



MOULTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2022

Moulton Parish Council

Parish Office

Moulton Community Centre – Sandy Hill

Reedings

Moulton

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Parish Councillors

Cllr David Aarons (Chairman)
Cllr Geoff Paul (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Neil Bennett
Cllr Chris Curran
Cllr Stephen Fehnert
Cllr Tony Morrow
Cllr Stephen Morrow
Cllr Gary Moss
Cllr Yvonne Swallow
Cllr Martin Swannell
Cllr Trevor Ward
Cllr Kevin White

Executive Officer

Jane Austin CiLCA, CertHE: Community Governance

Mission

Moulton Parish Council's vision is for Moulton to be a successful, vibrant and attractive community where people want to live and work. Council represent the community and aim to protect and promote the heritage and identity of Moulton in order to preserve the parish for current residents and to provide a legacy for future generations.

Our values underpin our decisions and actions. We aspire to be:

Efficient and Effective: Delivering services, ensuring value for money and evaluating the impact of our actions.

Open and Democratic: Consulting with residents and organisations in appropriate decision making.

Proactive and Innovative: Finding solutions and acting in the best interests of local people.

Diligent: Complying fully with legislation associated with local government, equal opportunities, health and safety and approved governance procedures.

The Council is made up of 14 elected councillors (2 seats currently vacant) representing Moulton parish. They are responsible to the residents they represent and can be contacted directly on any matter. They receive no allowance but have a passion to be involved in the community. Councillors have four main areas of work:

- Decision-making through attending meetings
- Monitoring, making sure that decisions lead to efficient and effective services
- Getting involved with the local community
- Appointed as Lead Councillor on council projects and initiatives

Chairman's Report Cllr David Aarons

This past year has seen the Parish Council emerge from the severe COVID restrictions, if only by "baby steps".

The new parish year began with a welcome to two new councillors, Kevin White and Tony Morrow. Kevin and Tony have spent a considerable amount of time researching how to improve outdoor parish facilities for older young people and are expected to bring proposals to the PC this year.

Our first Community Connector, Mary Jane, left us owing to a relocation to Italy. Fortunately we were able to bring in a new team, Rachel and Shelley, to build on MJ's excellent work. Councillor Yvonne Swallow is our hard-working liaison councillor for the Library and Health & Wellbeing. Rachel and Shelley have extended and expanded the role to include management of our community library (rescued from the proposed NCC closure) which has now been incorporated into a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), a project managed and delivered by Councillor Fehnert.

At about this time a Moulton resident (Fritz de Zutter) asked permission to undertake bulb planting in the Public Gardens minutes which resulted in a wonderful display of daffodils in the spring. Thank you Fritz!

Final planning approval was sought from WNC Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) for the new secondary school at Thorpeville. I attended, together with our WNC ward councillor (Mike Warren) and two local residents, to express our deep concerns. It became clear that the committee was minded to approve. However, we were able to at least ensure that all possible mitigation would be considered and that this could not simply be determined by officers but would need to be agreed with our ward councillors before returning to the SPC for final approval. Not what we would have wished but probably the best we could have hoped.

Whilst on the subject of planning, each month Councillor Trevor Ward and his planning committee put in a lot of unseen and unheralded work commenting on the multitude of planning applications sent to MPC for consultation. My thanks to the whole committee for their hard work.

Following a closure of the permitted footpath from Boughton Fair Lane towards Pitsford Reservoir by the then Farm Manager an approach was made to Moulton College to reinstate access. Not only has that now been done but it has been improved and the path now named Centenary Way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the College.

Improved relations with Moulton College also resulted in an offer from them to design and provide a memorial to those who have suffered as a result of the many conflicts around the World. Moulton PC provided the location, planning, design ideas and logistics. All was done in time for last year's Armistice Day Sunday Parade which included a diversion to the Public Gardens and our beautiful stone memorial.

A considerable amount of effort, led by Councillor Martin Swannell, has been made to improve our green spaces. New signage has been submitted to WNC planners and Martin has worked with the WI and a team of volunteers to plant trees in Crowfields Nature Reserve along with other initiatives in Crowfields and for a wild flower meadow in Busby's Meadow. He was also able to obtain 105 additional saplings from the Woodland Trust to add to these.

