

Rainhill Annual Parish Meeting
22nd April 2015
Held at Rainhill Village Hall

Present Cllrs: B. Almond, J. DeAsha, M. Donovan, J. Doyle, S. Glover, L. Glover, B. Heydon, D. Long, C. Moore, W. Wood, Superintendent Louise Harrison, PCSO J. Williams (Merseyside Police), Mike Berry (Police & Crime Commissioner's Office) and 17 residents.

Apologies received from Cllr Grunewald

1. The Chair, Cllr B. Heydon, 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:
 - This year saw a change in personnel. Malcolm Paton, who had been clerk for 5 years retired to the Lake District and thanks were given for his dedicated service and excellent work. Gillian Pinder is now in this position.
 - 2014 marked the 100th year anniversary of the start of WW1. The Civic Society organised an excellent Exhibition and additional Parish Council funds were committed to ensuring the War Memorial was looking its best. A working group has been established to investigate an informal twinning arrangement with the French town of Latour-en-Woevre, in memory of 2nd Lt Jones, a resident of Rainhill who was killed in action in a plane crash during the First World War. A letter of thanks was sent to the Mayor of the Town for the respect shown to Lt Jones. Further, contact is being made with Market Weighton which was the home town of the second officer killed in the plane crash, Lt Hickes.
 - Following consultation on the closure of the Dane Court Cop Shop, the Parish Council had worked with the Police to agree the first ever Community/Police Compact to ensure a safer more secure Rainhill. The Parish Council secured a continued Police drop-in facility at the 4F Centre together with more structured communications.
 - The Parish Council continues to help the hard-working members that run this Village Hall by contributing towards the hall running costs. The Parish Council will fund the provision of a defibrillator, discussions are ongoing into its exact positioning.
 - We are working with the Railway & Heritage Society to celebrate the 200 year anniversary of the Rainhill Trials, ensuring that Rainhill gets the recognition it deserves as the birthplace of the railway.
 - An Armed Forces Community Covenant has been drawn up to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Rainhill and make it easier to access the help and support available. This complements the National Covenant.
 - 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 has had to take on extra responsibility for the maintenance of the facilities due to cut backs at St.Helens, including health & safety tests for Legionella.

- Tribute was paid to the hard work of the volunteers who tend the garden at Rainhill railway station.
 - Rainhill Music Festival goes from strength to strength, with almost 100 applications received for adjudications across five sections. It was a pleasure to present top prize to flautist Megan Simpson, together with additional prizes and trophies being sponsored by the Parish Council.
 - Finally the Annual Report has, once again, been distributed to all homes in Rainhill.
3. The Clerk briefly presented the draft accounts for 2014/15 to the meeting:
- The Parish Council is in a healthy state financially and is conforming to all statutory requirements and national association guidelines.
 - Total Income for 2014/15 was just over £50,000 which is £3,000 less than the previous year. Whilst there had been a marginal annual increase in the money received through the precept, this has been offset by a reduction in other income, where money received in previous years had been one-off's. The current level of income is stable and should not be subject to downward fluctuations.
 - 'Expenditure' showed a decrease of £400 at just over £50,000. Expenses on churchyard maintenance had now ceased, but there had been extra spending on maintenance of the war memorial together with a grant to the 4F Centre. There had also been more spending on environmental improvements including seeding of wildflowers along the highways.
 - Overall in 2014/15 expenditure exceeded income by only £51.99. Following a budgeting exercise this year's precept has been set at £53,800.

Mr Bennett asked if figures were available for the Village Hall accounts. Unfortunately they were not, but copies could be obtained from the Village Hall Management Committee. Residents expressed that the Village Hall was not being used to its full capacity, this was due to a lack of permanent staff. The date of the Village Hall Annual General Meeting was requested and will be added to the Parish Council's web site for information.

