

## **STANDISH VOICE AGM 2022 – CHAIR’S REPORT**

This is the seventh 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. We now have more than 1,500 members and almost 11,000 followers on our Facebook page.

2021 has been another extraordinary year for us all because of the global Coronavirus pandemic which has had a devastating affect on all our lives. We are now two years into the pandemic and I don't think any of us could have imagined the impact this would continue to have on everyone both worldwide and in our local community. I would especially like to extend our thoughts, prayers, and condolences to all those people in Standish who have lost a close family member, relative, friend, neighbour, or colleague to the COVID-19 virus. Also, to all those people in the village who have been ill, and those who continue to suffer the effects from long COVID-19 as a result of this infection.

Standish Voice has continued to provide assistance to those people in our village who required it through the coronavirus support service. Working with our three councillors, Councillor Adam Marsh, Councillor Ray Whittingham and Councillor Debbie Parkinson, Paul Ogden (vice chair), and Karen Bliss, our treasurer and our volunteers we continued to provide the support. As things improved and the requests for assistance reduced, the decision was made in the summer that we would stop the assistance. I would particularly like to thank Karen Bliss, our treasurer for all the work she has undertaken in processing and paying all the invoices for the coronavirus support. The way in which our village came together to help people who were having to isolate, by assistance with shopping, getting prescriptions and providing contact was phenomenal and I thank you all and especially all the volunteers and SmartStrat who provided the telephone hotline throughout.

We have continued to meet with the Wigan Council Chief Executive and senior council officers, by Zoom, and I would like to thank Alison and her officers for their continued support for Standish Voice and the work we do.

Together with our local councillors we have held discussions, virtually, with a number of officers as Wigan Council has been identifying projects which they consider the Section 106 developer contribution monies can be utilised. This culminated in a public consultation on the proposals during March 2021. Standish Voice have expressed concerns about the questionnaire itself, which we believe was misleading, and the subsequent outcomes reported. We have continued to stress that the Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2019 following extensive consultation, should be at the forefront of their thinking and development of projects. We would thank you all who responded to the consultation. Standish Voice have been very clear that we will continue to discuss the issues with Wigan

Council and give our views. We have held several meetings with senior officers and been advised that no decisions have yet been made but we expect a decision shortly

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. 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 of implementation of the Neighbourhood plan. In particular, I would like to thank Brian Jones, who has left Standish, for all his help, assistance and technical knowledge which has been invaluable. Brian was one of the founder members of Standish Voice and worked tirelessly to help shape the Neighbourhood Plan.

Unfortunately, we were again not able to hold several events we had planned, and we had to cancel our annual Christmas market again. However, thanks to Kathy Robertson and Ian Trafford we were able to have another virtual Christmas Market which was extremely successful. My thanks go to them. We all hope we will be able to resume our normal Christmas market again this year.

We have continued to actively raise the profile of the neighbourhood forum, locally, regionally, and nationally through a series of press releases, use of social media, meetings, and discussions with national bodies.

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 Facebook 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 again done a phenomenal job, especially this year, in keeping us all informed of local issues. 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?

We will need to continue 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 will continue to oppose the School Lane

widening but hope that some of the other projects will start to be delivered in the forthcoming year to benefit the village.

In addition to the work on the Neighbourhood Plan, we hope we will be able to resume events and encourage people in the village to support the work of Standish Voice.

Special thanks, as I mentioned earlier, to Paul our Vice-chairperson, to Karen Bliss our treasurer, and to all our other committee members Fran Aiken, Sarah Djali, Allan Foster, Diane Gore, Reverend Andrew Holliday, Brian Jones, Dave King, Janet Monks, Nicky Ogden, Kathy Robertson, Ron Wade and Ian Trafford.

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. 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.