

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/25

The Parish Council has held six formal meetings during the 2024/25 municipal year, with most meetings held at St David's Parish Hall, commencing at 7pm. The meeting scheduled to take place on 2 December 2024 was cancelled. Between these formal sessions, the Council has met informally on several occasions to advance council business, plan events, and progress projects efficiently. Any decisions made informally were formally ratified at the next Council meeting.

At the Annual Council meeting in May 2024, Councillor Paul Kenyon was appointed Chair of Haigh Parish Council for the 2024/25 municipal year, with Councillor Ian Parker as Vice Chair. The Council's remaining five members were Councillors Roberta Derbyshire, Jill Ingram, Marie-Clare Kenyon, Andrew McKeogh, and Andrew Wilson. Councillor Roberta Derbyshire was also appointed to represent Haigh Parish Council on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee of Wigan Council.

However, in July and September 2024, Councillors Andrew McKeogh and Roberta Derbyshire resigned from their positions. Following notification from the Election Officer that no election had been called by the electors, the resulting vacancies were filled through the Council's co-option process. After a thorough advertisement and appointment procedure, the Parish Council welcomed Councillors Catherine Croston and Kerry Whittle, with their formal acceptance of office ratified at the March 2025 Council meeting. Councillor Kerry Whittle has subsequently been appointed as the Parish Council's representative on Wigan Council's Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

In November 2024, the Council received very sad news of the unexpected passing of Parish Clerk Krystyna Pilkington. Having supported the Council for several years, Krystyna was a dedicated and capable officer, as well as a valued friend, who will be deeply missed. In commemoration, the Council observed a minute's silence at its January meeting and passed on their condolences to her widower and family.

At the beginning of the year, the Council enlisted the expertise of a Locum Clerk to help navigate the situation, appointing Dianne Scambler on a consultative basis. Recognising her contributions, the Council formally confirmed Dianne's appointment to the role on a permanent basis during its meeting in March 2025.

Over the past year, the Council has remained actively engaged in reviewing planning applications, making representations where necessary. Particular attention has been given to the progress of applications and recent planning enforcement measures concerning tent pegging events at a site on Pendlebury Lane. Additionally, the Council continues to liaise with Wigan Council to address lighting concerns at the Leyland Mill Lane site whilst remaining vigilant to any potential planning applications relating to the derelict 'Bridge 63' public house and its surrounding land.

The Council's annual Bubblefest event took place on Sunday, 7 July 2024, though attendance was 50% lower than in previous years, with fewer stalls booked and a significant reduction in net income compared to 2023. A prolonged period of wet weather and an unfavourable forecast were considered key factors contributing to the decline in turnout. However, those who attended enjoyed the event, and the reduced numbers made management more seamless. Given the absence of a substantive Clerk towards the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025, the decision was made to cancel this year's event. Further consideration will be given as to whether to proceed with the event in 2026.

On 26 September 2024, the Council hosted its Annual Awards, recognising the dedication and contributions of several individuals and groups within the Haigh community. The event served as a token of appreciation for their hard work in their respective fields. It was attended by the Mayor of Wigan Council, Councillor Debbie Parkinson, and her consort, and was a truly memorable occasion.

The Council has continued to work closely with the Canal and River Trust to enhance the canal towpath, contributing a substantial £8,000 in grant funding toward the project. The initial £4,000 was match-funded by Wigan Council, with an additional £1,000 provided by Ward Councillors. To complete the restoration and extend its reach, the Council has committed a further £4,000 grant.

This initiative, instigated by the Chair and the result of several years of dedicated effort, has delivered significant improvements for the benefit of residents. The project has been met with widespread appreciation, with many expressing their thanks and providing positive feedback on its impact.

After several discussions and a site visit with Wigan Council the overgrown footpath and blocked culverts running along the river Douglas in Haigh Country Park was finally cleared. In addition, the public footpath running along the canal on the opposite bank from the towpath between Pendlebury Lane and Sennicar Lane has been cleared at the request of Haigh Parish Council, as part of our commitment in ensuring that all the rights of way in Haigh are kept open for use by the public.

Over the year, the Council has also undertaken several other community-focused projects, including the installation of commemorative lamppost decorations for Remembrance and Christmas, lobbying for improvements to traffic management along the entry routes to Haigh Woodland Park, ongoing maintenance of the historic Haigh Windmill, the creation of improved bridleways and the organisation of a litter-picking event.

The Council continues to hold quarterly meetings with senior leaders of Wigan Council to address residents' concerns and collaborate on key local issues. At its most recent meeting, the Parish Council's role as a key stakeholder in the Haigh Hall restoration project was reaffirmed, ensuring its ability to represent residents in crucial decision-making processes related to the project.

Committed to strengthening its engagement with the community, the Council is dedicated to working closely with residents in the coming year, actively seeking ideas and suggestions to ensure its initiatives are both impactful and fiscally responsible. By fostering meaningful connections and allocating its budget effectively, the Council aims to deliver the best possible outcomes for those it serves.

As part of this commitment, the Council is preparing to launch a dedicated website to enhance communication with residents. In addition to its regular meetings and social media presence, it has also established a working group to explore new initiatives that promote collaboration with residents, community groups, and key stakeholders, ensuring meaningful engagement for the benefit of Haigh Parish.

Dianne Scambler
Clerk to Haigh Parish Council
20.05.25