STANDISH VOICE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

November 15, 2016

**The meeting commenced at 7.45pm**

**Management Committee present:** Gill Foster, Paul Ogden, Karen Bliss, Ron Wade, Brian Jones, Fran Aiken, Diane Gore, Dave King, Allan Foster

1. **Apologies:** Rev Andrew Holliday, Sarah Djali, Janet Monks, Nicky Ogden, Heidi Lipscome, Nic Macmillan
2. **Minutes:** The minutes of 2015’s AGM were passed without alteration.
3. **Standish Cricket Club:** Ahead of the AGM, Mr Paul Hassan, from Standish Cricket Club thanked Standish Voice for helping to staff the club’s recent Firework Display which raised vital funds for the club.
4. **Chairman’s report:** Gill gave her report for the year. Printed below
5. **Vice chairman’s report:** Paul gave his report for the year. Printed below.
6. **Treasurer’s report:** Karen gave her report but said there were a number of items relating to the Christmas Market which were still outstanding.
7. **Membership secretary’s report:** Ron said there were now 550 members.
8. **Election of the committee:** The present committee was re-elected unopposed apart from Heidi, who stood down as Events Lead. Gill thanked Heidi for the hard work she had put in on the Christmas Market and other events.

**The meeting ended at 9pm**

**Standish Voice Chair person’s Annual Report 2015-2016 by Gill Foster**

This is the second annual report for Standish Neighbourhood Forum – Standish Voice and I am pleased to report we continue to go from strength to strength.

This last year has been an extremely busy year for Standish Voice on the development of our neighbourhood plan.

Our 15 committee members, who have each taken on responsibility for specific areas of expertise have played a crucial role. Their contribution, dedication and hard work has been fantastic and I would personally like to thank all the committee members for their hard work over the last year and for the time they have devoted to getting us to the stage we are at in developing our neighbourhood plan. In addition we have a number of specialist working groups and they work on specific projects. I would like also to thank the people in the working groups for their time and contribution.

Our membership has continued to grow and we now have over 500 members representing the wider community in Standish.

We have also been continuing to forging relationships with the Council and held several meetings with the Chief Executive, deputy Leader of the Council (Cllr Molyneaux) and senior managers. To date Wigan Council have been very supportive and helpful in providing us with the information we require for the development of the Neighbourhood plan. We have a dedicated planning officer, Jennie Hill, to help co-ordinate and give advice to us, and myself and Paul meet with the officers on a monthly basis to discuss technical issues relating to the emerging neighbourhood plan. I would particularly like to thank all the officers at the council who have been assisting us.

We were pleased to be invited to give a presentation at the launch of The Deal in Standish here at the Unity Club in January 2016 and I was also pleased to represent Standish Voice at a Council Meeting earlier this year to explain to all the councillors the work we have been doing as the first Neighbourhood Forum in Wigan.

The purpose of becoming a Neighbourhood Forum is to enable a Neighbourhood Plan to be produced for Standish. Once produced then plan will need to be reviewed by a planning inspector and then there will be a referendum when all the people of Standish can vote to adopt the plan. The plan, if adopted, will become a statutory document which will have to be considered alongside Wigan Council’s overall planning documents but the policies will be specific for Standish. There is therefore a robust legal process that we have to go through in the development and adoption of policies within the Standish Plan. The aim of the plan is to shape the future of the village and ensure that any developments meet local needs. That is why your input in completing the questionnaire last summer and support given to helping the committee in the technical aspects of developing a plan has been essential. To ensure that the Committee Members fully understand the process and legal aspects we have continued to undertaken a number of training sessions and workshops. We have developed a project plan and timescales and are currently on track for the delivery of a Plan by the early next year.

Each member of the committee has taken the lead on the working groups that have been doing the research and developing the draft policies from the issues that came from the consultation last year. Nobody should underestimate the time that this has taken and I would like to thank the theme leads and all the people in the working groups who have been working so diligently so produce draft policies.

In addition to these working groups, separate ones have also been set up to take forward specific issues like car parking, cycle routes and organising the Christmas market and thank you to all those people who have been involved.

We have continued to receive support from Locality and during the last year we have been successful in two grant applications. The first allowed us to have technical support from specialist consultants – Aecom, who undertook a housing technical study specifically for Standish. This work was completed at the end of 2015 and was followed by a further piece of work looking at the housing needs assessment for Standish. Both these reports have been signed off by central government and Locality and will be used as evidence in the development of the emerging housing policies in the neighbourhood plan.

We have also received grant funding to allow us to use consultancy support for the development of the plan and the forthcoming consultation on the draft plan, which begins on the 3rd of December at the Christmas market. In addition we have also been able to access funding to engage a consultant to look at the village centre and to see what could be done to improve the village centre and the conservation area. We are hoping this work will be concluded shortly. We are really pleased to be able to engage Carol Latham to help us with the writing of the draft neighbourhood plan and to facilitate workshops for us. Carol works with a number of neighbourhood forums across the country and her knowledge and expertise has been invaluable. I am sure the committee will join me in thanking her for her input and working with us.

In addition to the Locality funding we have also been successful in obtaining funding from the Council which is helping us to put on the Christmas Market on the 3rd of December. I would like to thank all the people on the organisation group and we all look forward to a successful event. We would not have been able to do as much without external funding but we are aware that we will need to also raise money ourselves. There have been several fundraising events and I would like to thank those involved for organising two fashion shows which were a great success and raised money for the Christmas Market.

We have continued to respond to planning applications for housing developments in Standish and have also made comment on a number of technical consultation documents over the past year. In particular I would like to thank Allan Foster, Nicky Ogden and Brian Jones for their work on these.

