

Little Stanney & District Parish Council

www.littlestanney-pc.gov.uk

Chairman's Report for the year 2013-14



Councillor Roy Greenwood (Chairman)
Councillor David Astbury
Councillor Linda Carter
Councillor Paul Carter
Councillor John Glazzard (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor John Jones

Councillor Clive Lipscombe
Councillor Peter Mountford
Councillor Martin Roberts
Councillor Judith Thomas
Pauline English (Parish Clerk)

Meetings and Councillors: At the meeting on 28 May 2013 I was elected Chairman and Councillor John Glazzard was elected Vice-Chairman for the year. The Parish Council met on six occasions during 2013-14. For 2014-15 the Parish Council has decided to hold meetings every month starting in April. The meetings will continue to be on the fourth Tuesday in the month, at 7.30pm in Little Stanney Village Hall. We will evaluate the success, or otherwise, of this decision early next year. We were sorry to lose Councillor Ken Whitehouse, whose resignation was accepted at the March meeting. An advertisement has been placed to fill the vacancy.

Finance: We increased the precept to £6,500 in 2013-14 to enable us to continue to employ our Amenity Cleaner and to continue to ensure that we have sufficient reserves. Our internal auditor, Wellfield Accounting Services, completed the audit of the Parish Council's accounts for 2012-13 in April and we subsequently received a clean report from our external auditors, BDO, following submission of the Annual Report. The Internal Audit for 2013-14 will take place on 8 May.

Amenity Cleaning: Graham Povey continues to provide us with excellent service and fills every moment of his 10 hours a week. We would like to be able to offer him additional hours but have not found anyone willing to provide funding, despite the proximity of the businesses along the A5117 and on Cheshire Oaks. Councillor Heatley has provided us with a grant towards our costs for the past three years, which is most welcome. Not only does Graham collect rubbish from our streets and grass verges, often clearing up after the regular weekly refuse collection vehicles, he reports fly-tipping and other problems to Cheshire West and Chester Council by phone immediately he sees them and generally keeps an eye on the condition of the villages. He is definitely an asset we would find difficult to replace.

Playing Field: Following the annual inspection of the play equipment last year, some minor repairs were made. Our next inspection is likely to be undertaken in May or June and hopefully there will be no further repairs required. Despite several attempts we have failed to contact Chester & District Housing Trust (now Sanctuary Housing) by either letter or email to ask them to trim back hedges around their site on Croughton Road and repair fences to the rear of their properties in Bunbury Close. Councillor Jones was more fortunate in managing to speak to one of their operatives personally on site, so hopefully our requests will now be met.

Nature Park: A new picnic bench is to be installed in April, funded by Ward Councillor Graham Heatley from his members' allowance, after the existing bench was vandalised. There has been no obvious recurrence of the drugs activity reported last year, possibly due to the perimeter hedge being kept at a level to allow the site to be visible from the road. A new access gate has been installed on the corner of Wervin Road to enable access by hedge cutting machinery.

Planning: The Parish Council was consulted on 11 householder planning applications throughout the year, all of which were approved by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). Our January meeting was brought forward to enable a full discussion on the application for the conversion of agricultural buildings to three residential units at Church Farm, Stoak. Despite the Parish Council's concerns about traffic during the demolition/construction stages the application was approved.

As Chairman I represent the Parish Council on the Ince Park Community Forum (organised by Peel Holdings) and attended a number of meetings throughout the year. The withdrawal of Covanta from the Biomass project was quite a blow and their replacement is awaited.

Highways: In July we invited Ian McNeill, CWaC Area Engineer, to our meeting to discuss issues relating to speeding, particularly on Rake Lane and Wervin Road. Ten residents were present at the meeting. Mr McNeill listened to the issues raised and the possibility of introducing a 30mph speed limit on Rake Lane was discussed. Mr McNeill advised that the road did not meet the criteria for a 30mph limit but a 40mph limit might be possible on part of the road. This is currently being explored, as the Parish Council now have to meet some of the costs. A traffic survey was requested for Wervin Road, which subsequently showed that the majority of traffic was within the 85percentile. The possibility of a "Concealed Entrance" sign on the approaches to the Mobile Home Park was explored and we were told that such signs were only for temporary works and were not intended to be permanent!

Collapsible bollards were installed at the top of Croughton Road in Stoak. They have so far been successful in preventing fly tipping. Unfortunately there is still a flooding issue on Croughton Road probably due to the grass and weeds growing out of the drains. CWaC have been asked to take some action, but so far nothing has been done.

During one of the site visits held with CWaC Engineers during the year it was noted that the handrail leading from the Canal Bridge to the towpath at Stoak was loose. The Parish Council commissioned its repair and was reimbursed by CWaC.

We are continuing discussions with CWaC about naming the A5117 from Elton through to the A540 junction to make properties easier to find using SatNav and for emergency vehicles. The street signs for Strawberry Way East, Strawberry Way West, Dunkirk Way and Whitby Lane have been erected. The length of road between the M53 and M56 junctions is to be called Hill View Road. The only remaining stretch to be named is between the M53 roundabout and Longlooms Road

Public Rights of Way: The public inquiry into the application to have the Strawberry Drive footpath included on the Definitive Map was held in October and the Inspector ruled in favour of the application. The owner of the property adjacent to the gate into Stanney Woods has been told to remove the gate to ensure free access into the woods from Strawberry Drive.

Communications: The Parish Council's website, www.littlestanney-pc.gov.uk, is now live but still under development and suggestions are always welcome from residents about improving its content. In relation to superfast broadband, Wervin and Croughton are already on the Chester North exchange and should already be experiencing faster connection speeds. BT recently installed a green cabinet at the bottom of Bunbury Close in Stoak linking it to the Mickle Trafford exchange and we are informed that superfast broadband should be available in June. Residents will have to make their own arrangements with their internet provider to link into the cabinet.

Public Order: Although we have not yet met our Beat Officer, Kevin Ross, our PCSO Lyam Beddows has been to two of our meetings to report on public order issues. We were amused to hear of a man apprehended for riding naked on a bicycle. We receive regular written updates and the Police hold a regular surgery in Little Stanney Village Hall which is advertised on our website. Anyone can call in for a chat. The Parish Clerk has attended meetings for Parish Council representatives organised by the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Cheshire West and Chester: During the year CWaC consulted the Parish Council on a number of issues including the draft Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan, Make or Buy, the Chester Transport Strategy and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Parish Council responded to some consultations and noted others. The Community Governance Review is on-going, although the recommendation to include the four houses on Whitby Lane within Little Stanney parish is currently out to consultation.

Cheshire Association of Local Councils: The Parish Council continues to be a member of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils. The Parish Council put forward a Motion for discussion at the Annual Meeting in October 2013 seeking a review of the Charter. The Motion was adopted unanimously and the new Charter was the subject of the round table discussion at the Local Councils Assembly in March 2014, which was attended by the Chairman, Councillor Astbury and the Parish Clerk.

Roy Greenwood

Chairman, Little Stanney & District Parish Council

April 2014