

## YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

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## MEETING DATES FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ARE:

**11TH SEPTEMBER 2017 @ COTTAM COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**30TH OCTOBER 2017 @ COTTAM COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**ALL MEETINGS COMMENCE AT 7.30PM**

## GRANT FUNDING

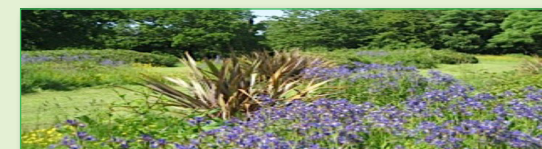
The Parish Council continue to maintain a small budget to assist, by way of a grant for, 'not for profit' groups within the community. These grants that are generally restricted to amounts up to £200 must be used for a specific purpose which is clearly identifiable. If your group is wishing to undertake a project and might need assistance please contact the Clerk to the Council who can give guidance on how to apply and, let you have a copy of the Council's Grant awarding policy that will help you put forward your application.



**Lea & Cottam  
Parish Council**

## NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2017

**2nd Edition**



## IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ

### OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE

Preston City Council has now proposed that Parish Councils should contribute to having their public green open spaces maintained by the City Council's workforce.

The proposal is that Lea & Cottam Parish Council should contribute £38000 per annum to PCC for this service even though the residents in this area already pay for maintenance services via their Council Tax.

This proposed contribution, which will have to be paid for by increasing the local parish Precept, will only apply to the 'parished areas' of Preston which include Lea & Cottam, Woodplumpton, Broughton, Whittingham, Grimsargh and Ingol and Tanterton. The 'non parished' parts of Preston, mainly the central areas of the city, will not have to pay any extra and will still have the maintenance undertaken by PCC. This means that you as the tax payer will, if the proposal is accepted, pay more for the same level of maintenance that is standard in those 'non parished' areas.

To give you some background to this we need to go back over 30 years to the setting up of the Central Lancashire New Town authority when they laid out a plan for 'village style' areas on the outskirts of Preston, Chorley and Leyland. Cottam Hall Village was one of these and is within the Lea and Cottam parish area. The concept was to have a self-sustaining village with a mixture of houses with green open spaces and community facilities such as schools, health centre, community centre and shops, with a canal side marina and enhanced landscaping along the canal.

Cottam has the largest percentage of developed green open spaces within the Preston City boundary and therefore bear the greatest share of the overall contributions that are being requested. The consensus is that the maintenance of grounds in Lea & Cottam has deteriorated in the last few years. The Parish Council has been providing added benefit by the utilising two lengthsman who provide enhanced services where needed to keep the area looking tidy and attractive at a minimal cost to the residents of Lea & Cottam.

## **OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE (Continued)**

Homes and Communities Agency took over the management of the CLNT areas some years ago and in 2010 paid PCC an endowment of £8 Million to maintain all the land within the PCC boundary that they had previously owned, this included the Cottam Hall area. This payment was intended by legal agreement to 'provide an annual income to fund the Property's annual maintenance costs in perpetuity' although seemingly, there was no specification as to the level of maintenance that should be undertaken. It is therefore of concern that this Council is being asked to contribute to maintenance costs in the Cottam area which were supposedly already funded by way of the legacy payment. This Council, a local resident and the local PCC Councillors have therefore questioned the legitimacy of the proposed action and asked what has happened to the legacy payment which had been provided for the Cottam area. A Freedom of Information [FOI] request has been made by the Parish Council and a local resident and whilst we have obtained a copy of the original endowment agreement it raises more questions than answers. A detailed response to the FOI request is still awaited.

**The Parish Council now has a dilemma as there are 3 possible options that can be pursued:**

### **REFUSE TO PAY (1)**

- PCC have stated that they will reduce maintenance to the level required by 'Health and Safety' legislation
- They will cease to maintain playgrounds and will close them rather than repair faulty equipment although, they are still legally liable for any injuries as they will still own them.
- PCC originally intimated that they might transfer ownership of the land to the Parish Council if requested so that the local parish council would then take full responsibility for maintenance and ownership – this offer has now been deferred at least for the time being.

### **CHALLENGE THE LEGALITY OF PCC'S ACTIONS**

#### **POSSIBLY BY WAY OF A JUDICIAL REVIEW (2)**

- This could cost between £20K-£50K, as a one-off payment, but with no certainty of winning. The Parish Council would also need to consult a barrister prior to any action which could cost between £2K-£5K just for a legal opinion, unless a resident, who is a barrister is willing to give "Pro-Bono" advice to the Parish Council.

## **OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE (Continued)**

### **PAY THE REQUESTED CONTRIBUTION (3)**

- This would be £38000 for the first year and would require an average extra charge of £20 per dwelling on top of the current Parish Precept. The amount per household would of course vary dependant on circumstance; Council Tax relief where appropriate and the Council Tax Band applicable to each household so that higher banded properties would pay more than lower banded properties.
- There is also the possibility that PCC would seek to increase the contribution in future years although the Parish Council will only be committed to one year at a time.

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**This Council does not wish to see the appearance of the area deteriorate but, does feel that it should not increase the Precept without feedback from the residents who would have to pay any increase.**

The Council would like your help in reaching a decision by letting us know what course of action you feel appropriate, please contact:

- The Clerk to the Council
- Your local Parish Councillor
- Your local City Councillors
- Attend the next Parish Council meeting to let us have your views

The Council would also appreciate any offer of professional help to assist with dealing with the proposals.

## **HANGING BASKETS**

Once again our hanging basket display in Lea Town is looking attractive along with those at Cottam Community Centre which were a sponsored by Lea and Cottam Parish Council.

