

Rainhill Annual Parish Meeting
23rd April 2014
Held at Rainhill Village Hall

Present Cllrs: B. Almond, J. Carroll, M. Donovan, J. Doyle, S. Glover, L. Glover, B. Heydon, D. Long, P. Lynch, C. Moore, W. Wood, PCSO P. Wise (Merseyside Police), 8 residents.

Apologies received from Cllrs J. DeAsha and J. Kelly and from Sgt S. Barcroft (Merseyside Police).

1. The Chair, Cllr C. Moore, welcomed residents to the meeting, thanked them for attending, and explained how the meeting would progress.
2. The Chair then asked members of the Council to briefly introduce themselves and gave a report on the activities of the Parish Council over the previous twelve months. Key points included:
 - The Parish Council was shocked and deeply saddened with the untimely passing of Dot Kelly in October aged 69 years. Dot had been a Parish Councillor alongside her husband John for many years. She was always a very enthusiastic champion for the local community and will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.
 - The Parish Council, with the help of Ward Councillors and St Helens Council, continued to support the provision of open spaces for the enjoyment of Rainhill residents. The Council has responsibility for 8 parks spread over 43 acres of Rainhill. The Council provides support to two junior football teams, Rainhill United at Rainhill Park and Rainhill Rocket at Holt Playing Fields.
 - The Parish Council continues to help the hard-working members that run this Village Hall by contributing towards the hall running costs.
 - The Council continues to support Rainhill Gala which, despite the atrocious weather on Gala Day, still managed to raise over £3,300 for Willowbrook Hospice and other local organisations and charities. This is a tremendous achievement and a real reflection not only on the charitable giving of the community but the amazing year-round efforts of the Gala Group.
 - Along with the Gala, Drama, Musical Theatre and Beer Festival, Rainhill Music Festival has established itself as an important event in the life of the Village. The Parish Council continues to help the Music Festival by providing trophies and prizes and as usual, organisation of the 2013 event was excellent and the performances were of a very high standard. It had been a pleasure for the Chair to present the prizes to Young Musician of the Year Solomon-Miles Donnelly and the other winners in St Ann's Church on the penultimate night of the festival.
 - Thanks were given to Oakdene Primary School Choir who performed at the switch on of the Christmas Tree lights and helped make a special and festive occasion.
 - The 4F Centre caters for disabled children and young people and since Barnados vacated the building in October 2011, a group of local volunteers has taken over the management of it. Earlier this year the 4F Centre was given a makeover when 13 young people from the Princes Trust at St. Helens College chose it as their programme of training, decorating the entrance, the

main hall and the sensory room so that the children now have a fresh new centre to be proud of.

- The annual Good Citizenship Awards evening was held on 21st February, where awards were made to Moira Dickinson, Anne Jones, May Medwell and Malcolm Steward to recognise their excellent work in and for the community. It was the 13th year of the event and a total of 37 residents have now had their good work acknowledged
- Where resources have allowed, the Parish Council has continued to look at new projects. Development of the open space on Exchange Place is an exciting venture and the Rainhill ECO community group has worked hard to land external funding, with pump priming from the Parish Council. Work on the garden is scheduled to be completed later this year and the Chair was honoured to put the 'first spade in the ground' on Saturday, 1st March.
- The Parish Council continued to support local residents by vetting local planning applications and making comments and objections where necessary.
- The Parish Council website continued to be improved and is both a regular source of messages to the Council and a source of information about the Council. Any suggestions for additional content will be welcomed.
- Close co-operation continues between the Police, Ward Councillors, St Helens Council and the Parish Council.
- The Annual Report has, once again, been distributed to all homes in Rainhill.

Mrs J. Speakman suggested that, as so much went on the village, the Annual Report might contain a list of events taking place and this was noted by the Chair.