Particular thanks must go to our Executive Officer and her whole parish team. The Community Centre is thriving and has been used by our local doctors' surgery team for regular Covid-19 vaccination sessions. Wellbeing activities are being developed and extended, the Community Library

is being well used and a new chapter in the life of the Cafe has begun as we apply for an extension to make it bigger and better.

For the third year running the accounts have passed through the internal and external auditors unscathed, with no qualifications. A winning combination of the parish team and Finance Committee has ensured that our finances are accurate and appropriately managed.

Thanks also to all our parish councillors who give of their time freely and enthusiastically.

All in all a successful recovery from two grim "Covid" years.

Executive Officer Report Jane Austin

The Council years of 2020/2022 will be ones that we hope are never repeated. The demands and challenges were enormous. The Parish Team worked throughout the pandemic to help and support our residents and businesses in whatever way we could as well as undertaking normal council business. Financial pressures have been high but through careful financial management we remain in a comfortable position.

The beginning of the financial year, April 2021 saw us still in lockdown and working from home. As the weather improved and restrictions lifted, we were slowly able to 'get back to normal' and reopen Moulton Community Centre and Moulton Village Hall to hirers in June 2021. I am truly grateful to our small team of staff who stepped up to support residents as much as possible, whilst keeping everything else running and I couldn't be prouder of them.

The past year has seen many advances on parish projects and these are detailed later in the report. 2021/2022 was also the year we said good bye to some of our team and said hello to new staff members. Mary Jane, our first Community Connector left us in June to move to Italy. Such is the parish council's commitment to our Health and Wellbeing initiative we were fortunate enough to recruit two new Community Connectors, Rachael and Shelley. This has enabled us to deliver so many events and provide more services to all ages of our population, as well as managing the library. In July we welcomed Jayne Bunting, ex Boughton parish clerk to our team. Jayne has many decades of experience and is responsible for overseeing the parish improvement projects over the past year. Anne Kirkland retired in August and we recruited Caroline Hammond to assist Louise with the ever growing business at the Community Centre.

Although we are still a parish council we have the operation and function of a small town council. Below is a small example of how our parish has grown in the last 6 years:

	2016	2022	% Increase
Population	3454	6000	73%
Dwellings	1474	2364	60%
Income			400%
Expenditure			93%
Contractors	5	45	
Play Areas	1	5	
Attenuation Basins	0	7	
Public Open Spaces	4	9	
Community Buildings	1	2	
Library	0	1	
Cafe	0	1	

New housing developments in Moulton parish are coming to an end and at the present time, Mulberry Homes will be the last one to be completed. Although development in Overstone parish will continue over the next decade, the need for community infrastructure will be significant and Moulton will continue to feel the impact of this for some time to come.

I must pay special tribute to the Chair and Vice Chair who appreciate the dedication and relentless hard work of my team and never fail to thank them. Their steadfast support enables us to continually strive to improve services for residents. It's a great advantage that this council understands the difference between Governance and Management.

The Parish Team continues to grow and develop and comprises of very experienced individuals all with great strengths. We accept and rise to any challenge thrown at us. The threat of Covid may be receding but we are already working on our parish wide winter initiative which will be to help alleviate heat and food poverty for our most vulnerable residents.

Moulton holds the reputation of being the best run council in the County. Notwithstanding the strong working relationship with council, I believe this to be down to the best group of people I could ever wish to work with, all of whom work many more hours than they are paid for.

Governance

Public scrutiny of Parish Councils has continued throughout 2021 and the Parish Council recognises the importance of demonstrating both the impact of our services and the integrity in which it operates. The Parish Council is committed to meeting the highest standards of governance in all its activities and to ensuring that everyone who acts in the name of the Council - councillors, employees and volunteers meet the highest standards of conduct and probity. The Parish Council has adopted Standing Orders and a Code of Conduct and conducts an annual review to support continuous improvement.

