which replaces 'Quality Parish Council' status.

***Councillor Ray Woodward***

Chairman of the Parish Council