3. The Clerk briefly presented the draft accounts for 2013/14 to the meeting:
 - The Parish Council is in a healthy state financially and is conforming to all statutory requirements and national association guidelines.
 - The 'Income' total for the year was higher than in 2012/13 despite the income from the Precept being lower. However the components making up the increased income were mainly 'on-off' and could not be considered ongoing income sources.
 - 'Expenditure' showed a significant decrease compared with 2012/13 and this was due largely to a large spend on a number of Environmental Schemes' in 2012/13 including the Houghton Street Refurbishment, Community Notice Boards, Christmas Illumination improvements and, the biggest cost, CCTV on Warrington Road. The increase in Public Open Spaces spending in 2013/14 was mainly due to the professional cleaning of the War Memorial and also significant tree works on the same site.
 - In the final section the increased 'Cumulative Fund Balance' reflects the fact that income comfortably exceeded expenditure in 2012/13.

Mr M. Walker asked why the brought forward figure for 2013/14 did not match the carried forward figure for 2012/13. The Clerk indicated this was due to a write-off of VAT which had been claimed but was not refundable according to HMRC rules and is shown in Balance Sheet section of the full accounts.

4. Mrs J. Speakman gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Women's Institute indicating it had been a good year for the W.I. and that donations and proceeds of various fund-raising events had allowed them to make contributions to a number of

charities, the main donations being made to North West Air Ambulance and the CMN Baby Charity. They now also have a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

5. Mrs A. Slater spoke on behalf of the Civic Society and specifically about two initiatives. Mrs Slater talked first about 'Rainhill Remembered' advising meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month and inviting everyone to take part. She also added that a local calendar they had produced was sold out and had produced a healthy profit. Mrs Slater then talked about an exhibition planned for September to commemorate the centenary of WW1, the contributions being offered and wonderful stories about Rainhill at that time. All help will be welcomed and it is hoped that local schools will also be actively involved.
6. Mr C. Tigwell gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Railway and Heritage Society including:
 - Usual programme of speakers has gone down well at meetings
 - The interest taken in the Skew Bridge work has shown results with the most recent alterations being much better than what was originally in place and with the opportunity having been taken to use the scaffolding already in place to help clear away unwanted vegetation
 - A film of the Rocket 150 celebrations is now on disc and so preserved for the future
 - A trip to Whitby and the North Yorkshire Moors being very popular
 - As promised a tree was planted in the 'Riverside Triangle' in memory of Gordon Jamieson and a formal event is being arranged
 - Frustration at the lack of interest from schools to offers of visits offered on the Rainhill Trials.
7. PCSO Wise, Merseyside Police, gave a brief report including a breakdown of crime figures supplied to him by Sgt Barcroft.

As this year the Police 'Have Your Say' meeting was combined into the Annual Parish Meeting any issues regarding policing were then invited:

- Mrs H. Winstanley spoke about the problems caused by parking when football matches were being played on Council pitches. PCSO Wise advised they were keeping an eye on the situation.
- Cllr S. Glover was aware of the concern regarding the increase in burglaries and advised that there are plans to install CCTV at an appropriate point between the village and the Junction 7 roundabout. This should help as this quick route out was being followed by vehicles involved in crime.
- Cllr Heydon was concerned that the figures for violent crime had increased and that this seemed to be against the national trend. PCSO Wise indicated this may partly be due to the way in which crime is recorded and some incidents might otherwise have been categorised differently, e.g. as ASBO.
- In response to queries by Cllr Wood, PCSO Wise advised that 'Have Your Say' meetings would only be taking place every 3 months instead of the previous monthly meetings and that the next one is on 23rd July. With regard to staffing levels he advised that PCSO Dearing and he were regularly on duty in Rainhill at the moment but, otherwise, the future of local staffing was currently unknown. New PCSOs were being recruited but he did not know how these would be deployed. However the Central Neighbourhood Support

Unit will be detecting 'spikes' and adjusting the deployment of staff to districts accordingly.