2021 Council and Committee Meetings Calendar

All meetings of the Council and Committees are open to the public – see Calendar of meetings below. Each meeting agenda includes a period when the public can address the Council. For more information please go to the meetings pages on our website

[Agendas & Minutes | Moulton Parish Council \(moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk)

Councillor Attendance at Council Meetings 2021-2022

Councillor	Full Council (Meetings Held 12)	Finance (Meetings Held 8)	Planning (Meetings Held 1)
Cllr D Aarons	11	8	
Cllr G Paul	9	8	
Cllr N Bennett	8	6	1
Cllr C Curran	11		1
Cllr S Fehnert	9	8	
Cllr T Morrow	9		
Cllr S Morrow	9		1
Cllr G Moss	8		
Cllr Y Swallow	10	6	1
Cllr M Swannell	7		
Cllr T Ward	9		1
Cllr K White	10		

Council Meetings

Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.15 p.m. in Moulton Community Centre. Meetings are held in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and other appropriate legislation.

Committee Structure

Throughout the year the work of the Parish Council was supported by the Finance Committee. The Planning Committee meet on occasion to discuss large or sensitive planning applications in order to advise council of an appropriate response. Each Committee has Terms of Reference approved by Full Council and are reviewed annually. Committees generally meet in advance of Council meetings with minutes of meetings provided to the Council together with any recommendations.

Delegated Authority

Within its Standing Orders the Council has a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved for its approval which cannot be delegated to its Committees and these are defined within the relevant terms of reference. Day to day management of the Council is delegated to the Executive Officer and her team and the Council reviews its scheme of delegated authority on an annual basis. Notwithstanding any delegation the Council remains collectively accountable for the work of the Council.

Risk Management

The Parish Council has overall responsibility for ensuring that there is an appropriate system of controls, financial and otherwise across the Council to provide reasonable assurance that relevant laws and regulations are complied with, that assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposal and that proper records are maintained and information is reliable.

Financial Review

The Parish Council receives income through the Precept which is an annual sum of money collected with the Council Tax by West Northamptonshire Council. In addition, income is received from Cemetery fees, hall hire and developer contributions.

Details of the income and expenditure for 2021-2022 can be found on our website using the following link: [Finance | Moulton Parish Council \(moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk/finance)

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee, consisting of five councillors meets each month. Its functions include the consideration of new policies, developing strategy, monitoring of the actions in support of the Business Plan, oversight of the Council's budgets, accounts, property, resources, investments and internal controls. Moulton Parish Council is open and transparent in the way it manages its finances. Information on the way the Council mitigates financial risk and what it has spent money on can be found on the Council website [Finance | Moulton Parish Council \(moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.moultonnorthants-pc.gov.uk/finance) The Council's finances are monitored on a day to day basis by the Responsible Financial Officer and the Finance Committee. The Council appoints an internal auditor who assesses the Council's compliance with relevant legislation and a further audit is carried out by an external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission.

Finance Committee Chairmans Report Cllr Geoff Paul

It will come as no surprise that the Parish Council's finances have again been seriously impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic during the financial year just completed.

Not only have we experienced a significant drop in revenue from the Community Centre for the times when our facilities have not been available for hire, but the ongoing difficult situation many parishioners have found themselves in has encouraged us to raise our Health and Wellbeing effort, to support vulnerable members of the Community, which has come at a financial cost. We were also faced with a loss of contracted revenue, when our original Café partner left at very short notice. (This also led to a bad debt in respect of unpaid and overdue rent).

We have now been in the Community Centre for 5 years, and this has led to some of the installed equipment reaching the end of its effective life, which means we have had to repair or replace some of it. There were other items which we have learned through experience may not have been correctly specified when the original purchases were made. In both of these scenarios, we have spent money to bring the facilities up to date, and made more environmentally friendly choices, where appropriate. This has also come at a cost!

All in all we have faced huge problems in balancing our books, but all is not doom and gloom. We strengthened our Health and Wellbeing team, who have been exceptionally good in making that part of our work more effective. The changes came with a certain amount of start-up costs, but many of the initiatives have become self-financing, thanks in part to our success in obtaining Grant Funding from various statutory and non-statutory bodies.