Mr Webber questioned the terms 'S.137' and '4F' Centre. It was explained that S.137 referred to the section of the Local Govt Act that permits councils to spend money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure e.g. Donations. The location of the 4F Centre was explained.

4. Neighbourhood Superintendent Louise Harrison gave a report on Policing on behalf of Chief Superintendent Julie Cook.
- Crime statistics showed a reduction in robbery, none reported for either personal or business, and burglary which had seen five less reported cases.
 - The cases of burglary reported had been opportunist attacks which could be prevented with more diligence to locking doors.
 - The drop in facility had not been well attended, either at the 4F Centre or previously at the Library. Posters publicising the facility had yet to be reprinted.
 - The lease on Dane Court Cop Shop was in abeyance, a definite position on this would be provided in due course.

Cllr De'Asha expressed disappointment at the closure of the Cop Shop facility, Rainhill residents would continue to pay toward the Police service without having an active Police presence, and were the only community to lose it's facility. This was acknowledged by Louise Harrison but, due to unprecedented cuts, was necessary.

Cllr Long indicated that following the announcement of the loss of the Cop Shop the Parish Council had arranged the public meeting, attended by the Police and Crime Commissioner and negotiated a Community/Police Compact to forge stronger links with the Police and ensure Rainhill is not forgotten.

Mrs J Speakman expressed disappointment that the efforts made to increase security in Rainhill had been repaid with cuts to the Police Service.

Mike Berry thanked the Parish Council for their help and support. Louise Harrison agreed, indicating that the Police rely on the support and intelligence of local residents in fighting crime.

Cllr Heydon thanked the Police for their attendance.

5. Mrs A. Davy spoke on behalf of the Civic Society indicating that this had been a good year, where membership had increased and a successful programme of events had been completed. Notably, the WW1 Exhibition had many compliments, Rainhill in Bloom had more entrants than ever, and Rainhill Remembered meetings had generated great community involvement and links with other organisations. Thanks were expressed to contributions from other organisations including the Parish Council for donations and the Rose Bowl award for the winner of Rainhill in Bloom. The Civic Society are proud to have contributed to the establishment of the Eco Garden and look forward to another year of community cooperation and development.
6. Cllr S Glover gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Eco Group. Previously the site had been neglected and was reclaimed by the Parish Council who took possession 15 years ago. When ownership was established an initiative to enhance the land was commenced. Funding from Mersey Waste and Cory was secured with the help of St. Helens Council Officer, Joanne Jones, whose dedication was acknowledged. A group of volunteers took on the project, their dedication has been admirable. The garden was completed and opened last year and will be self-financing through fundraising events. The aim is that everyone should utilise the garden, including schools for educational events. Further volunteers were always welcomed!
7. Ruth Proffitt spoke on behalf of Kendrick's Cross Women's Institute. Membership was around 80, with an average attendance of 76, the majority of whom were Rainhill residents. The WI aimed to inspire women to do whatever they want to do. The organisation also has clout with the Govt and serves on several committees. This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the movement. Kendrick's Cross WI support many causes and charity work and give all funds raised back to charities, both locally and abroad. Current projects include knitted Teddies for Tragedies, the donation of 10 knitted blankets to the Red Cross, providing clean water to families in Uganda and clothes for 'Fish & Chip' babies. They enjoy a full programme of events including trips, speakers and the Annual Council meeting in Southport, whilst also providing help and support to the sick, following the traditions of the WI movement.
8. Cllr Heydon gave a brief report on the Rainhill Music Festival which is now in its 5th year. Together with presenting the overall prize to Megan Simpson, Cllr Heydon had attended many of the adjudication sessions and had marvelled at the high standard through the whole age range. The Parish Council would

continue to support RMF but have had to place a financial cap on its contribution. RMF was excellent for the advancement of the arts in Rainhill.

