** COPPULL PARISH COUNCIL**

 **ANNUAL REPORT**

1. April 2021 to 31 March 2022
2. **THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Members of the Parish Council elected Councillor Michael Atherton as Chairman of the Parish Council for the eighth consecutive year and Councillor Marjorie Parkinson as Vice-Chair, for the third year. Eleven meetings of the council were held in 2022/22 and quarterly meetings of Management & Finance committee. Meetings from May 2021 returned to normal, face to face meetings, as restrictions in regard to Covid-19 were relaxed.

At the end of March 2022, the Parish Council consisted of the following Councillors and the Clerk:

Michael Atherton Matthew Crook Marjorie Parkinson

Nora Ball Paul Eastham Maggie Peel-Impey

Pauline Cobham Elaine Jones Lynne Moores

Neil Coggins Steve Holgate Paul Taylor

Janette Colecliffe Sheila Makin Ashley Whittaker

Sue Edwards (Clerk)

All Parish Councillors have been elected uncontested, but are essentially volunteers who work for the residents of the village and strive to keep the area clean, tidy and a pleasant place for all to live and work. They do not get paid for this role. The Parish Council is non-political. Elections are held every four years and the next elections are in May 2023.

**Allowances:** Parish Councillors for many years previously have agreed to forgo any expenses, with the exception of mileage costs if they are doing work on behalf of the Parish Council – but not for travelling to and from the Parish Council office/meeting room. They can all be issued with one printer cartridge and one ream of paper per year, if requested. This is reviewed at the Annual General Meeting.

**Employees:** The Parish Council continues to employ the Clerk, one full-time and two-part time Lengthsmen. The gardener works on a self-employed basis and a self-employed handy-man/joiner has been utilised this year to catch up on repairs to play areas, the Leisure Centre and the Village Hall.

**FINANCES:**

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** The total fund now stands at £214,628.41. Another bank account has been opened and £50,000 deposited into it. Together with the £85,000 in the other two accounts, this represents the CIL money received which is earmarked for the building of a new Village Hall. The Parish Council has five years to spend this money from receipt of each funding amount. The initial amount of funding was received in 2018.

**Financial Statement:**  This is subject to audit –an independent internal auditor usually audits the accounts twice per year, but was unable to undertake the six month audit due to Covid 19. The external auditor, appointed by the Audit Commission, undertakes a final audit at the end of the financial year. The Auditor’s appointed are PPK Littlejohn.

The Parish Council has also put in place internal checks in accordance with Financial Rules and Regulations. A Parish Councillor undertakes a complete check of all payments and receipts against invoices issued, on a quarterly basis. This was undertaken for the first six months, but due to illness the check for the last six months has not been undertaken. The Internal Auditor to be made aware of this.

Due to Covid 19 the amount which can be spent under the delegated powers of the Clerk, Chair and Vice-Chair was raised from £500 to £1,000 and it was resolved to continue with this delegation to enable the smooth running of the council for the foreseeable future.

**Newsletter:** The A5 size newsletter has continued to be produced quarterly during this financial year, although there have been problems with printing and delivery companies. It is hoped that this situation will be resolved early next year.

**Christmas lights:** Some lights were again obtained this year, mostly to replace broken ones. An additional Merry Christmas lit banner was also obtained, but unfortunately arrived too late to be put up. There was a problem with supply of lights this year and this effected the timing of putting up the lights. It was resolved to start much earlier next year, with the hopes of having a proper “Switch on” event. The up-lighting of the soldier in the Memorial Garden still remains throughout the year, at the request of residents.

**Precept:** The precept was set at £110,330.00 for 2022/23 – this represents an increase of approximately 8% on last year’s precept, which was kept below the previous precept to try and help combat the effect that Covid had on people’s finances. However, to provide the same level of service the precept had to be raised, as everything has been subject to significant increases. The cost of this increase per resident is only £2.86 per year, for households on a Band D rate.

**Village Hall:** Unfortunately, due to Covid, Little Lamb’s Pre-school could not continue and it was proving difficult to also find a builder for the new build. At the end of March 2022, three quotes had been obtained from local builders and these will be considered by the Parish Council in the new financial year.

