

## **Chair's Speech – Little Leigh Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting**

Good evening everyone, and a very warm welcome to the **132nd Annual Parish Meeting** of Little Leigh Parish Council.

Thank you all for joining us tonight – it's always encouraging to see so many residents taking the time to come together for the good of our village. I'd especially like to thank our Ward Councillors for their continued support – in particular for funding the **large TV now in the hall** and the **new grit bin** for Hole House Lane Hill. Both have already proven very useful!

Let's take a moment to look back on what has been a truly eventful and vibrant year for Little Leigh.

### **Events & Community Spirit**

For me the highlight of the year was our Green Festival held in partnership with Little Leigh Primary School. It was a great success with over 30 stalls and activities and 250 people attending. Thanks to all the organizers, to the WI for providing refreshments, to all the stallholders, and everyone who came along

We also enjoyed **village walks**, well-attended by both residents and their dogs, and a **cycle ride through the lanes into Northwich**, promoting healthy and sustainable travel.

Thanks go to **Cllr Sharon Geary** for arranging an excellent **CPR and defibrillator training session**, which was very well received.

In September, we held a **Dog Show** in the field next to the hall. Our thanks to the **Horton family** for loaning us the field, and to **Barnyard of Anderton** for sponsoring the rosettes.

Inside the hall, we hosted a themed show: **"All Creatures Great and Small."** You might remember some of the wonderfully imaginative cakes on display – our community's creativity never fails to impress!

And of course, who could forget the **ABBA** and **Jersey Boys** tribute nights? A brilliant time was had by all – many thanks to **Cllr Sophie Littler** for organising those.

We rounded off the year in true Little Leigh tradition with **Carols Around the Tree** – a magical evening that really brought the whole village together.

### **Highways and Village Maintenance**

A sincere thank you to the councillor team who carried out a comprehensive **survey of our roads, pavements, drains, and gullies**. In particular, **Cllr Rob McSweeney**

deserves recognition for managing the project and compiling everything into a detailed spreadsheet to help us monitor responses from **CWAC Highways**.

While we are grateful for the support from Highways, there is concern in the community about how swiftly some reports are being closed – often **without action**. We will continue to press for accountability.

We've also been in **ongoing liaison with United Utilities** regarding the **bursting water main** on Hole House Lane and **persistent low water pressure** around the village. This remains a priority area for us.

Please remember – any road defects deeper than 4cm should be reported to CWAC using the **“Report It” app**. Your involvement really does help keep the village safer.

## **Planning and Development**

While **LLPC can comment on planning applications**, it's important to remember that **CWAC is the final decision-maker**.

Thank you to **Cllr King**, who spoke out in opposition to the **Winnington Solar Park application**, which was thankfully **refused by CWAC's Planning Committee**. However, the developers have **appealed the decision**, and a planning inspector will review the case in **July**. If that appeal is successful, we may face a significant increase in **HGV traffic on Runcorn Road**.

We also want to **acknowledge the tragic fatal accident** that occurred on **Runcorn Road in July**. Our thoughts remain with the family and all affected.

We're still hopeful that the **Hollybush Pub** will one day reopen and become a cherished part of our community once again.

## **Acknowledgements and Thanks**

None of this would be possible without our amazing **volunteers**. Whether it's delivering **The Grapevine**, supporting events, or helping maintain the village, your contribution is invaluable.

Thank you to **Cllr Jenny Jones**, who has led the **Village Hall Management Committee** with energy and dedication – you'll be hearing more from Jenny later in the agenda.

Thanks to Russ and Elaine who have diligently look after our planters over the past few years and thanks to the WI who have kindly taken over this responsibility.

And finally, thanks to **Cllr Stuart Cook**, who led the development of the **Little Leigh Strategic Plan Survey**. I'm looking forward to his presentation shortly, and to seeing how we can use your feedback to shape the future of our village.

Thanks to careful budgeting, our **finances remain strong**, so we are in a position to act on some of the brilliant ideas you've shared.

I also want to share some news that is bittersweet for us all. **Ann Brazier, our long-serving Parish Clerk, has decided to retire.**

Ann has been nothing short of exceptional in her role. She has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that our council operated **smoothly, efficiently, and – most importantly – correctly**. Her knowledge, dedication, and calm professionalism have been invaluable to us all.

On behalf of the entire council and the village, I want to offer **our heartfelt thanks** to Ann for everything she has done. We wish her all the very best in her well-earned retirement – and we sincerely hope she will remain involved in the life of the village as a participant in our forward journey.

## **Looking Ahead**

As we look ahead to our **133rd year**, our focus is firmly on **strengthening community engagement** and continuing to build a **vibrant, connected village** that we can all take pride in.

We want to ensure that every resident feels they have a voice – and a role – in shaping the future of Little Leigh. The recent **village survey** will be a key tool in helping us understand what really matters to you. The responses we receive will guide much of our strategy going forward.

But even now, we're aware of certain priorities and concerns already being raised by the community – and to address these, we're taking action.

We will be establishing a new **Community Events Committee**, dedicated to creating activities that appeal to all ages. This group will work closely with the **Village Hall Committee**, our **local school**, and wider community partners. To make this a success, we'll need volunteers – so if you're passionate about community events and want to help bring people together, we'd love to hear from you.

On the planning front, our **Planning Sub-Committee**, led by **Cllrs McSweeney and Geary**, will continue to monitor local applications and ensure residents are informed. If any contentious developments arise, they'll be holding open **planning surgeries**, giving people the chance to raise concerns directly.

**Last summer**, a fatal crash on the A553, resulted in the death of Tim Burgess and his partner was left with life-changing injuries. Our thoughts remain with their families and all those affected.

In the months since, many residents have shared their concerns about **speeding through the village**, and it's clear that this is an issue we must address.

In the year ahead, we will be working closely with our **Ward Councillor, Lynn Gibbon**, and **Highways** to review the current **50mph speed limit** on the A533. We intend to consult with residents to explore whether this can be **safely reduced to 30mph**, to better protect everyone who lives, walks, cycles, and drives here.

We will also be calling on residents to **support our preparations for the upcoming Solar Farm planning appeal**. This is a critical moment, and we need a **coordinated effort** to ensure that our community's opposition is both **heard and felt**.

The appeal is scheduled for **1st July**, and we strongly encourage as many residents as possible to **attend the hearing** and show their support.

In the coming weeks, we will be holding a **community meeting** to plan our strategy and organise our response. Your involvement will make a real difference

We'll also be engaging with residents in **other parts of the village** where there have been further **road traffic incidents linked to excessive speed**. Your voices will be crucial as we push for improvements to road safety throughout Little Leigh.

And finally, we know that **communication is key**. Many residents aren't always sure who to contact or how to stay informed. While we will continue to publish *The Grapevine*, we're also improving our **Parish Council website** and establishing a **presence on social media**. Details of how to connect with us will be displayed around the village to ensure everyone has access to updates and opportunities to get involved.

Let me close by saying how proud I am of everything we've achieved together this year. Your support, ideas, and community spirit are what make Little Leigh such a special place to live.

Thank you – and let's look forward to another fantastic year ahead.