

## **Standish Voice Chairperson's Annual Report 2022 by Gill Foster**

This is the eighth 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 almost 1,730 members and 11,500 followers on our Facebook page.

We have continued to meet with the 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 expressed concerns over the length of time it took to collate and report the findings and we are pleased to say that the community response against the proposed widening of School Lane, which Standish Voice led, resulted in the scheme being rejected by the council.

Other schemes were approved and we have been continuing to work with officers of the council to have an input into the improvement schemes to extend the Line, footpaths and cycle routes around the village. Improvements to parks and open spaces are also being discussed and proposals for works to create a new park and increase biodiversity at Robin Hill field, next to the Line, are well underway. All these projects were identified in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan and we will continue to ensure that the council adhere to this.

We will continue to work with the council to ensure that all the Section 106 funding from developers is spent in the village to benefit residents and businesses. We will commit to push for improved parking facilities.

We successfully organised a campaign to persuade the Council not to sell a piece of land which would have enabled access to a greenfield area at the rear of Chorley Road to be developed and have worked with local residents of Chorley Road regarding this scheme.

We have also continued to respond to planning applications, and particularly to object to further housing developments, including at Rowton Rise and Robin Hill, and, more recently, proposals to build homes on our Green Belt at Arbour Lane. We have also given our vision for Standish as part of consultation on Wigan's own borough-wide local plan.

We have continued to make representations to the regional development plan, which is crucial in the retention of Standish's Green Belt. The Places For Everyone plan is now entering its public inquiry stage and we will continue to monitor its progress. It is expected to be ratified this year, protecting out Green Belt until 2037.

As in previous years, Standish Voice's 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 Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

In particular, I would like to thank Dave King, who has now stepped down from the committee, for all his help, assistance and knowledge on green spaces which has been invaluable. Dave was one of the founder members of Standish Voice and worked tirelessly to help shape the neighbourhood plan.

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 face book page up to date with the latest information on the work of Standish Voice and other local issues. He is assisted by Ian Trafford and we now have over 1,730 members, which is brilliant. I am sure you will all agree both he and Ian have again done a phenomenal job, especially this year, in keeping us all informed of local issues, so thank you both.

I would personally like to thank Paul 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. It has been so successful that the works to extend it from Cat'ith Window to Pepper Lane and beyond are well advanced and will be completed in the next few months.

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 push to ensure that some of the other projects will start to be delivered in the forthcoming year to benefit the village.

We will also be working with the council to promote the objectives of Standish Neighbourhood Plan in the development of Wigan's own borough-wide local plan and will be meeting with council officers in the coming months.

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, 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.