Additionally, our decision to take over the running of the Café on a trial basis, by the launch of 'Eat at MCC' has also helped us to increase our revenue.

Moving to the future, with the Community Centre fully open, and a long and increasing list of hirers, we are much more confident about the future income from that service, though we are by no means insulated from the well-publicised cost increases the country is facing – energy, fuel, transport, raw materials, among many others.

Despite these (and other) challenges, we are determined to do what we can to improve the lives of residents within the parish. We are looking to extend the size of the current café area, to make it more welcoming, have already installed a kitchen for the use of hirers of the FitzJohn hall (meeting a requirement identified by hirers over the past years), and have some exciting plans to improve Parish facilities by upgrading the Village Hall.

The Finance Committee was set up following the last Election and has enabled Councillors with an interest in financial matters to examine (and approve where thought appropriate) proposals to improve life within our ever-expanding village. I wish to place on record my sincere thanks for the professional and conscientious support I have received from my colleagues.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee of the Parish Council currently consists of five councillors. The Committee acts on behalf of the Parish Council and considers planning applications and infrastructure matters. All planning applications are considered by the Committee with input from site visits, neighbours and other stakeholders when making recommendations to West Northamptonshire Council who are the local planning authority. Moulton Parish Council continues to work closely with both our West Northamptonshire Councillors and their respective officers to ensure that the views of the residents of Moulton are taken into account when determining planning-related matters.

The Parish Council engages with West Northamptonshire Highways in respect of infrastructure. Issues such as problem parking and speeding are regularly raised by residents and the Parish Council contributes in the resolution of such matters.

Planning Committee Chairmans Report – Cllr T Ward

The planning committee consists of myself, Trevor Ward as Chair, Yvonne Swallow as Deputy and Neil Bennett, Steve Morrow, Chris Curran.

The planning committee of the Parish Council does not have any powers to approve and pass plans, so we check plans to enable us to make recommendations. We can point out to the planners what we foresee as problems and hope that they take notice. Often, we are unable to stop large developments, but we can suggest modifications which will make the development more amenable to the people of the area. One may think and hope that with all the development and new houses we have had over recent years that there will be little further building in Moulton. The Sustainable Urban Extension SUE on the A43 and in Overstone comes under their Parish Council but this affects us in Moulton.

In fact, every month there are three or four applications for modifications to existing houses or in filling in spaces in the village, so the planning committee has to consider these and make recommendations. We therefore tend to be busy in between Parish Council meetings and because of Covid there have been major changes in the way we operate. During the worst it was impossible to visit sites to have a look or meet the applicants. We therefore have learnt to operate from the application itself.

Some of the big developments that have come out recently are the new secondary school along the old A43 on Thorpeville. We believed that this was going to be difficult to stop as the County Council own the land and the Department for Education provided money for building and so it has proved. Nevertheless, we are able to suggest some modifications to the plans. The plans have plainly been copied from elsewhere and they referred to places that were nowhere near Northampton which we got deleted. One of the points we made was regarding an entrance going straight through the trees on the roadside which had TPOs on them. This has been noted. We are still arguing about the all-weather pitch which they want to be open until 10 pm seven days a week. We disagree with this. We will continue to be vigilant with future modifications which are being made.

MPC and WNC Highways have concerns about heavy traffic being generated at certain times of the day, nonetheless the plan was passed. A public session at a MPC meeting was held which was attended by more than 70 people. There was opposition but it did not generate a pressure group as we had hoped.

Further development has been the building of an Aldi supermarket. On the original plan it was a smaller convenience store. As a result of its position, we have been able to work with Overstone Parish Council planning and it was modified, so instead of a standard off the shelf supermarket it became more consistent with the Rural area it is located in.

We now have applications in for the Saxon Park retail development and garage opposite Aldi. We are opposing this and again working with Overstone PC. It may be unlikely that it can be stopped but it is hoped that we may be able to influence the planners to provide more local amenities for the new houses. We have already discovered areas in the plans which will have to be modified.