9. Peter Reeve spoke on behalf of Rainhill Probus. This year was the 50th Anniversary of a movement, that starting in Welwyn Garden City, to provide fellowship for business men approaching retirement. The group are part of the wider Rotary Club Organisation. Rainhill Probus amalgamated with Prescott Probus in 2012, and now has 58 members. The group host a monthly luncheon club, invite guest speakers and organise trips (where wives are also welcome!), ladies are also invited to dine 3 times a year. A magazine promoting the movement was provided and circulated.
 10. Gordon Webber gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Rotary Club. The group form part of the world wide Rotary Organisation. Activities this year have included: help with the Rainhill Music Festival – providing funding and prizes and also marshalling the car parking; Christmas Sleigh – raising funding and community spirit; helping with the Rainhill Gala; and hosting Rainhill's Beer Festival. The Rotary Club have also been active in providing defibrillators in many village locations including the Coop (though this might be moved to the Post Office), Longtons Lane and St. Ann's School and to Rainhill United football team. Grants are provided to both individuals and to organisations through their Dragon's Den Initiative and have included funding for the garden at Rainhill Railway Station. Funding has been provided to schools abroad to provide shoes for children in Africa. If anyone knows of a good cause in need of funding the Rotary Committee will considered it. The Beer Festival now has a permanent home in the Victoria Hotel.
 - R. Proffitt felt that the provision of a defibrillator in the Village Hall should continue to be pursued. Cllr Heydon confirmed that once a suitable location had been identified this would be provided. Cllrs Donovan and Doyle both emphasised the importance of immediate availability of a defibrillator in an emergency situation. Support was expressed for the provision of an additional defibrillator.
 11. Mr C. Tigwell gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Railway and Heritage Society including:
 - The Society's principle function as custodians of the Rainhill Trials Museum
 - Usual programme of speakers has gone down well at meetings
 - The annual trip to Whitby had been tainted by the use of a diesel train but had still been enjoyable.
 - Continued efforts to interest schools of Rainhill in the significance of the birthplace of the trials, which were now being pursued with the support of the Parish Council. Information packs were available to those interested.
 - Events to mark the celebration of Rocket 200 in 2030, with celebrations planned for the 190th Anniversary in 2019. Rainhill did not want to be overshadowed by events surrounding the Stockton to Darlington celebration.
 - Whit bank holiday weekend has been selected as a date to mark the planned celebrations, which would emphasise the importance of events in Rainhill to the Concept of Speed
 - An appeal was made to all organisations to contribute to the celebrations.
- Cllr Long reiterated the importance of the 2019/2029 celebrations. Rainhill is custodian of a place in history and need to maintain this legacy by ensuring it is passed on to future generations. Due to financial restrictions the anniversary would start to be marked by low key events, building to significant celebrations in 2019/2029.

Clarification was sought on the significance of the two dates which were confirmed to be the 190th and 200th anniversary of the Trials followed by the opening of the Liverpool to Manchester railway line the following year.

12. Cllr Moore presented a report provided by Maria Heaton on behalf of the Village Hall Management Committee. Maria is Chair of the Management Group and had undertaken a review of the policies and practices in operation.

- The VH is a charitable organisation
- Office hours, which were previously Mon-Thurs 10-2pm, will now be more flexible
- The number of users has increased, there had been no increase in the rental rate this year, to remain competitive with other providers.
- The VH had benefitted from a 100% rate discount this year, but this was not guaranteed to be repeated.
- The Hall was used by a variety of groups including: Community Service Groups - Police, Blood Donors, Parish Council; Sport/Health – Fit Forever, Keep Fit Groups, Bowls, Ballroom Dancing; Recreational/Fine Arts – Performance groups, Crafts, Women’s Institutes (both), and Townswomen’s Guild.
- Thanks were expressed for the grant received and the offer of a defibrillator.
- The Hall relies on many volunteers to remain operational.
- Thanks were expressed to Eric Rothwell, who retired this year, his contribution will be greatly missed.
- Greater responsibility now fell onto users to ensure locking and alarm procedures were followed correctly. If the current system does not work, the Hall may have to close.
- A treasurer is needed for the current year and if anyone knows a willing volunteer they should contact Maria.

