

Astley Village Parish Council

**Annual Report 2022/23**

**Arnold Almond**

It was with great sadness that we learned that Arnold Almond, Chair of the Parish Council had passed away peacefully on Thursday 16 February 2023 surrounded by his family.

Arnold was first co-opted onto the Parish Council on 3 July 2019. He was later elected Chair of the Parish Council in May 2021 where he continued to fulfil the role up until his death.

Arnold will be greatly missed by the Parish Council and the friends/Partners he worked with as Chair of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council send its sincere condolences to Arnold’s wife Joan and his family.

**HM Queen Elizabeth II**

On behalf of the Astley Village Parish Council, representing the residents of Astley Village, the Parish Council joined the entire Nation, the Commonwealth and much of the world in mourning the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II; the Parish Council sent our heartfelt condolences to the Royal family at this difficult time.

Most of our population has never known any other Head of State during their lifetime; HM dedicated her entire life to Service to our country and has been a figurehead of National unity throughout her seventy plus years in office. She will be greatly missed.

**New Councillors Co-opted onto the Parish Council**

Councillors Eddie Murdoch and Councillor Ian Thomas were co-opted onto the Parish Council. We welcome both of them to our Parish Council as their experience will and has already been a great asset to us.

Contact details of all the Parish Councillors are available on the Parish Council website; [www.avpc.org.uk](http://www.avpc.org.uk) we are here to support and represent our village residents

**Millennium Notice Board**

The Parish Council have installed a new outdoor dual door noticeboard and steel sub frame at the corner of Chancery Road and Hallgate. Parish information will be displayed on this and on the existing noticeboard at the corner of the Community Centre including details of Parish Council Meetings, in order to keep local residents informed of Parish Council activities.

**The Chorley Flower Show, Astley Park – 29 - 31 July 2022**

For the first time in recent history Astley Village Parish Council had a Stand at the Chorley Flower Show, where Information was available regarding our Village and the plans we have for future improvements. Our Councillors were available for a face-to-face chat throughout the weekend to answer queries from residents and other visitors.

**Options to Improve Community Access at the Community Centre**

The Parish Council have supported a proposal to introduce a Community Larder and run support groups in Astley Village by St Vincent de Paul Society Chorley Buddies. The Parish Council are discussing with Chorley Borough Council options to make better use of the small meeting room at the Astley Village Community Centre during the day.

**West Way Sports Hub – Phase 2 (****New Play Area and Work to Pathways at the Site)**

The Parish Council, working with Chorley Borough Council, has agreed to contribute £35,000 towards the new play area and work to pathways at the West Way Sports Hub. Chorley Borough Council has confirmed that the tendering process is now underway for the New Play Area and Work to Pathways at the Site and the work is proposed to start in Spring 2023.

**New Finger Post Signs in the Village**

Two new finger post signs on Chancery Road have been erected. The first near the subway points to the “Village Centre”, “Astley Park” and to the new “West Way Sports Hub” and the second finger post sign on Judeland Wood points to “Astley Park”.

**Astley Village Community Garden of Reflection**

The creation of a Community Garden of Reflection in the village is now complete. A solid “Unknown Tommy Statue” has been purchased with “A Time to Reflect” at the bottom and will be in place for the three weeks prior and a week after Armistice Day each year.

The improvements have made a positive difference to how this space looks and how it will be used in the future. The soil edges will be grass seeded in April and a planting design is being prepared. The Parish Council and Chorley Borough Council jointly funded this Project.

**Remembrance Sunday/** **Poppies in the Parish**

Parish Councillors attended Chorley’s Remembrance Sunday commemoration on Sunday 13 November 2022. As last year, a Parish Councillor laid a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. The Parish Council are seeking permission from Lancashire County Council for attachments to lighting columns along Chancery Road, to include poppies in the period immediately before and after Armistice Day and banners throughout the year. In 2022, the Parish Council arranged for a limited number of poppies to be attached to the lamp posts in the village. Additional poppies have now been purchased for every lighting columns along Chancery Road.

**West Way Ponds Community Nature Reserve and Wildlife Educational Project**

The Parish Council has been working with Chorley Borough Council to improve the West Way Ponds Community Nature Reserve

The Ranger Team (Chorley Borough Council) has carried out urgent work and replaced the missing plank from the viewing platform and trimmed back the vegetation. Work has now started on a project to improve the area. The works to West Way Nature Reserve started on site on 13 February 2023 for a duration of two weeks.

**Environmental Issues in the Village**

Along with many residents, the Parish Council is concerned at the lack of grass cutting maintenance in front of and behind the shops at Hallgate. The Parish Council and Chorley Borough Council have written to A.P.A. Blackpool Limited (the owner of the shopping centre) regarding the lack of grass cutting in front and behind the shops at Hallgate and have asked that this be addressed as a matter of urgency.

**Mini Meadows and Wildflower Borders Initiative**

The 2023 mini meadows and wildflower borders initiative by Chorley Borough Council along Chancery Road, supported by the Parish Council, is already underway with the preparation of the areas able to be seen. The Parish Council has engaged with Chorley Council and with our residents and helped forge a Plan with the Chorley Council to build on the 2022 programme.