**Website/Facebook:** There is now a separate page for the Neighbourhood Plan on the website and the Clerk updates this, together with adding agendas and minutes for the meetings. It will take some time for the website to become fully up to date with all the necessary requirements for a Parish Council, as it is extremely time consuming. At the present time, two of the Parish Councillors put information from the Parish Council onto a community page on Facebook for the Parish council.

1. **CHORLEY COUNCIL**

Chorley Council look after the town centre and surrounding Chorley areas, plus 23 parishes in conjunction with the relevant Parish Councils. Chorley Council is responsible for council tax, waste collection, fly tipping, tree work, some bus shelters, housing, planning, environment, licences …. to name just a few. More information is on their website www.chorley.gov.uk.

**Designated Public Protection Order (DPPO):** This is around the Leisure Centre, Library, Memorial Garden and a few roads around this area continue to be under this order, which gives Chorley Council and the Police power to confiscate alcohol (no alcohol area) and to help combat anti-social behaviour. This has recently been approved to carry on in this area and is really needed as anti-social behaviour on the Leisure Park continues, with litter, broken glass and dog fouling. Police have been informed.

**Local Plan:** A draft Local Plan is being produced by Chorley Council, to replace the current one which is the near its end. When Coppull’s Neighbourhood Plan is produced, it will run alongside Chorley Council’s Local Plan.

1. **COMMUNITY**

**Allotments:** This is the seventh year for the Parish Council Allotments and they continue to be extremely popular with local residents. Six smaller plots were installed on some of the waste ground and these have all been filled. The Allotments have their own Association, providing help and advice, insurance, etc. and they have also been successful in obtaining grants to further improve their open space. Many plots become available during the year due to people being unable to continue to work them. A waiting list is held by the Allotment Association and to date none of the plots have remained empty.

**A1 Fitness:** A1 Fitness opened again as soon as they were allowed regarding the Coronovirus restrictions.

**Defibrillators:** The Leisure Centre holds an automatic defibrillator and the Conservative Club also has one that is available at all times for public use. A list of other defibrillators in Coppull can be found in the Parish Council newsletter.

**Dog Fouling:** This also continues to be a big problem in the village, especially during the winter months. There are certain “problem” areas in the village and the Dog Warden has been asked to monitor these. The main concern is people allowing their dogs into the gated off children’s play areas.

**Flowerpot Festival:** This event, organised by Marie Forrest, was a resounding success and there were some outstanding displays. The Parish Council to continue to support this event, which is hoped will continue each year.

**Food Bank:** A food bank scheme has recently been opened up from The Methodist Church Hall. This is a scheme to allow residents to purchase food at very low cost, food which would otherwise be wasted. The scheme has been arranged through Chorley Buddies.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** This plan is now well underway, with a survey which has just been circulated around the village and on line.

**Remembrance Day Parade:** Unfortunately, the parade could not go ahead in 2021, again due to the pandemic. Dignitaries attended outside the church to lay wreaths and a small blessing was held outside.

1. **GARDENS/FLOWER BEDS**

**Berry’s Garden (Chapel Lane), Jubilee Garden (Spendmore Lane), Memorial Garden (Spendmore Lane) and Springfield Leisure Park.** All continue to be maintained by the Parish Council, in conjunction with Bill Bailey (Volunteer Memorial Garden) and George Evans (PC Gardener), who has now taken over the gardening contract as well. New equipment including a ride-on mower, a hand-held mower, strimmer, scarifier and hedge cutter/pruning attachment. A new sign has been obtained for the Jubilee Garden, which was part of the funding given from Chorley Council.

**New Road Flower Beds and beds near Spendmore Lane Bridge: Wheatsheaf Island, Birkacre Brow /** **Seats/Flower Beds, A49 at both boundaries, Jolly Tar Lane bed, small bed near Police Station and beds on Chapel Lane at the old school:**  Again, these are all maintained by the Parish Council, either through the above mentioned, or on contract with Chorley Council, together with volunteers.

**Rivington View Nursery** sponsors a flower bed on Preston Road and also a bed on the Berry Garden. The **Wheatsheaf Hotel** sponsors the island. Olga has now retired from volunteering, but she leaves behind a legacy of German Lane being clean and well maintained.

Thanks go to all the volunteers and sponsors for helping to make Coppull a nicer place to live and work **and the Parish Council will continually strive to make improvements in the future.**

1. **LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

LCC is responsible for education, social care and highway matters, to name but a few. More information can be obtained from their website. They continue to look after the Chisnall Colliery Site.

