

ULNES WALTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Viking council

Alan Jones, Editor of *LGR*, visits the dynamic Ulnes Walton Parish Council in Lancashire.



Part of the winning council team - Cllr Eileen Doran, Cllr Derek Ormerod (Chair of the parish council) and Mrs Lynne Rowett (Clerk to the Council).

Visiting, Ulnes Walton PC and the clerk, Lynne Rowett, it confirms yet again that councils of all sizes can make significant differences to their communities. It is not surprising, given its achievements that Mrs Rowett won the NALC/Aon Clerk of the Year for 2003.

The name Ulnes Walton is thought to stem from a Viking of the name Ulf, and as a settlement of people it can be traced back to those times and even earlier to the Roman occupation. The size of the population is around 650.

The situation of the village on the A581 is significant, because this road is a major east/west route and an important link on the tourist route to Southport and the coast. And this now represents a major leisure corridor.

The prisons

There are two prisons in Ulnes Walton. They are category C HMP Wymot and category B HMP Garth.

Unlike, some other organisations and bodies, the council took the constructive view and built a good working relationship with both prisons' senior officials.

All the parish councillors and clerk have visited HMP Garth and were given an eye-opening full guided tour. This included the feeling of what it is like to be locked-up behind bars in a prison cell. While at HMP Wymott there have been many joint-initiatives, which resulted in prisoners making parish noticeboards and wrought

ironwork for the parish area. They have even planted a colourful display of plants for parish festivals.

Working in partnership

The parish and Lancashire County Council work extremely well together. This can be seen through many different policy projects. At the moment, they are starting work together with the prison authorities on opening a network of footpaths through a local woodland.

When plans were submitted for a proposed extension to Wymott Prison, there was a strong objection levied by the parish council and Chorley Borough Council supported this in turn. It was turned down.

However, after several meetings between Lancashire County Council, Chorley Borough Council, the Parish Council and officials from the Prisons Authority; a Green Travel Plan was developed to help ease the infrastructure problems caused by the proposed extension.

Indeed, members of the parish council will assist with the implementation of the travel plan. Final decisions are still waiting on this situation.

Mrs Rowett, said: "This shows what benefits can be sought by working together to lessen the impact of the extensions planned for the local community."

Parish Plan

They see the Plan as an important first step on the route to the

achievement of the status of a 'Quality' parish.

Cllr Derek Ormerod, Chair of Council and Parish Plan Steering Group, said: "Becoming a Quality Parish is of great significance. Without it we will miss out on many opportunities to directly influence the future of our community. The Parish Plan sets down the hopes and aspirations we have, in consultation with all our residents, prepared for our future."

Clerk of the Year Award

When I asked councillors why they nominated Mrs Rowett for the Clerk of Year Award. They replied, she has been wonderful in helping to bring the council and the local community together.

Mrs Rowett has been very successful in getting lottery grant awards for the mid summer festival event.

She, has also been instrumental in working with a landfill operator and the county council to provide public access as part of the restoration programme for two now obsolete landfill sites within Ulnes Walton.

With the Countryside Officer from the County Council, Mrs Rowett and the Council, will be at the centre of creating a 'Viking' footpath to follow the local River Lostock. So taking the footpath out to the coast and therefore linking in with neighbour parish councils in doing so.

By Act of Parliament

The parish council used to have five seats, and never need co-options. However, they felt this

number was not sufficient for their plans of being a modern and dynamic parish council. So they requested that there was an increase to six.

And with no law already in statute to approve this, it had to go all the way to the Houses of Parliament and an Act undertaken to approve this. So at last year's elections there were six vacancies and all seats were filled by election.

The council

The council is represented by a diverse range of councillors in terms of age, professional background and location, which truly reflects the community.

The council has a precept of £2,500 for Band D Council Tax. This has been stable for three years.

The Council has just one more test to pass, before it can apply for Quality status. That test is the Clerk's test. Mrs Rowett has completed her Local Council Administration portfolio and was awaiting the results from the lead marker.

Cllr Eileen Doran said: "With Mrs Rowett and other elected members, the council has been brought into the 21st century and everyone is making a significant contribution for the local community."

He continued, by saying that with Quality status the council will be able to have more input into services delivered by the borough and the county council like the neighbourhood warden scheme, traffic management, planning, and local environmental services.



River Lostock from Ulnes Walton Bridge.