**Trees along Chancery Road, Astley Village**

The Parish Council has carried out some maintenance to the trees planted by the Parish Council along Chancery Road, Astley Village including removing:

* a single Beech near to Long Copse, planted by a resident.
* a Bird Cherry planted opposite the bus shelter near Great Meadow which was in a poor location and too close to the kerb and to existing trees.
* a Lime located opposite Broadfield, which was too close to an existing Birch tree.
* a dead Birch near lighting column, close to Long Croft Meadow.

In addition, all the tree ties have been checked to make sure they are secured to the stakes. Many of the ties had slipped down and have been repositioned close to the top of the stake and secured with a fencing staple or small flat head nail.

The Parish Council planted five trees on the Green opposite the Shopping Complex in February 2021 with the intention of improving the landscape of the area, make the shopping area more attractive and to encourage the village residents and passing traffic to use these businesses. The trees selected were intentionally low-level growth varieties needing little or no maintenance and in fact they will help to soak up any residual ground water from the Green. Unfortunately, the Parish Council have been unable to obtain permission from the landowner for the trees to remain in situ, and therefore the Parish Council has had no alternative but to take the necessary steps to relocate them and l reinstate the land.

**Events held in Astley Park**

Last year’s summer and autumn season again brought about many social activities on Astley Park, such as the Flower Show, the Picnic in the Park, the Bonfire Night later in the year and many more and whilst the Parish Council support these activities, they have landed us with some major parking problems. The parking facilities in Astley Park are inadequate to cater for such activities and Park and Ride provisions have also proved to be inadequate, resulting in major unlawful parking problems on Chancery Road itself, the verges and all of the cul-de-sacs coming off Chancery Road. The Parish Council has worked with Chorley Borough, Chorley Borough Council on this problem resulting in a temporary and trial traffic order being approved by Lancashire County Council to make Chancery Road a one way system and to allow parking down one side only.

At the meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 7 September 2022, Parish Councillors discussed issues raised by members of the public including the length of duration and noise levels experienced by residents as part of the music event held in Astley Park, particularly on the 22 and 23 July.

Chorley Borough Council, who have responsibility for approving and managing these events have now met with the organisers of the event to discuss the complaints received. An undertaking was given that the Parish Council would be consulted in the future, prior to the granting of permission for events involving live music events held in Astley Park.

Parish Councillors suggested that an acceptable decibel level be determined by Chorley Borough Council and that this should not be exceeded for future events held in Astley Park.

**Anti-Social Behaviour in the Village**

During 2022 there has been an increase in wanton and senseless vandalism at the subway under Chancery Road. Chorley Council has responded quickly to our requests for reparation, but it should not be necessary, our constant aim is to improve the Village for all our residents of whatever age and we can do without this vandalism.

There have also been other incidents of anti-social behaviour in the village in recent months which are being addressed and we soon hope to facilitate community litter picks in the village each month.

**Christmas Event - Thursday 8 December 2022**

Village residents and friends attended the Parish Christmas Carol Singing event held round the Christmas Tree in front of the shops in Astley Village on Thursday 8 December 2022 at 6.00 p.m. Refreshments were served in the Community Centre.

**Community Grants**

The Parish Council can offer grants to local organised groups for local projects. The grants available are in the hundreds, not thousands of pounds but can make a real difference. If your group would like to apply, all they need to do is submit an application form with some details. A copy of the grant criteria and application form are on the Parish Council website: www.avpc.org.uk

**Buckshaw Primary School Art/History Project**

Buckshaw Primary School are hoping to start a whole school project in April on local history including Astley Hall. It will involve the children researching an aspect of our local history and producing four pieces of artwork that would be displayed on the outside walls around school. This will be a great way to engage the children in History, Geography and Art giving them an opportunity to learn about their local area.

The total cost of materials is approximately £410 which included eight wooden boards, paint, and varnish. In addition, the school have made enquiries regarding an artist to assist them with the design.

The Parish Council agreed to make a Community Grant of £500 to support the Buckshaw Primary School Art/History Project.

**The Friends of Astley Park**

In collaboration with the Chorley Borough Council and Lancashire Environmental Fund(LEF), the Friends of Astley Park have completed a project to create a 2.05-mile-long perimeter footpath around Astley Park now known as Astley Park Trail. There were two flights of steps on the trail which were not usable by people in wheelchairs and difficult for those with children in pushchairs or with impaired mobility. It is proposed to create two short paths, so anyone needed to bypass those steps could do so. Chorley Borough Council have agreed to create one of the paths and the Friends of Astley Park are seeking funding to create the other (a 108-metre length skirting the edge of Dog Trap Wood).

The total cost of completing the project is £3,464 and it is hoped that Lancashire Environmental Fund would make a grant of £2,400 and the balance of £1,064.00 would be met by Chorley Borough Council and the Friends of Astley Park.

The Parish Council agreed to make a Community Grant to cover The Friends of Astley Park’s contribution of £264.

**School book bags - Buckshaw Primary School**

The Parish Council have provided each child at Buckshaw Primary School with a new school book bag to carry their books in at a cost of £1,210. The school would normally provide the children with a plastic book bag to transport their book home and back to school but these were poor quality and the school were keen to encourage the children to take care of their books.

**Councillor John McAndrew (Vice Chair)**