As you can see, we are kept very busy throughout the year. Mostly we meet as a working party and then make recommendations to be approved by Moulton Parish Council. Anybody

can attend the parish council meeting to share their opinions and thoughts about planning applications. If people are objecting to West Northamptonshire Council, we ask for copies of letters so we can take those views into account in our submissions. The plans we may be presented with sometimes show a rather optimistic and unrealistic viewpoint at times and local input is essential to bring these points to our attention.

Overall a busy time on the planning committee. We always welcome input from members of the parish and will always take these into account when making our submission to the planning authorities.

Community Engagement

In addition to the Parish Council website, which holds a huge amount of information including Agendas and Minutes, there are five Council noticeboards in the village. They are updated regularly and are located at Moulton Community Centre, Fuller Road, Overstone Road, Boughton Road and Barlow Lane.

The Moulton Scene, our parish magazine is delivered twice yearly to all households in March and September. A Summer newsletter is delivered in July and a Christmas newsletter in late November. Newsletters are also delivered when needed throughout the year.

A Consultation Open Day was held on 15th March at the Community Centre and covered the following topics:

- Moulton Football Club – Proposed Extension
- Youth Provision
- Neighbourhood Plan Review
- Planting Schemes throughout the parish
- Moulton Scene

Both our Community Connectors attended the meeting to talk to residents about the many events and groups running from the Health and wellbeing Hub.

Moulton Library, Health and Wellbeing Hub

Having joined in June 2021 when the library was only able to open for a few half days a week we have really seen it grow from strength to strength. We had a steady increase in footfall as the year (2021) went on with October, November and December seeing an average of 6000 visits each month. However we are now seeing even more people through the doors on an average week so we anticipate this November/December to be even busier.

We have ensured that we are always offering a varied timetable of activities and are consistently receiving positive feedback from visitors for that is being offered.

Games morning was an already well-established group but we have ensured its continuation and have added value by purchasing new games and referred to new members.

Every Friday morning without fail the library is full to the brim of residents enjoying a good chat and catch up over a cup of tea and a biscuit – not to mention the games! Aided by our Good Neighbour volunteers who keep the tea flowing and ensure any newcomers are welcomed into the group. With funds raised through the year we were able to take the group and volunteers out for Christmas dinner.

Crafternoon was introduced from September 2021 and now sees a regular group of 6/7 ladies enjoying crafts, chats and cake. We regularly receive donations from residents towards the group and the ladies are now working on creating cards to sell in the library shop.

Funds raised from car boots went into purchasing toys for construction club. This has been very well received and sees many families with a variety of ages as the club runs through until after school.

We hold two stay and play sessions a week, one dedicated for under ones and the other open to all under fives. Both are popular groups but we do see a consistently higher number of mums and babies join the under ones group each week. We recently used funds raised to purchase baby weighing scales having found there to be a huge gap in the services being provided – this has already been well taken up with several babies coming in each day to be weighed.

Having liaised with another community managed library we acquired a book trolley for second hand book sales. Book sales have always been popular but with the ability to have them move around and located at the front of the library we sell far more than before and this has now increased to being a steady income stream.

With the new partnership working with café we have been able to increase our offering of activities particularly during the school holidays. We have worked together to offer biscuit decorating, milkshakes and themed workshops which has increased footfall for both ourselves and the café.

We are in regular communication with Moulton Primary schools family support / inclusion lead. We collect and arrange food parcels for families in need as well as arranged and delivered donations of school uniform. We facilitated emergency summer codes for food banks through the holidays and set up Books and Breakfast to run alongside to ensure anyone struggling had access to a healthy meal. Organised eight 'making friends sessions for new school starters in lieu of them not having any official through school due to covid restrictions

We have recently been able to restart the monthly coffee/afternoon teas once held in Chappell house prior to covid. Unfortunately, due to restrictions in place on residents being not allowed to use the communal spaces it was not something we were able to start sooner, however residents that attended have been very grateful and lots of discussions have now been had on how to increase this offering going forward.

Despite taking on the car scheme with only 4 active drivers we have made it our priority to ensure that we rarely have to let people down with their lift requests. We have actively advertised for new drivers and now have a further three currently awaiting their DBS checks.

