

CRONTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

It has been a busy year which has brought us many successes coupled with some challenges, but on the whole, we should be proud of our efforts and positive contributions to village life.

This financial year we have been able to reduce the percentage increase of the precept, despite some costs continuing to rise, whilst looking to maintain and enhance value we give to the village. Knowsley Council has once again been awarded the Pasture Maintenance Contract for the current year.

The Council has co-opted and welcomed 2 new Councillors, namely Simon Boyd and more recently Helen Wilde, to replace retiring Councillors, Will Cook and David Thomas, who we thank for their hard work and services to the village over many years. It is always good to benefit from new additions to the Council to bring fresh viewpoints and ideas. We also recently welcomed Sara Boyd as our new Clerk/RFO, who has already worked hard to improve our processes and standards.

A refurbishment of the Toilet/Washroom area of the Parish Council office was funded by the Unicorn Inn as a community initiative and completed by a local contractor. We hope to build on this by improving the décor in the main room to make it more appealing for users. As well as this being our meeting place for Council meetings, the space also allows free use to a Craft Group and opens for a Book Exchange and social session.

We have achieved a lot in terms of community events during the year. Last June we held a D-Day commemoration which involved local cadet groups, and in November our usual Remembrance Sunday service. At the well-attended Christmas Service, supported by the 2 village schools and the Holy Family Church, we were able to support Widnes Food Bank Charity with a top up to their collection at the service. Cronton Garden Centre assisted us with erecting of the village Christmas Tree.

A grant was given by the Parish Council to a group of volunteers who organised a Christmas party with a free meal and entertainment for 65 of our local senior citizens, which was enjoyed by all. The Parish Council will once again be offering Grants to local community organisations, and we encourage applications.

We have seen the Community Centre come under new management and Cllr Gordon Thomas is now the Parish Council representative on their committee. The response from many people wishing to volunteer has been heartening and we hope this positivity will continue. The Cronton Gala and Events team is also once again holding the Gala in September. It is great to see all our community groups working hard together to enhance the activities available to our residents and the wider community.

The Parish Council recently organised and put on a VE Day celebration, marking 80 years since the liberation of Europe. This event was popular and provided a pleasant evening of entertainment and coming together at the Pasture.

We have again agreed to fund a free bus service (also part funded by Knowsley Council) to run between the village and the Knowsley flower Show site at Court Hey Park in August. This will allow more people to access this wonderful local event, which can otherwise be a challenge with car parking being costly and difficult, or for people who don't have cars. This was well used last year,

and we hope that this will continue this year. We also benefitted from several Knowsley Park Ranger activities through the year, including a Bat Walk and some children's holiday activity sessions.

We continue to secure services from the Living Well bus facility who have provided free wellness checks and vaccinations to residents.

The Pasture path has allowed visitors to use the area throughout the year. It does however continue to suffer from damage after heavy rainfall, for which we are awaiting repair and are seeking assistance from Knowsley Council, along with opportunities for funding to help improve the site. Some additional drainage pipes were installed which has helped somewhat.

Litter, dog fouling and fly tipping continue to blight our village, and we have engaged with Knowsley Council following our last organised litter pick in February to request inclusion in their 'Action Day's' which look at these issues. We hope to bring their team to Cronton in the near future. Potholes frequently occur which we rely upon Knowsley Council to rectify, this can often take some time.

Speeding and poor parking also continues to be an issue around several key areas of the village – again we have engaged with Knowsley Council to bring their attention to this and ask that they support us to improve the situation. Whilst there have been parking warden visits on occasion to look at parking around the schools, poor parking often continues.

Crime as a whole continues to be low, with some isolated incidents noted, mostly thefts eg bicycles. The Pasture has remained mostly anti-social behaviour free, however Pex Hill has had a number of reported incidents. We continue to liaise with the Police as much as possible and whilst there are still some concerns around communication (being told we should contact Cheshire Police) we do have some policing support through a local Police Officer who has attended meetings where possible. Our local PCSO also recently provided a free bike marking session to help to identify bikes in the event of a theft.

Currently, the Chapel Lane housing development remains the biggest concern to our residents. Councillors continue to liaise with the Planning Department at Knowsley Council to understand the plans and present our objections to the exit onto Chapel Lane, which we view as a very dangerous location for this exit. At the time of writing, we understand that Knowsley Council are still not in receipt of all of the traffic survey information needed to enable them to make a decision either way.

The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme initiative introduced in 2021 has unfortunately not been able to progress further despite a lot of work being put in by volunteers in the earlier years. This is mainly down to time constraints of the 3 vetted volunteers and a lack of new volunteers coming forward to spread the workload.

We await further information on the Multi-user path project which has stalled with some outstanding issues.

I would like to thank all of the Councillors and Clerk who have contributed to making improvements in our village. I look forward to working with you all again in the coming year.

Rosanne Hayes - Chair
May 2025