I reported last year that we had submitted applications for several assets of Community Value to the Council. I am pleased to report that applications for the Ponds at Almond Brook, the Line, Library, community centre, Ashfield Park, and the Rec, have all been approved. Unfortunately our application for the Crown was unsuccessful. I would like to thank Dave King and Janet Monks for their hard work on putting the applications together.

We have continued to actively raising the profile of the neighbourhood forum, locally, regionally and nationally through a series of press releases, use of social media and numerous meetings with national bodies. Paul Ogden, Vice-chairman, has undertaken the role of communications since we were established and has been responsible for producing the newsletter and keeping the web site up to date with the latest information on the work of Standish Voice and local issues. I am sure you will all agree he has done a wonderful job. I would personally like to thank him for his time, hard work and his passion for Standish Voice which has not waivered. I feel sure that the committee would like to join me in thanking him.

So what does the year ahead hold?

The next few months are going to require a lot of time, energy and expertise in the progression of the neighbourhood plan for Standish, but it is also an exciting time for the village. I have already been in discussion with some of the national organisations regarding the technical support we will need to cover the “gaps” in expertise required to ensure our plan and planning policies are robust as these will ultimately be scrutinised by the national neighbourhood planning inspector. We have a legal process to follow and once our draft plan is prepared we will submit it to Wigan Council who will then organise the referendum where every eligible person within the designated area will be able to vote on the content of the plan. We hope that this will occur in Spring next year. There are undoubtably a number of challenges but we see our neighbourhood plan as being the way to shape the future of the village and to give the people of Standish the opportunity to have their say and use our collective influence.

We will be starting our consultation on the draft plan and policies shortly. This will enable everyone to have their say on the draft and this will include statutory bodies and organisations who have an interest as well as local people in the village. It is important that we get your views as this is your plan for the future of the village and the plan will run until 2030.

Special thanks as I mentioned earlier, to Paul as Vice-chairperson, to Karen Bliss as treasurer, Ron Wade as membership secretary and for keeping us on track with our project plan, Nic Macmillan for her work on analysis of relevant policies, Janet Monks and Dave King for their work on environmental issues and compiling the information on Assets of Community Value, Sarah Djali for liaison with the schools, Andrew Halliday for his community involvement, Fran Aitken for her work on health and linkages with Standish Library, Brian Jones for the work on transport, Diane Gore for her work with local businesses, Nicky Ogden and Allan Foster for their input and responses on housing proposals, and to our newest committee member Heidi Swift who will have responsibility for events.

**STANDISH VOICE AGM 2016 - VICE CHAIR’S REPORT**

This past year for Standish Voice has not been all about our Neighbourhood Plan and housing developments.

We successfully campaigned to have more public parking in Standish, are helping the Save The Crown campaigners to stop one of Standish’s oldest pubs being demolished, pushed for Standish Cycleway to transform The Line into a multi-use route into Standish, held popular fundraising evenings and are about to have our first big, community event with Standish Christmas Market on December 3.

We ran the parking campaign to coincide with Wigan Council’s Deal In Action which came to Standish in February. Our petition gathered 1,300 names in just a few weeks and our comprehensive survey of the village centre concluded that ideally there should an extra 130 public spaces.

Wigan Council agreed a 12-point plan to improve parking, including provision of a new public car park paid for by them. Over the subsequent months, we have been holding regular meetings with the council, discussing various sites across Standish centre for a new car park and how existing ones can be improved. We hope to include proposals for these in our Neighbourhood Plan soon.

We asked the council to bring forward improvements to The Line to create Standish Cycleway. This project was announced last February with a planning application approved in summer and an order to make the route a bridleway is now out for consultation. Instead of completing the £150,000 project piecemeal, the whole project will be carried out next summer, all being well.

The closure of The Crown in January was a blow to the community of Bradley and everyone who appreciates pubs as important buildings within our community. We are helping the Save The Crown campaign to stop the pub being demolished and replace it with houses. The campaign has successfully held off this planning application for at least six months longer than normal and we are still hopeful the pub can be saved. Opposition is growing, a petition has almost 900 names and a public meeting is being held here on Saturday afternoon as part of a TV documentary about the campaign. We have also formulated a policy in our Neighbourhood Plan to protect our remaining pubs.

Standish Voice also helped the campaigns to stop rail services being diminished on the Southport to Manchester line and the re-opening of the A&E in Chorley, giving its views on the Greater Manchester transport plan and presented its views to Wigan Council on various planning matters.

No-one should under-estimate the silent victory Standish has achieved in having none of its green belt land earmarked for even more housing in the recent Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, which recommends building 225,000 homes before 2035. This victory is even bigger as one site on Rectory Lane is being put back into green belt, one of only three in the whole of Greater Manchester. We will be ready to defend this proposal robustly.

We continue to publicise what we do, with many articles and comments in the Wigan Observer. Our Facebook site has 3,100 followers who interact with our daily posts of news, information and events as well as sharing what other groups are also doing in Standish. Our publicity and ticket sales for Standish Community Fireworks Night at the cricket club helped to sell hundreds of tickets for the event.

We have 550 followers on Twitter and also send out a monthly newsletter to our membership, which is approaching 600 people.

Our first major event will be Standish Christmas Market on December 3, with the help of The Friends of Standish Library, the Women’s Institute and St Wilfrid’s Church.

There has been a huge amount of organisation needed for the event and our links with Wigan Council, which we have been to improving over the year, have served us well.

Can I thank everyone on the Standish Voice committee and everyone on the Christmas Markets committee for their hard work over the year in trying to make Standish a better place in which to live and work.

Especially, I’d like to thank Gill for her leadership and good counsel over the past 12 months, especially in the areas of liaising with the organisations and consultants which we need to complete our Neighbourhood Plan – not least securing the technical help and thousands of pounds in grant money which is vital to take the plan forward.