13. Edna North spoke on behalf of Rainhill Women’s Institute indicating they are proud to be ongoing in Rainhill upholding the traditions of the WI, including the commencement of meetings with Jerusalem and closure with the Queen. This year marks the 35th anniversary. When they formed in 1980 they had 100 members and a waiting list. This spurred the formation of Kendrick’s Cross WI, but close connections are maintained, with joint Christmas and Gala work. Work this year has included:

- Flowerbeds in St. Ann’s Church grounds, thanks were given to Sandra
- Help to a pupil of Rainhill High planning travel aboard
- Decorating the Village Hall Christmas Tree.

As it is the 100yr anniversary of the WI movement several members were attending a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 2/6/15. This year’s national AGM would be held in the Albert Hall and the Queen and Princess Royal would be in attendance.

14. Mrs J. Speakman gave a report on behalf of Rainhill Townswomen’s Guild. The Guild held 9 meetings a year in the Millennium Centre. Funding raising this year had raised £2,700 which had been distributed to local charities. Joan Crank for Alzheimer’s Society had presented a talk at one of the meeting. This year is the 65th anniversary since the group were founded at the Ex-servicemen’s Club, this would be marked by celebrations and a commitment to carry on the good work.

Cllr Heydon indicated these organisations are the lifeblood of Rainhill and offered thanks to all organisations on behalf of the Parish Councillors.

15. The Chair introduced the Open Forum section:

- Mrs Wilkinson raised the issue of the work undertaken at the Railway station which was an eyesore and should be removed. Photographs were provided of hardboard attached to the internal bridges. It was agreed that this was a disgrace and would be investigated further with Network Rail.
- Mr P Elson spoke on behalf of the Rainhill Gala Committee in requesting the Parish Council call a public meeting on the future of Loyola Hall. The site is being offered for sale and the owners, the Jesuits, had been approached to sell the site to the community. This opportunity would not be available indefinitely and action was needed. A public appeal was needed to raise the funds necessary and Parish Council support was imperative. It was agreed that the issue would be discussed at the next meeting of the Parish Council in May, though no commitment could be made that a community buy out could be achieved. Other organisations voiced their support for investigating the possibility.
- Mr Bennett questioned why adequate bus shelters were not provided in the centre of the village. The Parish Council offered to take this up with Merseytravel.
- Mr Kinder complained that the road surface in Derwent Close was in need of repair. Works had been undertaken on all other roads with the exclusion of Derwent. Kerbs had been re-laid but the road surface was a disgrace. Cllr De'Asha offered to take this up with the appropriate officer at St.Helens Council.
- Mrs Speakman asked if the Parish Council were aware of the theft of coping stones along the sandstone wall on Rainhill Road. The Police indicated that they were aware of the theft but attacks continued. The Parish Council will approach St.Helens Councils to position their roving camera in the vicinity.
- Clarification on the population of Rainhill was sought and confirmed to be around 12,000.
- Mrs North raised concern that the convenience store on Dunbeath Avenue proposed to change its hours of operation. The Parish Council are notified of all planning application but had not received any such notification. It was confirmed that permission would only be required for a change to the hours if the original consent was subject to a condition restricting them.
- Mrs Speakman asked if any news was available on the ownership of the old Labour Club. It was confirmed that the site was in private ownership and was still operational, there was no news of a change in this status.

16. Cllr Heydon announced that two Parish Councillors were to stand down this year: Thanks were offered Cllr Lynch for his 4 years of service. Cllr John Kelly's involvement in Parish Council work commenced when, as a resident, he became concerned over the future of the Youth Club. He became a member and has provided dedicated service ever since. Sincere thanks were expressed for his contribution to life within Rainhill over many, many years.

17. 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.

18. Being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9.32 pm.