

Standish Voice Chairperson's Annual Report 2025 by Gill Foster

This is the eleventh annual report for Standish Neighbourhood Forum – Standish Voice, I am pleased to report that this year 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 2,012 members and 16,000 followers on our Facebook page.

During 2025 we have continued to meet with the senior council officers, and I would like to thank Alison, Chief Executive and her officers for their continued support for Standish Voice and the work we do.

Together with our local councillors we have continued to hold discussions with a number of officers as Wigan Council to progress projects utilising

the Section 106 developer contribution monies. This year has seen the completion of a number of significant projects which are contained in our Neighbourhood Plan.

Car parking in the village centre has been a major issue so we are pleased that the Quakers Place car park was finally redesigned, resurfaced and additional car spaces and disabled bays provided. This has been greatly welcome by residents and businesses and we were pleased that the council agreed to free time limited parking. An additional benefit for local residents was we, with our councillors, persuaded the council to re surface the small stretch of unadopted road on Quakers Place.

The Line has been further extended and now goes from Standish to Beech Hill and this is proving to be another successful route for cyclists and walkers. Plans are also being prepared to provide further extensions to this cycle route around Standish and footpaths and rights of way to be improved.

One of the twoplays areas in Ashfield Park has been improved this year with the relocation of it near to the toddlers area so the two areas are closer to each other. New play equipment has been provided and an adjacent seating/picnic area will be created. Footpaths within the park have also been upgraded

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.

In May 2025, the committee formally applied to Wigan Council for redesignation of Standish Voice as Standish Neighbourhood Forum for a further 5 years, as we are legally obliged to do. This was to enable the Neighbourhood Forum to remain in place and our work on the implementation of the Standish Neighbourhood Plan to continue. We are pleased that Wigan Council agreed to re-designate Standish Voice.

You may recall several years ago we successfully persuaded the Council not to sell a piece of land which would have enabled land at the rear of Chorley Road to be developed and have worked with local residents of Chorley Road regarding this scheme. In October 2024 I attended the planning committee to object, on behalf of Standish Voice, to a planning application for an access road which would have opened up this development and was contrary to policies in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan. After successfully arguing against the proposals, and against the planning officers advice, the committee voted to reject the

application as the application was contrary to Standish Neighbourhood Plan policies. The applicant did not Appeal within the 6 month timeframe.

At that same Planning Committee in October 2024, I also objected to the development of further Persimmon Housing development for 57 houses off Pepper Lane, again arguing that the development was in breach of Standish Neighbourhood Plan policies. The health service also had major concerns and the impact additional housing would have on Standish Medical Practice. Again the application was rejected by councillors as the application was in breach of the neighbourhood plan policies. The Applicant, Persimmon Homes, did Appeal and in September I attended the 2 day Planning Appeal along with Cllr Whittingham and Cllr Parkinson. Despite evidence being given by us as to the impact of additional houses on the health centre, traffic lights, ecology and infrastructure, the Government Planning Inspector disappointingly decided to favour the housing developer and overturn Wigan Council's decision and allow the houses to be built.

We will continue to make comment on planning applications in Standish.

This year we have also been working with planning officers on the development of the new Wigan Local Plan to help shape and ensure that the planning policies in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan are taken into account and that any new policies proposed will not have a detrimental effect on Standish.

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 mention Janet Monks, a valued committee member who sadly passed away in May this year. Her local knowledge, love of maps and detailed historical research ensured that her help, assistance and knowledge on green spaces was invaluable. Janet was one of the founder members of Standish Voice and she worked tirelessly to help shape the neighbourhood plan and green policies along with Dave King.

In addition I would like to thank Ron Wade for his tenacity in ensuring that public rights of way are progressed and that his involvement in production of the 3 walking route leaflets around Standish and the Inner and Outer Heritage trail walks has encouraged people to use them.

This year we have continued to support the community events held at Standish Library and I would like to thank Fran Aitken for her work in the Friends of Standish Library on these.

We were thrilled we were able to hold our annual Christmas Market again on 6th December 2025. My huge thanks to Kathy Robertson, Ian Trafford, Paul Ogden, Diane Gore, Fran Aitken and Sarah Djali, Clare Callaghan and all the Christmas Market Committee, all the volunteers and businesses who enabled us to hold this successful event.

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 2,012 members, which is brilliant and 16,000 Facebook followers. 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 waivered. 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 including the Christmas Market, Save St Wilfrid's Church Spire Appeal, Friends of Ashfield and support for Standish St Wilfrid's Football Club.

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, including improvements to the historic heart of Standish.

In addition we will continue to work with the council on the development of the new Local Plan. This was put on hold awaiting the new Government planning review, but this will form a large part of our work to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan policies are taken into account.

We hope we will be able to continue to support events and encourage people in the village to support the work of Standish Voice.

We are an apolitical organisation, however we have worked closely with our three Standish Councillors over a number of issues affecting the village, residents and businesses and we will continue to do so in the forthcoming year. Our thanks go to them for their continuing support of the work we do.

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, Sharon Gerrard, Nicky Ogden, Kathy Robertson, Ron Wade, Judith Atherton 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.