

## **Standish Voice Chair Gill Fosters 's Annual Report - 2020 AGM**

This is the fifth annual report for Standish Neighbourhood Forum – Standish Voice, and I am pleased to report we have again continued to go from strength to strength as our profile and membership has continued to grow in the village.

2019 has been an extremely busy, exciting and momentous year for Standish Voice, culminating in the development, consultation, publication, submission and examination of our final draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan. The production of our Neighbourhood Plan has had to follow a strict legal process and has gone through several statutory consultations and a planning examination before the Final Neighbourhood Plan could go forward for Referendum in July 2019. The production of the plan has taken a long time but I am sure, having seen the plan and supporting documentation, that you can appreciate the amount of time and effort that the committee members have put into producing the Plan on behalf of the people in our village.

The Referendum on the Neighbourhood plan was eventually held on Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 with a straight Yes or No voted to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan. The village turned out in force with a 30.4% turnout – similar to that of Local election, and a resounding vote of 94.5% of people voting YES to Wigan adopting the plan. We would like thank the village for their support for the plan which is now the footprint for development in Standish for the next 10 years and the policies within the plan will need to be taken into account by both Wigan Planning Officers, developers and planning inspectors.

As in previous years the 15 committee members, who have been elected to office and voluntarily given their time, have each taken on responsibility for specific areas of expertise and have played a crucial role in the work of Standish Voice and the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Their contribution, dedication and hard work has been fantastic and I would personally like to thank all the committee members for all their hard work and perseverance over the last year, and for the amount of time they have each devoted to getting us to the stage we are at with the Standish Neighbourhood Plan. In particular I would like to thank Paul Ogden and Nic McMillan for all their hard work on finalising the draft plan and evidence base and I am sure that everyone will agree that it is a very professional document. This was commented on by the Planning Inspector who examined the Neighbourhood Plan before it could be put forward for referendum.

We have continued to receive support from Locality, and during the last year we have been successful in receiving further grant funding. This has allowed us to have funding for the consultation process and publicity materials relating to the Referendum.

We have also been continuing to forge relationships with Wigan Council and held several meetings with the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council (Cllr Molyneaux) and senior managers. In particular I would like to thank Donna Hall , former Chief Executive for her support of Standish Voice and to Alison McKenzie-Folan, Wigan's new Chief Executive who we have met on several occasions since the Referendum to plan the implementation of the Plan and again we have her support for our work. The Leader of the council has also been very supportive and we look forward to continuing to work with him and officers of the council in the future. As we are the first Neighbourhood Forum in the borough, Wigan Council has continued to be very supportive and helpful in providing us with the information we have required for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, Referendum and

adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan for Standish. It has continued to be a steep learning curve for us all.

In addition to the Locality funding we have been successful in obtaining funds from Councillors Ray Whittingham , Cllr Adam Marsh, Cllr Debbie Parkinson and local businesses and which helped us to put on our fourth very successful Christmas Market on the 30th of December 2019. The Mayor of Wigan was extremely impressed with the professionalism and scale of the market and the way in which the whole village came to support the event. I would like to thank all the people who organised and volunteered on the day, as well as those people who attended and we all look forward to another successful event in December this year. We would not have been able to do as much without external funding but we are aware that we will need to raise money ourselves. .

We have continued to lobby Homes England and the Council regarding the Bradley Lane housing development in an attempt to get an increased level of the much needed affordable housing on the site, beyond the basic level proposed of 25% which is the minimum required by the planning department. W understand this site is currently on hold.

We have continued to actively raise the profile of the neighbourhood forum, locally, regionally and nationally though a series of press releases, use of social media, meetings and discussions with national bodies. On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019I attended a national conference, hosted by Wigan Council, as Council of the Year, and spoke about the work of Standish Voice and the Neighbourhood Plan. There were around 200 delegates from around the country, and I assisted Cllr Ready, as a panelist, at 4 workshops during the event.

Paul Ogden, Vice-chairman, has undertaken the role of communications officer since we were established and has been responsible for producing the newsletters and keeping the website and face book page up to date with the latest information on the work of Standish Voice and other local issues. I am sure you will all agree he has done a wonderful job. I would personally like to thank him for his valuable time, hard work and his passion for Standish Voice, which has not wavered. I feel sure that all the committee members would like to join me in thanking him.

In addition to the development of the neighbourhood plan Standish Voice committee members have been involved in a number of areas to help improve the village which Paul will talk about in more detail. When we signed up to “The Deal” we were asked by the Chief Executive what project would be of benefit to the local residents and we are pleased that The Line has continued to be well used by local residents walking, cycling and which reduces car journeys into the village.

So what will the next twelve months hold?

As a committee we are excited that Standish Neighbourhood plan has been adopted and we are now entering the implementation phase. Nobody should underestimate the time, enthusiasm and commitment that will be required until 2030 as we work to ensure the policies and projects are implemented for the benefit of the people in our village.

There are a number of community projects included in the Neighbourhood delivery plan which will need volunteers and local organisations to take the lead so I ask if anyone would like to volunteer to help us that would be greatly appreciated. Please can you let us have your contact details after the meeting.

We will also need to work with the Council to influence and ensure that the monies that are coming in as a result of the approved housing developments are maximised and spent to the benefit of the Standish community. We hope that these projects will start to be delivered in the forthcoming year.

We will need to be re-designated as a Neighbourhood Forum to continue our work, as we were originally only designated for a 5 year period which expires in May 2020. There are some minor changes to our constitution, which we will discuss later and then we can submit our application for re-designation to the Council for approval.

In addition to the work on the Neighbourhood Plan, we will continue to hold events and encourage people in the village to support the work of Standish Voice.

Special thanks, as I mentioned earlier, to Paul as Vice-chairperson, to Karen Bliss as treasurer, Ron Wade as membership secretary, Nic Macmillan for her phenomenal work on analysis of relevant policies and collation of the evidence base, to Janet Monks and Dave King for their work on environmental issues, Sarah Djali for liaison with the schools and proof reading the draft plan, Fran Aiken for her work on health and linkages with Standish Library, Brian Jones for his work on local transport, Diane Gore for her work with local businesses, Nicky Ogden and Allan Foster for their expertise and work on housing, and Kathy Robertson for her tireless work on the Christmas market.

It has been a privilege to work with such a diverse, dedicated and committed group of people.

In this report I have concentrated on the formal work of Standish Voice committee, which is the production of the Standish Neighbourhood Plan, and this is the first non-business neighbourhood plan to be produced in Greater Manchester and Standish should be very proud of this. However there has been a considerable amount of other work which has been undertaken which Paul Ogden – Vice chair, will report on next.

As Chairperson, I am extremely proud of everything that the committee members have achieved so far on behalf of the village, and I hope that in the coming years Standish Voice Neighbourhood Forum continues to go from strength to strength.