We have worked on increasing our reach across multiple platforms to ensure success in all events and activities we run. Facebook page was not long created before we started and within a few short months has reached 300 likes however this is now well on its way to hitting 1000 followers, with an active twitter following and active Instagram page too.

Despite only being open for the best part of three weeks during December the library welcomed a whopping 5700 people through the doors.

We kicked off the month in style with the annual Christmas Cracker event. We replied to over 100 letters written to Santa received from children who wrote to him on the day. Over 40 stalls selling handmade goods, Moulton Church with Christingle crafts, Moulton Scouts and Brownies with fun games, Moulton 77 Brass band serenading us whilst we shopped, and the Children's library full of crafts, reindeer food and letters to Santa there really was something for everyone. Moulton's

Christmas hamper appeal was once again a resounding success. Over 25 families received hampers including gifts for children, and our volunteers were able to deliver to 50 residents throughout Moulton. Moulton College kindly donated homemade mince pies and our local PCSO's were involved in delivering to our most vulnerable residents.

Two children's parties were held in the run up to Christmas – tickets sold out within 24 hours and we barely had time to advertise it was so popular.

A lovely evening was had by all at the community centre, with Santa visiting courtesy of the Rotary club - with crafts and bird feed making in the library, plenty of hot chocolates all round and the pizza van went down a storm.

Looking forward to the year ahead we are excited to build on and develop all that has been started this year. We anticipate a greater need for our support through the winter months and are starting to make plans for how best we can support those in fuel and food poverty. We have plans to expand our library timetable by working with other organisations to provide extra support to families including the Northampton sling library as well as a postnatal support service.

2021/22 Activities

Moulton Community Centre

- New phone system installed. The system includes new handsets, phones in each room to enable all hirers to be contacted in the event of an emergency. Monthly bills reduced as new system is a VOIP (Voice over internet protocol) system.
- Solar film on library windows installed to reduce heat in library
- Welcome desk installed at library entrance
- Boiler in library kitchen installed
- New window fitted in the upstairs Archive room
- New kitchen fitted in Main Hall - Fitzjohn
- Air conditioning unit fitted in Main kitchen and Upstairs Office
- Dishwasher installed in first floor kitchen
- Application for Library to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation accepted. Moulton Library Health and Wellbeing Hub CIO became registered on 9th July 2021
- Planning Application for Extension to Café and brick built storage shed submitted and approved
- From January 2022, Café now operated by MPC. 5* awarded after visit from Environmental Health

Parish

- Picnic benches and installed in Public Gardens
- Remedial works carried out in Busbys Meadow
- Remedial works carried out on all Attenuation Basins including additional planting
- Grating replaced and upgraded on the Public Gardens stream
- Quotes accepted to replace all parish noticeboards and information boards throughout parish. Planning permission recently granted, installation to take place shortly

- Cemetery path upgraded to accommodate tree roots
- Litter Bin Sponsorship Scheme launched
- Additional Litter Bins installed
- Additional Benches installed in the Public Gardens using donations from residents
- New fencing installed at Moulton Football Club
- Overflow carpark at Moulton Football Club resurfaced
- Barlow Lane Carpark relined
- Local Council Award Scheme in progress
- Neighbourhood Development Plan Review commenced
- Planning Application underway for proposed extension to Moulton Football Club
- Countess Manor open space transferred to council ownership
- Barwood Homes open space transferred to council ownership
- Upgrade to CCTV system Public Gardens

Climate Change

On November 2nd 2021, Moulton Parish Council declared a 'Climate Emergency'. Focusing on the need to reduce our carbon footprint will be a prominent agenda item for years to come. Invitations are extended to all residents to join the Climate Change Committee.

Public Gardens Memorial Project

2021 was the 100 year anniversary of Moulton College. To celebrate this achievement Moulton College worked in partnership with Moulton Parish Council to deliver a fabulous memorial in the Public Gardens.



Gig in the Gardens September 2021

Our outdoor event held in September proved to be the most popular yet. The weather was glorious and the bands entertained us for 8 hours. The Public Gardens is the perfect venue for our outdoor music events.

