

## **Standish Voice Chair Person's Annual Report 2018 by Gill Foster**

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

2018 has been an extremely busy and exciting year for Standish Voice, culminating in the development, consultation, publication and submission of our final draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan to Wigan Council.

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 draft 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 it is a very professional document.

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, Chief Executive for her continuing support of Standish Voice and as you may be aware she is leaving the council shortly and we wish her success in her future endeavours. 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. It has continued to be a steep learning curve for us all.

We have had two dedicated planning officers, Jennie Hill and Kathy Bibby, and also additional assistance from Nick Clarke and David Kearsley to help co-ordinate and give advice to us on technical planning policy issues. Myself and Paul have met with the officers on a monthly basis to discuss technical issues relating to the draft Neighbourhood Plan and statutory consultation compliance and timetabling of the process. I would particularly like to thank all the officers at the council who have been assisting us.

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.

In addition to the Locality funding we have been successful in obtaining funds from Councillors Ray Whittingham and Adam Marsh and local businesses and which helped us to put on our third very successful Christmas Market on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2018. I had the privilege of escorting the Mayor of Wigan around the Christmas market and she was extremely impressed with the professionalism and scale of the market and the way in which the whole village came to support the event, despite the bad weather. 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. There have been several fundraising events and I would like to thank all those people who have organised these events to support Standish Voice.

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.

We have met with Homes England regarding the Bradley Lane housing development. We have lobbied MP's, the council, Homes England and central government 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. This makes it even more important that the draft Neighbourhood Plan is accepted by the village.

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. 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.

The production of a Neighbourhood Plan has to follow a strict legal process and the committee have undertaken several training workshops to ensure we understand and follow that process. The draft Neighbourhood Plan was finalised in late summer 2017 and enabled the six week statutory Regulation 14 consultation to be undertaken on the draft policies, which concluded on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017. We received a number of responses (210) to this consultation and these responses were collated, considered and where appropriate changes were made. The final draft was issued and at the EGM held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 the Standish Neighbourhood Plan was overwhelmingly voted upon and agreed that it be submitted to Wigan Council. Wigan was required to undertake further consultation on the plan and they commenced their Regulation 18 consultation in November 2018 which ran for six weeks. Wigan is currently making arrangements for the planning examination of the plan which it is anticipated will take place in the spring and eventual referendum by the village to accept the plan. 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 draft plan on behalf of the people in our village.

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. When we signed up to "The Deal" we were asked by the Chief Executive what project would be of benefit to the local residents. We identified improvements to the Line and we are pleased that despite a number of legal set-backs, works to the Line have been completed and it is now well used by local people. The Line has been showcased in the council's Annual Public Health Report 2018 for the way it encourages walking, cycling and reduces car journeys into the village. Paul and myself were asked to take part in the video which was produced by the Public Health team.

So what will the next twelve months hold?

As a committee we are excited that Standish Neighbourhood plan is entering the final stages of the process. Undoubtedly the biggest challenge will be the examination stage of the neighbourhood plan, but with the expertise of all the current committee members I am confident that we can professionally justify the plan to the Inspector. Once we have received the inspector's feedback and comments the plan will be put forward for Referendum for the people of Standish to vote on adoption of the plan. If the plan is adopted at the Referendum, then more hard work is required to implement many of the proposals to improve our village. 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.

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 Jaime Jones 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.