Highways:

* There are still numerous concerns in regard to the mini-roundabout at the Clancutt Lane junction with Spendmore Lane and also with the mini roundabout at The Grange junction with Spendmore Lane. LCC is aware of the problems.
* Parking illegally or just irresponsibly is still a concern throughout the village. The Parish Council passes on any concerns to the Police, who have the authority to deal with this problem.
* Speeding vehicles is also still a concern throughout the village. Any complaints received are either passed on to the Police or to Highways at LCC, as these are the only authorities who are able to deal with these matters.

**Library and Friends of Coppull Library:** The proposed project to plant up a small piece of land at the back of the library is now up and running and the Friends are going from strength to strength.

1. **NATURE RESERVES**

**Blainscough, Hic-Bibi and Yarrow Valley Park Nature Reserves:** Coppull is extremely lucky to have three nature reserves on its doorstep. They are looked after and maintained by Chorley Council and provide an abundance of wildlife, flora and fauna.

1. **PLANNING**

All planning applications are looked at by the Parish Council’s representative and comments then made to Chorley Council who make the final decision on whether or not to approve the plans. However, there have been recent applications that have been refused by Chorley Council, but then agreed on appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in London.

**Call for Sites:** This was a request for sites to meet Government targets and for all planning authorities to have a five year supply of sites available. It gave the Parish Council the opportunity to have a say on what land within the Parish is allocated towards future development. The Parish Council is proactive in keeping the green belt from future development, but understands that some land has to be put forward for housing.

1. **PLAY AREAS**

**Byron Crescent Play Area**, **Springfield Leisure Park and Tansley Avenue Play Area**: These are the play areas in the village owned and maintained by the Parish Council. They are inspected bi monthly by Chorley Council and appointed Councillors check them each month. They are also cleaned and checked each week by the Parish Council’s Lengthsman.

1. **POLICE**

A new Community Beat Manager is now in situ for Coppull and this should help in tacking anti-social behaviour, with a more prominent presence around the village.

1. **SPRINGFIELD PARK LEISURE CENTRE**

The Leisure Centre is independent of the Parish Council and is a registered charity. Unfortunately, the café did not pick up after Covid and has now closed for the foreseeable future. There are vending machines available for snacks and hot and cold drinks. The Centre now hosts a Trampoline Academy and the members are dedicated to their sport and doing well in competitions. There are also classes available for children just wanting to enjoy it and not take part in competitions, together with free running at certain times. Indoor bowling takes place during the winter months and TAAG use the facilities on a Wednesday evening. Assistant Teacher training courses have been undertaken in the café area. The café area and downstairs meeting room are available to hire.

**THE FUTURE (2022/23):**

The world is now having to come to terms with living with Covid-19. The vaccination programme doesn’t stop people from contracting it, but there are very few deaths now.

The Parish Council’s plans for the future are:

* Arranging an event at the Springfield Leisure Park to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee – the event to take place on Thursday 2 June 2022 – information to follow.
* To continue to upkeep the buildings owned by the Parish Council – the Leisure Centre, including A1 Fitness and to progress the building of the new Village Hall (plans approved and a contractor to be appointed shortly).
* To support the Neighbourhood Plan Committee in producing the plan – The survey has now gone out, the deadline for responses is the end of May 2022. Once the results are in, the Neighbourhood Plan can be progressed.
	+ - * To continue to maintain all the gardens, tubs and beds throughout the village and maintain the children’s play areas owned by the Parish Council – Springfield Park, Byron Crescent and Tansley Avenue and to make further improvements throughout the village where possible. Hanging baskets will not be obtained this year, due to a charge set by LCC to assess each lamppost for stability. Instead, the Parish Council will be looking at other ways to provide flower baskets along Spendmore Lane.
			* To continue to object to planning applications in the green belt.
* To continue to campaign against anti-social behaviour, litter, fly tipping, dog fouling and speeding in the village.
* To build on the Christmas lighting each year and to arrange a “switch on” event in conjunction with a resident who has volunteered to organise, with perhaps carol singing around the display.
* Heritage Signs throughout the village have not yet been implemented - £500 is still available for this project.

**APRIL 2022**