- Cllr S. Glover was concerned that the change in shift patterns has seen PCSOs finishing at 10pm and asked how rowdy behaviour and other nuisance crimes would be handled after this time especially with lighter nights. PCSO Wise advised that the police will still be responding but that this would not be PCSOs.
- Cllr Moore commented that the service would obviously not be as good, not because the police are not working as hard but because of financial restraints. Mrs C. Scott asked whether the reason for less staff was just financial constraints and PCSO Wise confirmed this was the case. Cllr S. Glover advised that St Helens Council and Knowsley Council had part-funded PCSOs in the past but could no longer afford to do so. Cllr Long added that the Police and Crime Commissioner had met with the Parish Council and had understood the concerns of the Council regarding the impact of cuts on local policing.
- Cllr Moore repeated the advice of his local Neighbourhood Watch to "stay vigilant" in the face of opportunist crime.
- PCSO Wise then asked about priorities and it was agreed that Rainhill Park will remain a priority until July. Cllr S. Glover added that Martin Close has been a similar hot spot and should not be overlooked.
- Mrs C. Scott commented that seeing the presence of police on the streets is absolutely valuable. PCSO Wise agreed and said that 80% of shifts are spent on the beat.

8. The Chair introduced the Open Forum section:

- Mrs J. Speakman suggested that, as so much went on the village, the Annual Report might contain a list of events taking place and this was noted by the Chair.
- Mrs J. Speakman complained about the poor bin collection service including that when the street was not full of bins (due to inconsistent collections) it was full of waste. Cllr Lynch said he would raise the problem with St Helens Council and make sure it is treated as a 'hot spot'. However he added that the current system will be staying in place but it must get better. He suggested that residents must keep reporting incidents to St Helens Council so that problems continue to be highlighted and addressed. Cllr S. Glover advised that a number of new multi-recycling vehicles were being purchased and that this would help improve the situation. Mr M. Pickett reported that the system seemed to be working well in Mooreway and so the problem may just be in certain areas. Mr M. Pickett could not understand why all bins had to be put out every time and that he only put out ones worth emptying. Cllr S. Glover reported that if the 'official' advice had indicated all bins must be put out every time then it was wrong and Cllr Lynch said he would pass that comment on. Mr C. Tigwell also commented on a bin problem but said that, when reported, someone had responded and remedied the issue quickly although the small white van used seemed to be unsuitable for the job. Cllr Lynch reiterated that where problems are reported they do get fixed and re-emphasised the need to keep reporting problems to help the situation improve.
- Mrs A. Slater commented that the work done on the War Memorial had resulted in it looking much better and suggested that the smaller war memorial within St Ann's Churchyard should be cleaned. As she was aware of earlier

discussions that had already taken place regarding the possible cleaning of the St Ann's Churchyard memorial it was agreed that this matter would be pursued outside of the meeting.

- Mrs A. Slater enquired about the long-term maintenance of the proposed Eco Garden in Exchange Place and was concerned that it did not deteriorate into the same condition as the corner garden by Skew Bridge. Cllr Heydon gave an update on the Skew Bridge garden which continues to be owned by Riverside. He confirmed that Riverside had indicated they wished to continue maintaining that garden. A meeting which had previously been arranged between the Parish Council and Riverside had to be postponed but had now been rearranged for 12th May. Cllr S. Glover advised that the Rainhill ECO community group were made up of dedicated people and their plans definitely included the long-term maintenance of the Exchange Place Eco Garden. He added that there has also been a commitment from day 1 that the garden would not just be a place for relaxation but also an educational area for the children of the borough and not just Rainhill children. So there is an ongoing commitment from more than one area and includes the Parish Council which continues to own the land.

9. Mr C Tigwell gave a vote of thanks for the work of the Parish Council and the voluntary efforts of the Councillors on behalf of residents.

10. Being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.58 pm.

Chair, Rainhill Parish Council
12th May 2014